The Influence of Personality on Panel Attrition

John Körtner\textsuperscript{a} & David Richter\textsuperscript{b}

\textsuperscript{a} University of Konstanz, Germany, john.koertner@uni-konstanz.de

\textsuperscript{b} German Institute for Economic Research, Berlin, Germany, drichter@diw.de

Current research on changes in people’s personality over age or the impact of certain life events on personality development is often using data from longitudinal panel studies. Therefore it is important to know if some personality traits are related to non-response and panel attrition. A relationship between personality traits and panel dropout could affect the selection of the sample and limit the quality and accuracy of the data.

This paper analyzes the effects of personality on panel drop-out by using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) that allows investigating the personality of more than 20,000 adults since 2005. Using survival analyses, accomplished with cox proportional hazards regressions, we analyzed the effects of personality on panel drop-out separately for an “old” subsample (Sample A/B, started in 1984), a rather “young” subsample (Sample F, started in 2000), and a “fresh” subsample (Sample I, started in 2009) of the SOEP. We found that openness slightly decreases the probability of a panel drop-out in the “fresh” and the “young” subsamples. For the “old” subsample only, we found additional effects for agreeableness and neuroticism on panel drop-out. Agreeableness slightly decreases the probability of a panel drop-out whereas neuroticism slightly increases this probability. We control for age, gender, education, migration background, and number of inhabitants in the region of the respondents.

In conclusion, effects of personality traits on panel attrition are either non-significant or comparably small. Therefore, it can safely be assumed that current research on personality and personality development using longitudinal data is not biased with regard to selective panel attrition.