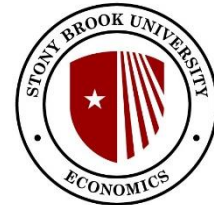


Department of Economics
2024-2025
Seminar Series



Monday, February 24, 2025
12:30 PM-1:50 PM
SBS, Room N603

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Education, Lifestyles, and Health Inequality

Abstract: Inequality in health outcomes has a strong socio-economic component. We argue that differences in lifestyles across education groups are key to understanding this fact. First, we use panel data on health behavior and health outcomes to estimate latent lifestyle types and their impact on health dynamics. We find that there is a large gradient in life expectancy across lifestyles (8.5 years at age 50) and that the higher frequency of health-protective lifestyles among the more educated individuals explains almost 1/2 of the education gradient in life expectancy. Next, to understand lifestyle formation, we build a life cycle model where education and lifestyles are jointly chosen early in life by individuals who are heterogeneous in the utility costs of adopting protective lifestyles and acquiring education. Importantly, these two early-life investments are complements, which endogenously generates selection of heterogeneous individuals into each choice. Quantitatively, we find that the more educated individuals choose healthier lifestyles partly because of their income advantage, partly because of the higher yield of their healthprotective behavior, and partly due to endogenous selection in terms of lower costs of adopting a healthier lifestyle. Finally, we find that the increase in the college wage premium over the last decades has widened the education gradient in lifestyles, resulting in one-year increase in the education gradient of life expectancy across cohorts born in the 1930s and 1970s. Of this increase, 45% is driven by the direct effect of wage changes, while 55% is due to changes in the composition of the shrinking set of high school dropouts.

All in-person seminars will be held in the Social and Behavioral Sciences Building, Room N603. For additional information, contact the seminar organizers: Profs. Chang Liu & Eva Carceles-Poveda. Visit our webpage for additional information: stonybrook.edu/economics.

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