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# Internalized racism and its effects on African American

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## ABSTRACT

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### INTERNALIZED RACISM AND ITS EFFECTS ON AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

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Conceptual Paper dated May 2017

Using the Afrocentric Perspective and Social Learning Theory this research study explored how internalized racism affects African American women. More specifically, it examined the effect of internalized racism on socioeconomic status and self-esteem of African American women. Prior research showed that internalized racism can contribute to decreased self-esteem and play a role in African American women's lives that have lower socioeconomic status. Findings revealed that internalized racism does influence self-esteem and affects social capital of African American women, which contributes to a decline in socioeconomic status. The researcher discussed and provided recommendations for future social work policy, research, and practice on the topic of internalized racism in African American women.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Statement of the Problem.....	1
	Purpose of the Study .....	2
	Significance of the Study .....	3
II.	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
	Historical Perspective .....	4
	Issue One: Self-Esteem.....	6
	Issue Two: Socioeconomic Status .....	9
	Afrocentric Perspective.....	12
	Theoretical Framework.....	13
III.	METHODOLOGY .....	16
	Methods of the Study .....	16
	Limitations of the Study.....	17
IV.	PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.....	18
	Findings on Self-Esteem.....	18
	Findings on Socioeconomic Status .....	19

CHAPTER

V.	SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION.....	22
	Summary of the Study .....	22
	Implications for Social Work.....	23
	REFERENCES .....	25

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to state the issue being presented throughout this paper, African American women affected by internalized racism. After stating the social problem in this chapter, a discussion of expectations and hypotheses will be presented along with the groups and geographical locations involved in the study. Lastly, the significance of the study will be presented. In this section, topics such as ‘why the study is important, ‘how this study will add to existing knowledge,’ and ‘how the study will contribute to future generations,’ will be discussed.

#### Statement of the Problem

The issue being discussed here is internalized racism and the effect it has on African American women. Internalized racism is defined as “the acceptance of stereotypes or beliefs that paint one’s racial group as...inferior...or a burden on society” (Hipolito-Delgado, 2010, pg. 319). It leads the person suffering to thinking, feeling, and behaving as though the dominant culture holds more value than their own (Lipsky, 1987).

Similarly, Stuart Hall offers the definition of internalized racism as “the ‘subjection’ of the victims of racism to the mystifications of the very racist ideology which imprisons and define them” (1986). This means that people who experience internalized racism are blinded by the dominant culture’s perceived perfection and do not realize that they are

trapped in self-destructive thoughts about their race and culture. Because they are trapped in these self-destructive thoughts, it is oftentimes unclear when they are first approached and asked about negative feelings towards their own ethnic group and how they deal with those negative feelings (Hersch, 2006). When examined, it is shown that these negative feelings can have an adverse effect on a person's overall quality of life. It could also be argued that the socioeconomic status of an individual would be effected due to negative emotions and opinions towards their own ethnic group (Marger, 2015). These topics will be examined in Chapter 2 of this conceptual paper.

#### Purpose of the Study

The central focus of this study will be to examine not only the effects of internalized racism on African American women, but more specifically the effects it has on their overall quality of life. For the purposes of this study Quality of Life will be operationally defined as the participant's all around well-being. More specifically quality of life can be defined based on the themes being discussed: Self-Esteem and Socioeconomic Status.

Research questions to be answered at the conclusion of this work are as follows: Was there a significant negative effect of internalized racism on self-esteem of African American women? And was there a significant effect of internalized racism on socioeconomic status of African American women?

Groups specifically identified in this study will be African American women and those they interact with that contribute to their lives. Other women of color and Caucasian women will also be discussed for comparison purposes. This study will use

research conducted in the continental United States.

### Significance of Study

Internalized racism is an important topic because it can effect more populations than just African Americans. Research presented in this study will not only provide insight into the effects of internalized racism on African American women as it relates to self-esteem and socioeconomic status, but also will provide future studies with existing research that could relate to internalized racism in other minority cultures. This study will contribute to the larger body of research by providing needed information on colorism and how people of different skin tones are effected differently in the African-American and outside communities. Looking into the opinions, thoughts, and feelings of those effected by this topic will provide a consciousness that will hopefully reverse the effects of this poisonous mindset.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will cover a number of themes. Firstly, topics surrounding African American women and their self-esteem will be a theme of this chapter. Along with this, socioeconomic status and its relation to internalized racism will be discussed. Literature pertaining to these topics will be synthesized and analyzed to show their relevance to internalized racism and its effects on quality of life for African American women.

