Pilot study protocol

ESF: **DXH_MET2** Metodologie 2

Plan for this semester: do a small pilot study for one of your RQ

4 meetings:

- Take stock, see what's missing; measures, materials, instructions

- Finalize procedure/protocol from recruitment to debriefing, decide on participants, check ethics and seek approval

- (in the meantime) …. brush up data-analysis skills

- Reflect on pilot experience, refine data-analysis plan and power analysis

Focus of DHX_MET2

- Projects with people as the primary objects or sources of data

Purpose for a Pilot study

- test feasibility of plan
  - methods work
  - participants go through the whole procedure without issues
  - data look as expected
  - analysis feasibility
- do people (participants) function as I imagine them?
- identify weak spots - adjust the plan

Lets try out the procedure

Form groups of 3 people with 3 roles
- a researcher
- a participant
- an observer

Initially do not discuss the topic of your study with the participant.

Roles may rotate – we should be able to do one round before lunch and one after

Lets try out the procedure

- Find a suitable space
- Researcher administeres the whole procedure incl. brief informed consent and debriefing
  - Participant is just himself/herself
  - Observer tries to be invisible and looks for possible misunderstandings
- Reflection
  - Participant reflects experience – thoughts, emotions, motivation & issues
  - Observer gives feedback, ask questions for clarification, revise materials…
  - Together review materials, procedure, ethics

- Suggestions for modification

Possible sources of problems in asking questions. Respondents….

- May not understand, may misunderstand

- May not know the answer or how to get to answer

- May not be motivated to invest energy in getting the best (truest) possible answer

- May have trouble fitting their answer to the response scale you offer

- May not want to tell you the (known) answer   (even though they agreed to participate)
  - May not even want to know the answer

- May have their own agenda with respect to your study

- May just wanna have fun

Possible sources of problems in observing behavior (e.g. games)

- Opportunities for observation error – vague definitions of categories, high cognitive demands on observer

- Missing important situational factors, determinants
  - Fundamental attribution error

- Missing unobservable personal variables

- Not optimal scale of behavior – too micro, too macro

- …. unless the observed behavior does not represent something else

Homework for the 4th meeting (May, 17)

- Do a small scale pilot study on volunteers – team up for the task
- Prepare a short presentation (10 min) of the pilot and what came out of it.

Checklist for the pilot study

- RQ/H are clear in my mind
- Measures, materials
  - measures valid, reliable; materials representative
  - clear and standard instructions
  - assumed/required abilities of my participants
- Design, procedure
  - clear, standard sequence of acitivities
  - standard instructions, timing („rapport maintenance")
  - monitoring the procedure
- Recruitment of participants
  - standard, clear advertisement/info (good to cross-check against consent form)
- Practical issues
  - Settings – lab, „quiet room", online, field
  - Assistants, conferedates, other presonell

- Ready for ethical approval – make as much use of IRB as they let you
  - functional, „informing" consent
  - considering and recognizing non-standard participants
  - debriefing as an ethical and validity-enhancing procedure, not only if deception is used, may uncover previously
- Data processing plan

Final task

- As a final outcome of the course write a short report (5-10 pages)
  - Very brief overview of the RQ an H
  - Method
  - Data description focusing on possible issues
  - Critical evaluation with suggestions for modification.
- „Econometrists" will write an essay on where they see the difficulties and advantages of research with people as the primary source of data.
- Dedline? End of May?