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Did Trade Liberalization Help Women? The Case of Mexico in the 1990s

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12:00 PM - UC Spindletop Room 242

Abstract: Using Mexican household surveys which span the 1990s, we examine relative wages and employment of women in Mexico during the period of trade liberalization and increased foreign direct investment. The gender wage gap remained stale over the liberalization period while the relative supply of women increased, suggesting that relative demand for women increased. Between-industry shifts, consistent with trade-based explanation, account for up to 40 percent of the growth in women's wage bill share between 1990 and 2000. Comparing across industries but excluding agriculture, we find that growth in women's predicted wage bill share is positively related to tariff cuts and increased trade flows. Trade variables, however, cannot explain the large decline in agricultural employment. Using industry-level FDI growth over the period 1994-1999 we also find some evidence that FDI helps less educated women.

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