

PROPOSAL: ON-LINE BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

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On-line studies are an increasingly important methodology in behavioral research. They provide an extremely efficient means of collecting data for some kinds of research questions, and offer the *potential* of an experimental population that is more representative than the typical psychological lab. However, reaching this potential requires the analysis and active management of the on-line participants, which is the purpose of this project.

Researchers at Yale use a site called eLab (elab.som.yale.edu) to run behavioral experiments. It has a registered population of about 15,000 (and growing). A study posted on eLab can usually expect to receive about 200 participants per day at a cost to us of about 25 cents per participant. However, we know relatively little about the participants in a given study, and nothing about their activity across studies. We are currently in the process of launching a broad demographic pre-screen for that population. The pre-screen will provide the opportunity to better understand this population, and to compare them to other on-line populations.

The objective of the project is to evaluate the eLab participant pool and make recommendations for improving research that draws on it. The research assistant's evaluation will include analyzing demographic characteristics and scores from major psychological tests. It will also include analyzing participant behavior over time, especially their frequency of participation and any indicators of quality and attention. An important question is how typical the eLab community is, and how representative it is of the population as a whole. To assess this, the research assistant will also compare this population to other on-line participant pools, from peer schools and from commercial sources, such as amazon.com. Recommendations will include methods for improving the representativeness of eLab studies, as well how to better manage the participant pool. Finally, depending on the research assistant's interests, the investigation could include experiments designed to assess participant preferences or behavior (e.g., what are the optimal incentives to use with our on-line subjects?).

The research assistant will interact with multiple SOM faculty who conduct on-line research. The project will be especially useful for those students interested in behavioral research. Experience with Excel is required. Experience with experimental research would be helpful. Experience with Stata or SPSS is a plus.