#### Historical Perspective

Research surrounding internalized racism and African-American women puts emphasis on implications during adolescence and young adulthood. The research found also covers internalized racism and how it relates to anxiety and stress in racial situations. These topics along with the before mentioned themes of self-esteem and socioeconomic status will be discussed here.

Karen Pyke states that internalized racism is implanted during childhood by means of instilling a sense of racial inferiority (2010). This sense of racial inferiority is instilled through phrases such as “don’t play in the sun; you’ll get too dark,” or “you’re pretty to be darker skinned” (Pyke, 2010). Phrases that carry implications that there is something wrong with a child’s physical make up, in the way that these phrases do are

detrimental to children's lifelong physical, mental, and social growth especially in young women (Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). One study found that oppression rooted in race and gender is closely correlated with mental illness in African American women (Szymanski and Stewart, 2010).

Colorism and internalized racism have similar definitions in that colorism is defined as the belief that one skin tone is superior to another, or more specifically, that lighter skin is superior to darker skin (Davis, 2015). Alice Walker came up with the term colorism in 1983 forever naming this act and stating "the internalized bias and favor for light-skin European features and 'good hair' has stratified the black community for generations" (Wilder, 2010, pg. 185). Another article similarly states that colorism is a bias based on skin tone, but is deeply rooted in supremacist ideals (Herring, Keith, & Horton, 2004). This means that colorism can occur within a race in the same way that it does with members of different races. The focus however is that there is a difference in treatment or a bias based on skin tone alone and no other attribute (Davis, 2015). Margaret Hunter argues that colorism as a bias is very real in regards to income, education, and multiple social constructs (2007). Even though darker skinned people are seen as ethnically authentic, lighter skinned individuals still hold an advantage in the areas of education, socioeconomic status, and housing (Hunter, 2007).

Oppression can be defined as the state of being subject to unjust treatment or control. Campón and Carter claim that oppression has shifted in meaning from one of tyranny to a more general injustice due to everyday practices (2015). This means that oppression is affecting people's lives in different ways than one would be used to seeing. Oppression as it relates to internalized racism is a system of power where those in control

make enforcing decisions, control access to resources, determine what is socially appropriate, and deny reality (Campón & Carter, 2015). In doing this, those in power also cause minorities affected by this oppression to internalize majority feelings about their own ethnic group. This internalization of negative feelings can only lead to mental illness or a belief that the denial of the oppression all together. The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) states that racism and discrimination can be one of the main reasons for psychological distress in minorities (2001). As far as denying the oppression altogether, this happens as a result of internalizing the belief that those in power somehow hold more value because of their race. Once the belief that they are superior is grasped, it turns into a colorblindness and ultimately a belief that judgement is based on merit rather than biases. Once this merit-based ideology is adopted oppression is no longer a factor because it is not real in the mind of the oppressed person (Marger, 2015).

#### Issue One: Self-Esteem

The acceptance of racist ideals towards one's own ethnic group, or internalized racism can have a negative impact on a person's self-esteem (Cross, 1971). Studies have shown that internalized racism and self-esteem are negatively correlated, especially when discussing the African American community (Carter, 1991; Parham & Helms, 1985a, 1985b). W. E. Cross created a theory examining five stages of transitioning from a Negro person to Black in American Society. This theory is known as Nigrescence (1971). Nigrescence splits internalized racism into three separate identities: 1. Assimilation, referring to being pro-American and viewing race as unimportant; 2. Miseducation, referring to acceptance of negative stereotypes about the African American community;

and finally 3. Self-hatred, referring to an individual's negative thoughts towards being Black (Szymanski & Gupta, 2009).

Self-esteem can be defined as "the individual perceptions...that are held about oneself" (Mathews, 2013, pg. 193). It is noted that the first psychological test for internalized racism was a doll test done to study African American children's preference for white dolls over black dolls (Pyke, 2010). This preference was seen as a racial self-hatred and was followed by a series of several more doll tests coming to the same conclusions (Clark and Clark, 1939; 1952). The doll test administered in this study actually set a standard for a very real depiction of internalized racism and set the precedent for self-esteem, identity, and opinions about one's ethnic group to be quantitatively measured in future studies (Bloom 1972; Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children 1970; Taylor and Grundy 1996).

