Exploring Internalized Classism Using the Regressive Model of Self-Stigma

Date: March 9, 2018
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Place: 132 Social Science Building

Abstract
A growing body of literature on classism suggests that negative attitudes and treatment based on one’s social class may have wide-ranging impacts on one’s sense of self, behaviors, and well-being. Scholars have theorized that internalized classism may be eroding dignity and contributing to observed health disparities between those of higher and lower social classes, but little quantitative research has explored the subject. The present study attempted to address this gap in the literature by applying the regressive model of self-stigma, a model originally developed for internalized mental health stigma, to internalized classism to better understand how to define and measure internalized classism and explore whether it accounts for decrements in well-being. Participants who rated themselves as possessing a lower current or childhood subjective social status completed a survey on M-Turk answering questions about classist beliefs, negative and positive class-based stereotypes, self-esteem, self-efficacy, class-based shame, and quality of life. Results for the model were mixed. Classist beliefs did not significantly predict applying negative class-based stereotypes to oneself as hypothesized. However, positive and negative stereotype application did have significant effects on self-efficacy, self-esteem, and class-based shame, the latter two of which also directly impacted quality of life. Furthermore, differences in social class groups were observed with the model, suggesting that these variables differentially affect one’s sense of self and well-being depending on social class. Future research should continue to explore how to define internalized classism and its impacts with a specific measure of internalized classism being most needed and recommended.