

# **Socioeconomic differences in health in China**

Yao Lu and Donald J. Treiman

University of California, Los Angeles

We examine the SES gradient in health in China, a developing country with distinctive economic and social systems. We use longitudinal data to establish temporal order and include community fixed-effect to reduce bias due to unmeasured heterogeneity. We ask three questions: 1) Does the relationship occur for all SES indicators; 2) Does the relationship occur for all diseases; and 3) Is the relationship similar in urban and rural communities. We find that the SES gradient exhibits stark differences from the well established patterns in industrialized societies. Income, rather than education, turns out to be the most influential SES factor. The relationship occurs in different ways for various diseases: people with higher SES generally experience better health outcomes, with the exception of health problems related to unhealthy lifestyles such as reduced physical activity, unhealthy diet, and smoking. Finally, the association is more pronounced in rural China, where inequalities in health-related resources and SES are more pronounced.