LeAnn Sutherland points out the fact that women of color dealing with internalized racism or colorism during adolescence feel as though they do not measure up and face feelings of inadequacy when it comes to beauty in comparison to their Caucasian counterparts (2005). This means they are expected to be something other than what they are. They are expected to live up to certain loud, smart-mouthed, or even promiscuous behaviors and when they do not follow suit something is out of order (Sutherland, 2005). Similarly, internalized racism can be perpetuated when identity confusion occurs. Hall states that identity shifts from context to context and is a production constantly in process (2000). This explains why when internalized racism sets in during adolescence, an identity confusion can carry into and throughout adult life.

In today's society while women are still being judged by their outer appearance, the ones that appear to be more beautiful become better equipped with social skills and social capital. More often these are the women with lighter complexions (Mathews, 2013). Along with this information it can also be seen that women with lighter complexions have on average better reputations and social standings than African American women with darker complexions (Morris, 2009). Even with this information, African American women of all skin complexions are likely to experience internalized racism in some form over the course of their lives (Lipsky, 1987).

The documentary "Dark Girls" outlines the experiences and views of African American women with darker complexions. These women express how throughout life they have always felt as though they were not good enough, smart enough, pretty enough, or did not measure up in other areas because of their skin color. These women speak on issues surrounding their interactions with men, African American and other, and overall feel that their ego and self-worth was better tended to by men who do not share a common ancestry. Women in this documentary stated that they distanced themselves from African American men and bought into negative stereotypes about these men due to the fact that they were not attracting them in the way they wanted. Because an emotional need was being fed by men of another ethnic background, these women thought negatively of their own. Although, at the time they did not feel that it was damaging when interviewing for the documentary some of the women state that if they could go back they would not hold those detrimental views about their own ethnic group, because it ultimately had a negative effect on their lives (Berry & Duke, 2012).

Self-esteem in African American women is also related in part to their stress and

anxiety levels (Harrell, 2000). A study done on women's social anxiety levels and feelings of self-worth found that women with relatively high anxiety levels also display low self-esteem (Jong, 2002). Research surrounding women of color and their internalized racism affecting stress levels and anxiety states that internalized racism mediates the relationship between past-year frequency of racist events and anxious arousal as well as past-year frequency of racist events and stress symptoms (Graham, West, Martinez, & Roemer, 2016). This means that in the given year that this study was performed all of the racist acts that women of color experienced not only contributed to their own internal racism, but also to their stress and anxiety levels.

African American women can experience racism in their day to day lives without holding negative ideals about their own ethnic group. It is shown that these women, although their stress and anxiety levels are still affected by racism have greater self-esteem, because they associate themselves positively with their race. Women who disassociate themselves from their race however or evaluate their ethnic group negatively have not only lower self-esteem, but lower skill mastery levels (Hughes, Kiecolt, Keith, & Demo, 2015).

#### Issue Two: Socioeconomic Status

Performance in any setting is a way by which not only women, but all people are able to measure their growth. If a woman of color is unable to measure up to certain skill set, thoughts of inferiority cloud her mind and limit her growth. Because internalized racism can negatively affect an African American woman's ability to master certain tasks, it can inhibit her overall ability to provide for herself as well (Hughes et.

all, 2015). “A woman's social relationships (i.e. social ties or social network) can additionally affect how many and how advantageous her resources are to other outlets (such as employment and/or education)” (Parks-Yancey, 2006). This means that the social capital a woman builds upon that initially brings up her self-esteem is also useful in building her career. Because the women who are seen as more beautiful are noticed more often and therefore given more opportunity, these women oftentimes are far better taken care of financially as well (Bowman, Ray, & Mosi, 2004). Similarly, Breland claims that because of this positive glow placed around women with lighter complexions or women deemed as exceptionally beautiful, they are associated with desirable personality traits and thus seen as “intelligent and employable” by potential employers (1998).

Presently, internalized racism is affecting socioeconomic status in a different way. African American women in the workplace have been given the short end of the stick in a sense that they have to deal with both gender and racial inequalities while also fighting off any feelings that would allow them to conform to oppressive or self-loathing thoughts (Watts-Jones, 2002). That being said, African Americans are still guilty of indirectly internalizing White racism through meritocracy (Pyke, 2010). Meritocracy, or the belief that everything is received based on merit and earning is just another way to keep minorities at a subpar level. In reality, Pyke claims meritocracy is a way for hiring and selection to seem objective and equal for all, but what's not being said is that the standards that are being applied cannot be equally applied to all prospects because of their differences and because of the predispositions that minorities are subject (2010). These predispositions alone are enough for minorities to have to struggle with in their day

to day lives. However, when the added factor of an internalized self-hate comes into play it makes it difficult for a particular group to believe they are able to succeed professionally.

