

This paper starts from an interesting idea: check if the profession in a given field is influenced by a highly controversial study. This is admirable and certainly Doucouliagos and Stanley (2009, henceforth DS09) paper is a good candidate for such an inquiry. Given the ever-increasing policy relevance of minimum wages, testing for whether the quality of the academic debate improves over time is a commendable effort on the side of Giotis and Chletsos.

There are some points I would like to raise, though. My first and the most important concern relates to the way Giotis and Chlestos identify the – presumably – causal effect of DS09. Namely, they only select papers published 2010-2014. This choice is highly questionable. For one thing, the study of DS09 – if I am not mistaken – was circulated before as a conference talk and a discussion paper. For another, many of the papers published in 2010 or even 2011 were submitted and accepted (or sent for revision) prior to the conception of DS09, let alone its publishing. What I mean to say is that some of the authors of papers published even in 2008 or 2009 could have met with the results of DS09, whereas some of the authors of papers published in 2010 or even 2011 had had no chance to account for the results of DS09 in their study, because their paper was already in the publication process. In my judgment, the adequate way to account for the effect of DS09 would be to develop a sample with all estimates – pre and post DS09 – and test formally for a structural break in the model in the whereabouts of 2009. Given how eagerly the meta-analysts share their data, this should not constitute a problem. Testing for the effect of DS09 by the means of structural breaks would have an additional advantage of possibility to show the speed of dissemination as well as scope for it.

This brings me to my second big concern, which is why DS09 should have an effect on the estimates. Let us assume for the sake of argument that we do not know the true effect of minimum wages on employment and it can go either way depending on a variety of circumstances. Individual papers usually exploit these circumstances to improve the quality of identification, etc, but the true nature of the effect remains unknown. Then, DS09 should only have an effect on the estimates that would otherwise have used – for the lack of better word – “wrong” methodology. In other words, there is no way DS09 can affect the underlying relationship between minimum wage and employment – it may only affect the treatment of it by the profession. Consequently, Giotis and Chlestos should focus on whether *improved* treatment leads to changes in the estimates of the effect sizes, not the change per se. For one thing, the underlying nature of the link between minimum wage and employment may change if the circumstances do as well. For another, the composition of circumstances analysed and thus present in the literature could have changed, without the change in the underlying nature of the original link. While these comments of mine are conceptual rather than precise, they can be translated to operationalizable components of the study. First, Giotis and Chlestos could (and should!) account for whether authors of their studies relate to DS09 when explaining the choice of method or interpreting the results (or at all, as a matter of fact). Second, in addition to listing all the possible methods in the literature, Giotis and Chlestos should provide some measure for the *quality of treatment* in their papers. These can be fairly objective (such as IF of the journal which published the study) or subjective (if the study shows improved methodology, relative to the prescriptions of DS09). On this note, the point of employing general-to-specific remains unclear to me. The coefficients are significant or not. If not – dropping them from the estimation changes (virtually) nothing for the estimates of other coefficients. Not reporting the dropped coefficients disables any interpretation/intuition on the side of the readers. If Giotis and Chlestos do it because of imperfect collinearity, they should state so and explain if there are important complementarities between their moderator variables. This too would be an important contribution to analysing this literature.