Basics: Psychological Research and the SOEP

Overlapping Interests of Social Sciences with Psychological Research on …

- well-being and life satisfaction
- life events (e.g., effects of marriage, divorce, unemployment)
- social relations and social support
- predictors of longevity/mortality
- cognitive resources (Symbol-Digit and Vocabulary tests in SOEP)
- job satisfaction & job rotation
- personality development (Big5 in SOEP)

→ More and more psychological variables added to the SOEP

Combining Laboratory Experiments and Household Panels

Advantages of laboratory studies
- Extensive information on (multidimensional) psychological constructs that need to be measured with multiple items or multiple cognitive tasks
- Process analyses (e.g., daily variability, learning processes) based on several measurement occasions in micro-longitudinal studies

Advantages of household panel studies
- Longitudinal information with small drop-out rates
- Representative samples
- Details about the environment (Social, economical, vocational, and educational background information)

Getting the best of both worlds by integrating laboratory samples in panel studies
- Combination of complementary data
- Detailed analyses of sample selectivity
- Longitudinal follow-ups and sample maintenance
- Investigating long-term effects of participation in laboratory training studies

An Example: The COGITO Study

Samples and Design
Based on a “convenience sample,” 101 younger (20-31 years) and 103 older (65-80 years) adults participated in 100 daily sessions, in which they worked on a comprehensive cognitive test battery and several self-report measures.

In addition, all participants completed comprehensive pretests and posttests with baseline measures of cognitive abilities and transfer tasks for the practiced abilities. Furthermore, several functional and structural brain measures (fMRI, MRI, DTI, EEG) were collected for sub-samples of younger and older participants at pre- and posttest. A control group, consisting of 44 younger (21-29 years) and 40 older (65-81 years) adults, completed pretests and post-tests without any daily sessions in between. Currently, a two-year follow-up is underway, which includes the medical examination and DNA sampling of the BASE II Study (see Poster on BASE II).

Future Perspectives
Making COGITO a permanent SOEP sample (as a “Related Study” or part of an “Innovation Sample”) will in the long run provide longitudinal data of a highly trained population. Research questions about the influence of a laboratory training on, for example, reactions to major life events can be addressed.

Tracking the residence of participants through the SOEP panel maintenance will facilitate possible additional COGITO follow-ups.