Sylvia Dominguez claims that internalization of historical and structural forces that deprive high-poverty neighborhoods access to opportunity can be extremely detrimental (2012). That is to say that a consequence of internalized racism can be seen in the person suffering, because they blame themselves for their lack of success when in reality the resources are not in place for them to succeed initially. In examining the book, Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism among the Black Poor, by Sandra Susan Smith, Dominguez explores the relationship between job seekers and jobholders in the African American community. It can be seen that African American job seekers who have internalized others' negative views about them are slow to trust or listen to jobholders in their community for fear of judgement or falling short in performance (2012).

African Americans have been separated socioeconomically since slavery. During this time however, the socioeconomic divide was more so about skin tone than anything else (Kerr, 2005). Slaves who were the fruit of an African slave and the White slave master were valued as gentler, kinder, and of greater value so were treated less harshly than those who had darker complexions (Mathews, 2013). Although this practice is from over a century ago there is still evidence not only that African Americans with lighter skin complexions are better off in terms of socioeconomic status, but also that the effects of internalized racism that exist because of slavery are a factor in the socioeconomic status achieved as well (Maddox, 2002).



Because the divisiveness of internalized racism allows for favor of the dominant race over minorities, African Americans since slavery have been socialized to believe that those with skin complexions closer to white deserve better (Piper, 2016). This is seen through history with ideas such as the 'brown paper bag test, in which one is tested to indicate whether or not they had Negro blood, or in the significantly different work assigned to house and field help during slavery (Davis, 2015).

### Afrocentric Perspective

The Afrocentric Perspective looks at ideas from the viewpoint of the African lens also known as a collectivist lens. This perspective looks at the African person as the center of his or her own history. The theory explains that once black people are the center of their own history then they are no longer just bystanders. In other words, the Afrocentric Perspective allows the African descendant to view their situation from the inside and not have a peripheral view of politics, economics, and social issues that affect their life. By having this view of the world going on around them rather than right in front of or aside from them, the Black person can make decisions about where they are going and answer questions about where they come from because everything is focused on them as the center.

This perspective relates to Internalized Racism and the effects it has on quality of life for African American women because this is partially the reasoning for the theory's existence. Internalized racism centers around feelings of self-hate stemmed from negative stereotypes about one's own ethnic group. The Afrocentric Perspective relates to the person suffering from thoughts of internalized racism because if implemented can help

this person to see themselves as center, rather than other. The Afrocentric Perspective would provide a foundation for self-love in the African American community as opposed to what internalized racism would provide.

When speaking to the issue of internalized racism and its effects on African American women in regards to their socioeconomic status and self-esteem, Afrocentrism looks at factors such as location, economy, and power positions to these as a collective issue rather than individual because a collectivist viewpoint would be beneficial to women of color suffering from internalized racism. It would seem that this perspective would almost be the complete opposite of viewpoints held by those suffering from internalized racism and colorism, but if these women were to look through a different lens with themselves as the center, internalized racism might not be such an issue. This perspective would be beneficial to women of color suffering from ideas of internalized racism, because rather than focusing on where they lack as far as stereotypes about their skin color goes they can focus on their attributes and see themselves in a positive light.

### Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory was created by Albert Bandura and was introduced through his Bobo doll test. In this test Bandura allows observers to see firsthand how children will imitate the behaviors of adults, thus learning what types of behaviors are acceptable and appropriate through direct observation of a seemingly responsible adult (Miller, 1966). Social Learning Theory speaks to ideas of internalized racism by examining the children who were subjected to the beliefs that their skin tone somehow made them subpar or less than their white counterpart (Hall & Carter, 2006).

Social Learning theory is applied to this study in regards to internalized racism as a learned attitude and not one that African-American women are born with. One study claims that this attitude is learned based on a sense of racial inferiority, much like Pyke's study that is born from ideas such as advising darker skinned children to stay out of the sun or coercing lighter skinned youth to find an equally fair skinned life partner (Speight, 2007).

One can even argue that Social Learning Theory can be applied to internalized racism when looking at the effects of slavery on the African American community. Because fairer skinned slaves were favored and darker skinned slaves were left with more rough and brutal roles, the slave community was divided. This division was a direct result of the learned behavior that is putting the fair skinned slaves on a pedestal. By putting them on this pedestal, masters taught their slaves that one skin tone was better than the other and the behavior of revering fairer skin would be passed down for generations (Berry & Duke, 2012).

