Socially desirable responding (SDR) is the tendency to give positive self-descriptions; in specific contexts, people generally know which personality dimensions are more suitable. The main goal of this study (Meier, Dompnier, Rudmann, Smeding & Butera, in preparation) was to overpass the massive effect of desirable dimensions in spoiling the validity of self-reported personality measurements.

### Theoretical background

#### Personality & Big Five

People know that **Conscientiousness** is a desirable personality dimension in hiring contexts.

In a **socially desirable way** (SDR), conscientiousness could impact the validity of self-reported personality measures:

People say that they are conscientious, when in reality they are not.

#### Socially Desirable Responding

People know which personality dimensions are important in a specific context, but how do they rank the importance of those dimensions?

When having a **small budget**, people tend to attribute a bigger part of this budget to assure that they have enough amounts of **necessities**.

When having a **large budget**, people tend to attribute the same amount for necessities, but have a larger remaining part to afford **luxuries**.

#### Necessities & Luxuries

People know which personality dimensions are important in a specific context, but how do they rank the importance of those dimensions?

- **Necessities**: friends in a bar
- **Luxuries**: friends in a formal bar

#### Contexts & Audiences

**Duty** Situations: Spouse

**Luxuries** Situations: Bar - restaurant

**Necessities** Situations: Friends in a bar

### Method

- **Dependent Variable**
  - **Necessities**: mostly bought in low budgets (36CHF)
  - **Luxuries**: mostly bought in the last part of the budget, i.e. incremental budget = large budget (108CHF) – medium budget (72CHF)

#### Budgeting Task

(Li et al., 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Condition</th>
<th>Necessities</th>
<th>Luxuries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duty Condition</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociality Condition</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Results

#### Conscientiousness

- **Duty Condition**: Answering in order to be appreciated by a professor in the University
- **Sociality Condition**: Answering in order to be appreciated by friends in a bar

**Conscientiousness** was seen as a necessity in the Duty Condition, but neither as a necessity nor as a luxury in the Sociality Condition.

F(1, 124) = 30.8, p < .001, η² = .20

#### Extraversion

- **Duty Condition**: Answering in order to be appreciated by a professor in the University
- **Sociality Condition**: Answering in order to be appreciated by friends in a bar

**Extraversion** was seen neither as a necessity, nor as a luxury in the Duty Condition, but was seen as a necessity in the Sociality Condition.

F(1, 124) = 8.78, p = .004, η² = .066

#### Agreeableness

- **Duty Condition**: Answering in order to be appreciated by a professor in the University
- **Sociality Condition**: Answering in order to be appreciated by friends in a bar

**Agreeableness** was seen as a luxury in the Duty Condition, but as a necessity in the Sociality Condition.

F(1, 124) = 21.1, p < .001, η² = .15

### Discussion

People are generally able to spot which personality dimensions are necessary (i.e. desirable) in particular situations with specific audiences.

Self-reported personality measures possibly do not reflect real intrinsic personality traits.

### References