Mixed Methods or Just Mixed Up?

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Outline

A reframing of the main point

Qualitative / institutional data as an input into compelling causal studies

Alternatives to the use of qualitative / institutional data

Probing the potential of the proposed protocol
Reframing the talk (and the conference?)

Point is really the potential role of qualitative and institutional data in making causal studies more compelling

Ex: our day at MDRC during the JTPA Study
Ex: our day at the SDA during the JTPA Study

Qualitative and institutional data play other roles too!

Ex: hypothesis generation (e.g. mechanisms, outcomes)
Ex: interpretation of estimates (whence the zero impact)
Roles qualitative and institutional data can play

1) Selection of the appropriate identification strategy

2) Justifying a chosen identification strategy
Examples of the role of qualitative / institutional information

Conditional independence
   Papers in the ALMP evaluation literature

Bias stability / common trends
   Various papers by Martha Bailey

Instrumental variables
   Judges and caseworkers
Alternatives to qualitative and institutional data

1) Announcements
   Identification strategies without justification

2) “Machine learning”
   The benevolent identification deity
Protocols and research automation

An aside on my history with protocols

An alternative view of the WWC / NWC

Is selection into programs always stronger than selection into services conditional on program enrollment?

The support condition on service receipt and the proposed specification test

More general alternatives:
  Ex: Altonji, Elder and Taber (2005)
  Ex: Ichino, Mealli and Nannicini (2008)