華人家庭研究中心
Centre for Chinese Family Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
香港中文大學

香港中文大學社會學系
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Using Deepfakes to Uncover Hiring Biases: A Novel Experimental Approach

About the Seminar

Traditional research on hiring discrimination relies heavily on CV-based correspondence studies, offering limited insight into biases during interactive interview stages. To address this gap, this presentation introduces a novel experimental approach using AI-manipulated videos in multi-stage factorial survey experiments with hiring personnel. By swapping facial features in standardized application videos while holding speech, content, facial expressions, and gestures constant, this approach isolates the effects of visual attributes to uncover complex evaluative biases. The approach is illustrated based on two empirical studies in Germany. Study 1 (N = 493) analyzes the effects of physical attractiveness across gendered occupational contexts. Results show that while all attractive applicants receive higher competence ratings overall, men consistently benefit from a beauty premium regardless of context, whereas women benefit only in female-typed roles. Study 2 (N = 1,291) investigates the effects of ethnic appearance by swapping faces across German, Asian, and African candidates with identical, high-standard German credentials. While CV screening shows no initial invitation differences, introducing video presentations provides effects for minority candidates consistent with statistical discrimination theory—though individual evaluator prejudices remain largely persistent. Together, these studies demonstrate that deepfake video experiments provide a powerful, highly controlled framework for examining multi-stage hiring dynamics, complementing traditional audit approaches and opening rich avenues for experimental research on social stratification and beyond.

About the Speaker



Tobias Wolbring is a professor of economic sociology at FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg. His research is located at the intersection of sociology, economics, and psychology. He has published several textbooks and papers in high-ranking journals, such as *Social Forces, Socio-Economic Review, Sociology of Education*, and *Sociological Methods & Research*. He is currently an Honorary Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Hong Kong and has received several awards, including the Best Dissertation Award from the German Sociological Association and the Robert K. Merton Prize from the International Network of Analytical Sociologists.

18 November 2026
(Wednesday)

9:30am-11:00am
(Hong Kong Time)

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(face-to-face only)

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