#### Summary Statement

This work discussed the Effects of Internalized Racism on Quality of Life for African American women. It conceptually defined the terms internalized racism, colorism, oppression, and quality of life respectively. This work also synthesized previous literature available pertaining to the given topic. A theoretical framework surrounding the Afrocentric Perspective and Social Learning Theory was also provided from this work. The purpose of this chapter was to examine internalized racism, its effects on African American women's quality of life, and how those effects contribute to

or hurt the African American woman as a whole with respect to self-esteem and socioeconomic status.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter will be to describe methods and limitations for this study. The methods will be presented, followed by the limitations of the topic.

#### Methods of Study

A Qualitative Study was used to address the Effects of Internalized Racism on the Quality of Life of African American Women. The study utilized a systematic review to collect, analyze, and synthesize data.

A systematic review is a type of literature review that attempts to identify, evaluate, and synthesize research evidence from previous studies. It can be used to summarize large bodies of research and generate new insights for social work and social policy. In this study research was performed using the Robert W. Woodruff Library System at the Atlanta University Center to access databases such as Google Scholar™ and EBSCO Host. The researcher also accessed hard copy journal collections using the library catalog. There was an estimated total of 12 keyword searches used to find research article. These searches produced similar results depending on the search engine. The researcher started with the keyword search--“internalized racism African American”—and then expanded to more general and inclusive terms.

The keyword searches later used included: racism, black internalized racism, African American colorism, and oppression & internalized racism. The researcher also searched within related areas to seek out alternative or overlooked resources, information for the theoretical framework, the Afrocentric Perspective, references, and terms. Keyword searches in related areas included: colorism & minorities, African American feminists, and colorism & adolescents.

Information was gathered organized according to the headings in the literature—Historical Perspective, Background, Socioeconomic Status, Self-Esteem, the Afrocentric Perspective, and Social Learning Theory. The researcher used 23 articles, 7 books, and 1 website. These resources were found within the health, social work, social science, liberal arts, and psychology fields respectively.

### Limitations

Many limitations were discovered over the course of this research. Information concerning the African American community and internalized racism was scarce and thus research found had to be sorted through carefully. Research concerning African American women and internalized racism was even more difficult for the researcher to find considering the topic is more limited. Research that covered African Americans and socioeconomic status was the least difficult to come across because of the broad keyword search.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This conceptual paper was written to shed light on the effects of internalized racism on African American women. Although internalized racism can affect African American women's lives in more ways than one, this work focused on the effects as it relates to socioeconomic status and self-esteem. Using a systematic review, the researcher reviewed literature on the relationship between internalized racism of African American women and socioeconomic status, and the relationship between internalized racism of African American women and self-esteem.

#### Findings of Self-Esteem

Research findings show that there is a negative correlation between internalized racism and self-esteem. African American women suffering from feelings of internalized racism are generally more likely to have a lower self-esteem.

Major themes in research findings show that higher levels of internalized racism contribute to more psychological distress in addition to lowered self-esteem (Szymanski & Gupta, 2009). This means that a person accepting of constant negative stereotyping

and damaging ideals about their own ethnic group can potentially have a very distorted self-image. Additionally, research findings suggest that women experiencing racism and sexism in their everyday lives are at greater risk for psychological distress. This distress is greatly increased when the perceived sexist or racist events are combined with existing feelings of some form of internalized oppression, including internalized racism (Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). Negative circumstances resulting from feelings of internalized racism are likely to present themselves in the lives of African American women through their self-image and the way they react to others. Because these women have distorted self-image and have trouble accepting their own ethnic background, research has found that these women tend to have harsher opinions of women who look similar to them (Mathews, 2013). What is even more interesting is, according to research, these women can hold these ideas about women who often look the same as them while holding knowledge of their own bias or internalized racism.

Szymanski & Gupta note that African American women who are active members of a community may draw support as a racial minority while still feeling internalized oppression as a woman. This increases the likelihood that her mental health will be negatively affected (2009).

#### Findings of Socioeconomic Status

Research shows that internalized racism and socioeconomic status are negatively correlated as well. African American women who exhibit biases and believe negative stereotypes towards their ethnic group are less likely to measure up to a certain skill set because of thoughts of inferiority (Hughes et. al, 2015). A common theme in research is



seen with African American women who have fairer complexions. These women are oftentimes viewed as more beautiful in African American communities and receive more opportunity for simply being noticed more often (Bowman et. al, 2004).

