

Work and Home Personality: differentiation or integration?

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Introduction

People behave differently when fulfilling different roles at work and home [1], with work personality more Conscientious and less Extraverted than various home roles. However, results for other traits have been somewhat inconsistent [2] [3]. This inconsistency is probably due to the methods used in previous research, which are unduly influenced by role stereotypes or social desirability (e.g. [4], [5]). Participants may actively exaggerate or attenuate differences in roles depending on their wish to appear consistent or flexible.

→ Can the differences between work and home personalities reported in the literature be replicated using more innovative methodologies?



Consistency between different contextual personalities is associated with higher performance [6], greater satisfaction [7] and better psychological and physical well-being [3]. In addition, an individual's sense of authenticity within each role is related to both well-being and satisfaction. There is little research, however, on the interaction between authenticity and role personality differentiation. This study explores the idea that authenticity could provide a means for reducing the negative impact of the "necessary evil" of maintaining differing role personalities.

→ Are individual differences in differentiation of role personalities related to authenticity?

→ To what extent is differentiation between role personalities a source of distress and is this affected by feelings of authenticity?

Method

191 full time employees completed an online questionnaire contextualised for either work or home, while in the appropriate context. Two weeks later, they completed the same series for the second context. The questionnaire consisted of the following scales: **Personality**: measured using the IPIP 50-item Big Five personality inventory [8]. In addition to work personality and home personality scores, **differentiation** scores were calculated using the absolute difference between the trait scores for each role. **Negative well-being** used the 4 item Perceived Stress Scale [9]. **Positive well-being** used two questions [3]: satisfaction with role and preference for role. **Authenticity**: 5 item scale [3] gave an authenticity score for each role and an overall **self-integration** score



Differences between work and home personalities



Across the whole group, only Conscientiousness was higher at work than home ($t_{190}=9.39, p<0.001$).



Individuals however, showed significant differences between their work and home personalities on all five traits.

Differentiation scores were calculated for each trait using the absolute value of the difference between work and home scores. Using a one-sample t-test, the differentiation score for each trait was tested against a null hypothesis of zero difference and revealed highly significant differences:

	Mean	SD	T value (df = 190)
Extraversion	.41	.35	16.18*
Agreeableness	.32	.27	15.90*
Conscientiousness	.53	.45	16.26*
Emotional Stability	.51	.48	14.79*
Openness	.30	.28	14.41*

* = $p<0.001$

Personality Differentiation and Authenticity

Self-integration (a measure of authenticity across both roles) was mostly unrelated to how similar or different participants' role personalities were. The feeling of being true to oneself is only minimally related to personality differentiation.



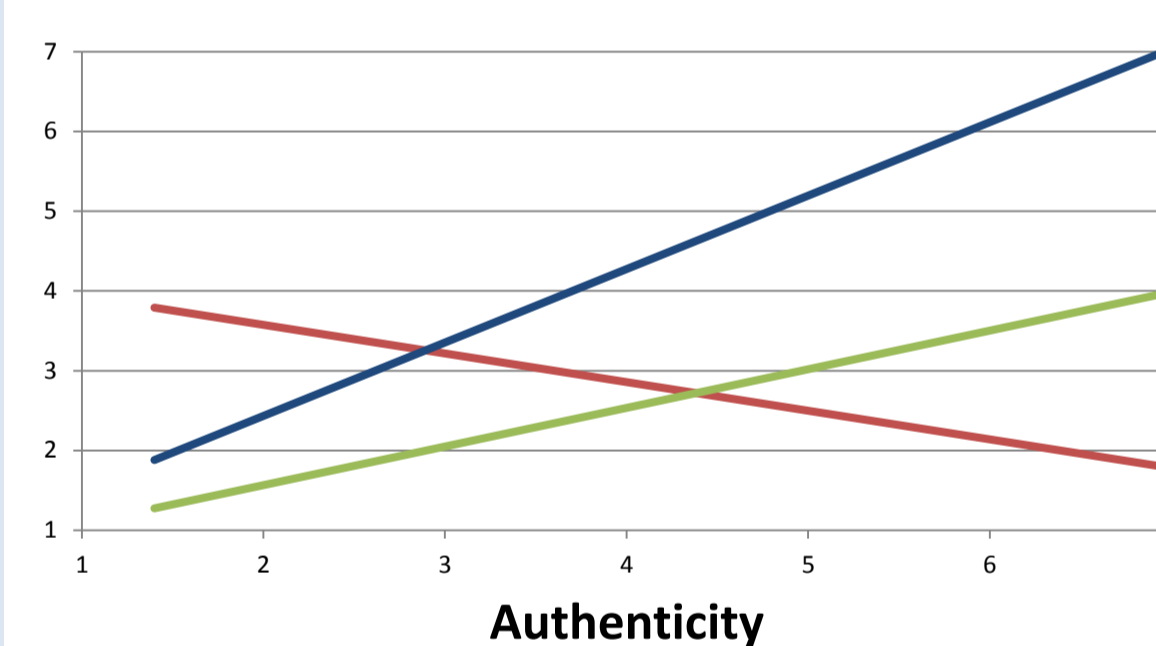
Pearson correlations between self-integration and personality differentiation scores were non-significant except for Emotional Stability ($r=-.16, p<.05$): those who had less differentiation on this trait between work and home also reported feeling more self-integrated.

