The Weight Wage Penalty: A Mechanism Approach to Discrimination

Seminar by Professor Tobias Wolbring

8 August 2018 (Wednesday)
10:30 - 12:00
Conference Room 422, 4/F, Sino Building
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, Hong Kong

Abstract
The wage weight penalty is a well-established finding in the literature, but not much is known about the mechanisms which bring this phenomenon about. This paper aims to provide answers to the question of why overweight and obese people earn less. Using the data of the German Socio-economic Panel we conduct three theory-driven litmus tests for mechanisms which explain the weight wage gap: human capital differences, discrimination due to asymmetric information, or taste-based discrimination. Due to conflicting predictions from the three theories interaction effects between weight and structural conditions serve as the key identification strategy. Results show that for men productivity-related variables (e.g. education, work experience, occupation, and physical health) almost completely explain the weight specific variance in wages. In contrast, for women neither performance nor a lack of information can solve the puzzle of weight-based differences in wages. We therefore conclude that – at least in Germany – overweight and obese women suffer from taste-based discrimination, while overweight and obese men earn less due to human capital differences.

Biography
Tobias Wolbring is professor of economic sociology at Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg. Current research interests comprise economic sociology, (higher) education, and causal inference. His work has been published in European Sociological Review, Rationality & Society, and Social Science Research.

Enquiries
3943 6271 / sociology@cuhk.edu.hk

Organiser
Department of Sociology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Registration
https://goo.gl/7TPxNT