Research finds that socioeconomic status is also affected by internalized racism through meritocracy. As explained before, meritocracy allows for African Americans and other minorities to believe that everyone is being judged by equal standards in the workplace. What is not explained is that these standards were not set with the minority in mind. So predispositions that minorities are subject to, combined with these seemingly impossible standards in the workplace make it difficult for African American women to feel as though they can truly succeed (Pyke, 2010). Skin complexion is also a factor in this meritocracy. Because African Americans are socially conditioned to favor fairer complexions, women of darker complexions who also have low socioeconomic status do not believe they deserve more than their status and that the fairer complexion deserves better (Maddox, 2002).

### Summary

Both self-esteem and socioeconomic status were shown to be negatively impacted by internalized racism of African American women. The more self-hate or internalized oppression is felt by women, the more likely they are to suffer from low self-esteem and psychological distress. This is true of socioeconomic status as well. Socioeconomic status is affected by internalized racism by way of feelings of worth and success. A woman's worth and feelings of accomplishment are greatly affected by the standards put in place for her to meet upon hire. If these standards are not set with the African American

woman in mind, she cannot be expected to succeed. When she follows suit and is unable to succeed, her socioeconomic status is then affected.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Using the Afrocentric Perspective and Social Learning Theory this study sought to explain if and how internalized racism affects socioeconomic status of African American women. Additionally, this study sought to explain the effect of internalized racism on self-esteem of African American women. The researcher hypothesized that internalized racism would have a significant effect on African American women's self-esteem, while being negatively correlated with the socioeconomic status of African American women. The researcher factored in the idea that levels of self-esteem and socioeconomic status affected by internalized racism might be altered depending on skin complexion.

The Afrocentric Perspective was supported through the use of African American women and their struggles as the topic of discussion. This study place African American women at the center of their own history, self-image, and social capital. In doing this, this study supported foundations and assumptions set forth by the Afrocentric Perspective. The Social Learning Theory was supported in this study through the use of research showing the lasting effects of internalized racism as a learned behavior in African American communities. This learned behavior's foundation in slavery has evolved with time and though it is less blatant in certain situations, has reared its head in the lives many African American women.

## Discussion

The literature review and findings of this study suggests that socioeconomic status and self-esteem of African American women are affected by internalized racism. This work explains how socioeconomic status and self-esteem are jointly affected by internalized racism through social capital. This means that the factors a woman builds upon to influence her self-esteem and self-worth are also factors in building her career and monetary status. When a woman feels secure in her body image, personality, and overall makeup she can confidently present herself to superiors and colleagues in the workplace. Because internalized racism negatively affects the way African American women view themselves, they do not often find themselves in the proper position to grasp advantages that may or may not be available to them. When the advantages are not available to them in the workplace, African American women suffering from internalized racism are not equip with the tools to advocate for themselves. They feel as though they do not have certain advantages because they are not deserving of them.

## Implications for Social Work

Internalized racism and its effects on the African American community is nowhere near a simple issue. This does not mean the solutions to this issue cannot be simple. Changes in arenas dealing with social justice (the way African Americans are judged), social work practice (the way African Americans are treated), and research (the way African Americans are portrayed) can be the initial steps to changing the direction of this negative mindset.

Social workers involved in social justice and policy can use their positions to lobby and fight for policies that benefit not only the minority, but the African American woman in the workplace. These policies would can start at the state level and make their way to national through continued advocating for the topic. This is not to say that African American women deserve more of an advantage than any other race or gender. This is calling attention to the fact that there needs to be an even playing field though. Because people are all held to the same standard in certain workplaces, women are often left behind. African American women, having to deal with both racial bias and gender bias, need policies in place in the workplace that allow for them to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded to their male and white counterparts.

Social workers in direct practice should attempt to become more familiar with internalized racism and the effects in can have on many of their clients. Information provided in this paper can guide practitioners in treating adult patients exhibiting feelings of internalized racism, as well as assist with prevention of these feelings in younger generations.

Future research should touch more on the effects of internalized racism on socioeconomic status. Current research depicts internalized racism's effect on socioeconomic status as something of a slippery slope. If research is to progress and contribute to a larger existing body, researchers should seek to answer questions of how severely socioeconomic status would be effected and to what degree skin complexion is a factor.

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