Job Market Paper: “The Determinants of Quality Specialization”

Abstract: A growing literature suggests that high-income countries export high-quality goods. Two hypotheses may explain such specialization, with different implications for welfare, inequality, and trade policy. Fajgelbaum, Grossman, and Helpman (JPE 2011) formalize the Linder (1961) conjecture that home demand determines the pattern of specialization and therefore predict that high-income locations export high-quality products. The factor-proportions model also predicts that skill-abundant, high-income locations export skill-intensive, high-quality products (Schott, QJE 2004). Prior empirical evidence does not separate these explanations. I develop a model that nests both hypotheses and employ microdata on US manufacturing plants' shipments and factor inputs to quantify the two mechanisms' roles in quality specialization across US cities. Home-market demand explains at least as much of the relationship between income and quality than differences in factor usage.
Honors and Awards

2011 Vickrey Prize (Best third-year paper), Department of Economics
2011 Program for Economic Research Graduate Student Summer Fellowship
2008 – Faculty Fellow, Department of Economics, Columbia University
2008 – Humane Studies Fellow, Institute for Humane Studies

Invited Seminars and Conference Presentations

Scheduled: Urban Economics Association (UEA)
2013: Conference on Urban and Regional Economics (CURE), Empirical Investigations in International Trade, NBER Summer ITI, NBER Summer URB, NYU Stern Urbanization Project
2012: CURE, LSE Spatial Economic Research Centre, NBER Fall ITI, UEA

Refereeing


Research Experience

Spring 2011 Research assistant for Jonathan E. Vogel, Columbia University

Teaching Experience (TA)

Spring 2012, 2013 Advanced Microeconomics, S. Elmes
Fall 2012 Urban Economics, B. O’Flaherty
Fall 2010 Microeconomic Analysis I (PhD), P.A. Chiappori & P. Siconolfi,

References

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