

# 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)