

German Institute for Economic Research – DIW Berlin

Designing and conducting mixed- methods research projects: Initial experiences with the SOEP data

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Qualitative interviewing of panel respondents

- Different sources of data are being used more and more in large-scale surveys: biomarkers, institutional data (on school, firms, neighborhoods...)
- Up to now, quantitative longitudinal data have seldom been linked to qualitative data in the framework of mixed-methods research
- Qualitative data can and should:
“lift the veil on social micro-processes (...) to develop adequate sociological explanations for phenomena on the aggregate statistical level” (Kelle, 2005: 103, 112)
- Panel data are particularly well suited to the analysis of, e.g., life course trajectories and long-term social processes
 - Standardized annual survey of biographical information
 - Can be considered a narrative or “quantitative (auto)biography” (Elliott 2008)

- Advantages
 - Of qualitative sampling
 - Representative data
 - Sampling on the dependent or/and independent variables
 - Past events can be taken into account: the current individual situation is therefore not separated from the previous life course
 - The instruments for the quantitative study can be improved or developed in light of qualitative events
- Potential challenges
 - Placing too great a burden on participants?
 - Endangering panel stability?
 - Anonymization and distribution data that were collected in the framework of mixed-methods projects

Three research projects based on the SOEP

Non-Standardized Individual Survey – Interviews with Employees in a Recall Experience (DFG)

Prof. Dr. Stefan Liebig, University of Bielefeld

Collaborative Research Center 882 “From Heterogeneities to Inequalities” Subproject B4
“Employers and Inequality: Synchronous and Diachronous Inequality Effects of Temporary Layoffs (Recalls)”

- First phase: quantitative secondary analysis with the SOEP and comparison with IAB individual data
- Extension of hypotheses to causes and mechanisms underlying recalls

Design:

20 interviews with SOEP respondents laid off and re-employed by the same employers

Sampling according to contrast groups (educational level, household context, gender)

Educational Biographies in the Context of Long-Term Social and Family Dynamics (BMBF)

Prof. Dr. Olaf Groh-Samberg, BIGSSS Bremen, Prof. Dr. Henning Lohmann, University of Osnabrück

- Family determinants of educational decisions and their effects on children's educational biographies
 - Under what conditions are children able to “break out” of unfavorable trajectories and dynamics?
 - To what extent do upward social mobility or crises in families positively or negatively affect children's educational biographies?

Design:

30 interviews with SOEP respondents (since the age of 10 and for a period of at least 15 years), multi-generational interviews

Sampling according to the social trajectory of parents and children

Qualitative Survey of Long-Term SOEP Respondents with a Turkish Background (DFG)

Dr. Ingrid Tucci, SOEP/DIW Berlin, Prof. Dr. Olaf Groh-Samberg, BIGSSS Bremen

- To what extent can different life course patterns be traced back to different biographical decisions and strategies? Influence of migration history.
- What factors affect upward social mobility among the children of Turkish immigrants?
- To what extent can biographical turning points be identified in prospectively surveyed quantitative panel data?

Design:

30 interviews with long-term SOEP respondents

Sampling according to a typology of educational and labor market entrance trajectories

Qualitative Survey of Long-Term SOEP Respondents with a Turkish Background (DFG)

A possibility for integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative data

		Portrait based on qualitative data	
		Aspect occurs	Aspect does not occur
Portrait based on quantitative data	Aspect occurs	Correspondence / Complementarity / Contradiction	Longitudinal characteristics without subjective relevance : unconscious structures - artifacts
	Aspect does not occur	Missing or inappropriate indicators	---

Problem: Can we link standardized and qualitative information about a respondent without compromising his or her anonymity?

Data collection procedure

Sampling strategy and documentation

- Documentation and explanation of the sampling strategy by the team of researchers
- File submitted to generate the dataset
 - Distinguishing characteristics of the population
 - Ensuring sufficiently large contrast groups from which respondents to be interviewed will be randomly selected
- Important information for the replication of the results or for the secondary use of the data

Documents in preparation the field

- Letter informing the respondents about the objectives of the research and presenting the research team
- Declaration of consent (signed) allowing the respondent's address and contact information to be transferred to the research team
- Fact sheet on data protection
 - Signed on the day of the interview by interviewer and interviewee(s)
 - Anonymization of the interview by the end of the project
 - Data storage site (FDZ-SOEP and research institution)
 - Possibility to transfer the anonymized data to third parties for research use
 - Contract cancellation right: respondent can demand to have the individual data cancelled

Open questions

SOEP: research infrastructure with the task of providing data to users

- Secondary analysis
 - Changes in research interest
 - Possible outcome: respondents dropping out of the (panel) survey?
 - Respondent consent: Can the anonymized data be used again by other researchers for their analyses?
- How can the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents be ensured in mixed-methods projects?
 - Documentation on the sampling procedure
 - Vast amount of information on respondents from both sources of data
 - Recommendations needed on the anonymization of the qualitative material

Thank you for your attention.



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