Differentiation, Authenticity and Well-being

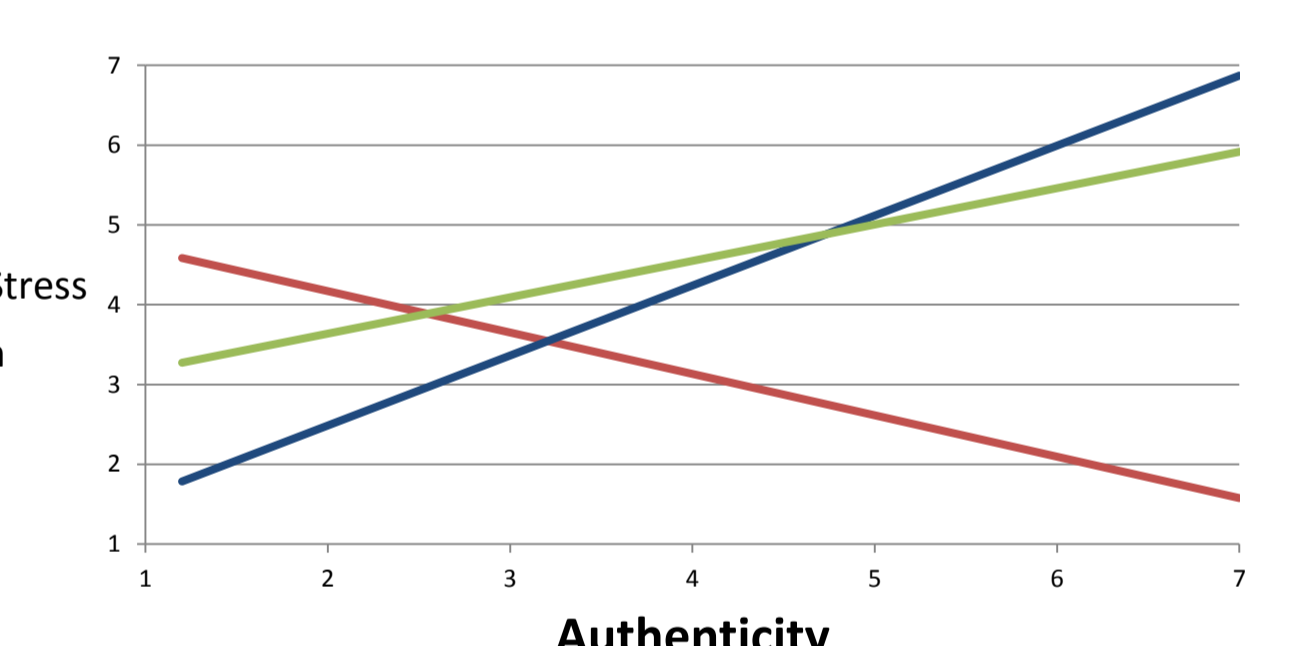


Those who felt more authentic in each role had higher well-being scores (less stressed, more satisfied with the role and a higher preference for the role) [Work role correlations: $r=-.53, .66$ and $.44$ respectively, $p<0.01$. Home role correlations: ($r=-.73, .64$ and $.38$ respectively, $p<0.01$)

Authenticity and Well-being correlations (Work Role)



Authenticity and Well-being correlations (Home Role)



Regression analyses showed that **self-integration is a major contributor to well-being**, predicting 41% of variance in stress, 48% of variance in satisfaction and 15% of variance in role preference. In contrast, **personality differentiation had almost no effect on well-being**.

Regression analyses: predicting overall well-being from self-integration and personality differentiation	Stress	Satisfaction	Preference
Model 1			
Self-integration	-.64***	.69***	-.39***
R ²	.41***	.48***	.15***
F	131.21***	174.14***	33.12***
Model 2			
Self-integration		.694***	
Differentiated		.121*	
Conscientiousness		.02*	
ΔR ²		.02*	
F		91.82***	

* indicates $p<0.05$, *** indicates $p<0.001$

Role differentiation scores and self-integration were entered into a regression equation, using the stepwise entry method, to predict cross-role well-being (defined as individuals' mean stress, satisfaction and preference scores).

What is important for employee well-being is that people feel they are being true to themselves, no matter how differently they might behave in the two roles.

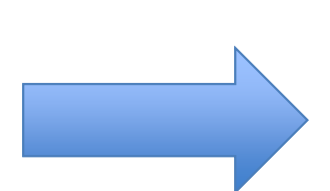
Summary and Implications



Previous research on contextual personalities has relied on methods that could be confounded by social desirability or role stereotypes. Using more robust methods, this study supports the finding that, at a group level, people are more conscientious at work than home. While group differences are minimal, at an individual level, **employees adapt their personality significantly to suit their own particular work or home context**.

Personality differentiation has previously been associated with lower well-being but this work demonstrates that a key contributing factor is in fact authenticity. **Employees who feel they are being authentic**, regardless of the extent of their role personality differentiation, **are less stressed and more satisfied with their roles**.

Inauthenticity in role personality has a large negative impact on well-being, yet employees also report a clear differentiation between their work and home personalities. How then can organisations encourage professional behaviour at work while still safeguarding employee well-being?



Raise awareness that 'authenticity' is perfectly compatible with differentiation of role personalities. Rather than employees feeling they have to behave consistently at home and work, they can be encouraged to find ways to still 'be themselves' even when they behave differently.

Further qualitative research is currently underway to explore the impact of in/authenticity on employees' experience of work in more depth.

