

# The Influence of Work Personality on Job Satisfaction: Incremental Validity and Mediation Effects

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**ABSTRACT** Drawing from recent developments regarding the contextual nature of personality (e.g., D. Wood & B. W. Roberts, 2006), we conducted 2 studies (1 cross-sectional and 1 longitudinal over 1 year) to examine the validity of work personality in predicting job satisfaction and its mediation of the effect of global personality on job satisfaction. Study 1 showed that (a) individuals vary systematically in their personality between roles—they were significantly more conscientious and open to experience and less extraverted at work compared to at home; (b) work personality was a better predictor of job satisfaction than both global personality and home personality; and (c) work personality demonstrated incremental validity above and beyond the other two personality measures. Study 2 further showed that each of the work personality dimensions fully mediated the association between its corresponding global personality trait and job satisfaction. Evidence for the discriminant validity of the findings is also presented.

Job satisfaction—defined as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (E. A. Locke, 1976, p. 1300)—is a pivotal construct in organizational behavior theory and practice and, as such, has garnered considerable interest in both its situational and dispositional antecedents. Despite an initial, heated debate (e.g., Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989), the dispositional source of job satisfaction is now generally accepted (e.g., Staw &

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Cohen-Charash, 2005). However, two related, critical questions remain unanswered: (a) Can the predictive validity of personality be improved and (b) what is the underlying psychological process accounting for this intriguing link between personality and role satisfaction? Drawing from the emerging literature on contextual personality (e.g., Fleeson, 2001; Heller, Komar, & Lee, 2007; Heller, Watson, Komar, Min, & Perunovic, 2007; Schmit, Ryan, Stierwalt, & Powell, 1995; Wood & Roberts, 2006)—defined as one's typical way of thinking, feeling, and behaving in a particular context—we will argue for the theoretical and practical utility of a more contextualized work-role-based measure of personality. In two studies, one cross-sectional and one longitudinal, we will examine whether work personality (a) is a better predictor of job satisfaction than both global and other-role (i.e., home) personality, (b) provides incremental validity in predicting job satisfaction above and beyond existing global measures, and (c) mediates the effect of global personality on job satisfaction.

### The Dispositional Source of Job Satisfaction

Much progress has been made in the last 20 years in our understanding of the personality factors associated with job satisfaction (Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005). Important links have been found, among other trait taxonomies, for positive and negative affectivity and core self-evaluations as well as the Big Five model (Heller, Judge, & Watson, 2002). Indeed, a recent meta-analysis has documented the role of four of the Big Five traits in job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002), yielding the following estimated true-score correlations:  $-.29$  for Neuroticism,  $.25$  for Extraversion,  $.26$  for Conscientiousness, and  $.17$  for Agreeableness; taken together as a set, the Big Five traits had a multiple correlation of  $.41$  with job satisfaction. Although substantial in magnitude, the question remains whether these validities can be further enhanced. We propose below that the global nature of traditional personality measures may effectively set an upper limit on their validity, and, that consequently, contextualizing these Big Five personality traits (i.e., assessing work personality) may be an especially attractive option for increasing the validity of personality measures.

Whereas a consensus is emerging regarding the role of dispositional factors in job satisfaction, researchers have only begun to explore the psychological constructs and processes that might underlie

these relations (see Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005). A few mediators such as job complexity (Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000), mood at work (Weiss, Nicholas, & Daus, 1999), goal concordance (Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005), and frequency of directional social comparisons (Brown, Ferris, Heller, & Keeping, 2007) have been proposed. In this paper, drawing from the emerging literature on contextual personality (e.g., Schmit et al., 1995; Wood & Roberts, 2006), we propose a novel mediator—work personality—of the effects of global personality on job satisfaction. In what follows we will discuss the contextual nature of personality, introduce the concept of work personality, and examine both work personality's main effect on job satisfaction and mediation of the effect of global personality on job satisfaction.

### Contextual Personality

Issues of consistency and change in the way individuals define themselves have long been of interest to social and personality psychologists, as well as sociologists. Dating back to eminent scholars such as James, Mead, and Cooley, it has been argued that the self-concept is organized into multiple components that are based largely on patterns of social interaction. For instance, James (1890/1950) noted that there are “as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him” (p. 294).

These powerful ideas have resurfaced in modern social psychological views of the self that include two related components: (a) an elaborate, multifaceted cognitive system, and (b) a “working self-concept” (e.g., Markus & Kunda, 1986). First, due to its complexity, self-knowledge is believed to be organized into multiple selves that are focused around specific contexts of experience (Linville & Carlston, 1994). Sociological theorizing (e.g., identity theory; Stryker, 1986) identifies roles—defined as positions that are associated with characteristic expectations, goals, traits, and behaviors—as important situational sources of variation in self-concept, most notably those that have been internalized as part of a self-concept (i.e., role identity).

Second, at a given moment in time, only a subset of these role-identity selves that is relevant to the immediate environment will be activated in cognition. For instance, writing a manuscript may render the author's “researcher” self-concept accessible. Activated

self-concepts, in turn, are likely to influence one's current behavior, mood, self-perceptions, attitudes, and experiences (Linville & Carlston, 1994). For instance, whereas accessing a "myself-as-mother" representation may evoke warm and caring self-conceptions, behaviors, and feelings, accessing a "myself-as-CEO" self representation may evoke competitive, achievement-oriented attributes.

Consistent with these ideas Mischel and Shoda (1998)—in their person by situation interaction approach to personality—have argued for a Cognitive Affective Personality System (CAPS) that generates temporal stability within particular situations and cross-situational inconsistency. That is, because different situations can activate different cognitive-affective mental representations and different associated meanings, people can act quite differently in different situations, but, at the same time, act fairly consistently in similar situations. In other words, a person can be very aggressive in one role (e.g., at work) and very passive in a different one (e.g., at home).

### Role Personality

Empirical support for personality differences between roles can be found in a few studies conducted by Roberts and Donahue and their colleagues (Donahue & Harary, 1998; Wood & Roberts, 2006) and by Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, and Ilardi (1997). Both groups of researchers asked participants to rate themselves on personality-descriptive attributes in multiple social roles (e.g., son, friend, romantic partner). Using this method, they established mean-level differences in role personality defined as increases or decreases in the average levels of participants' self-conceptions across different social roles. In one study, for instance, undergraduate students reported being most neurotic and least extraverted in a student role and most extraverted and least neurotic in a friend role (Sheldon et al., 1997).

It should be noted, however, that in addition to providing evidence for change in self-concept, these studies also provided clear evidence for consistency in role-based personality. Empirical evidence supports the existence of rank order consistency in personality across contexts, defined as the extent to which individuals maintain their relative position or standing within the group on a personality dimension across different social roles such as work versus home. Specifically, moderate to strong correlations were obtained between pairs of role based-personalities (inter-role  $r_s = .58-.71$ ; Donahue &

Harary, 1998). Conceptually, this consistency may be accounted for by a person's general or global personality (Wood & Roberts, 2006). That is, because a person's role-based personality substantially reflects global personality characteristics, he or she is consistent across roles. Indeed, supporting this notion, moderate to strong correlations have been found between global personality traits and their matching role dimensions (e.g.,  $r_s = .64-.72$ ; Donahue & Harary, 1998).

Taken together, the conceptual arguments and empirical studies reviewed above suggest that there is both variability and consistency in role-based personality across different domains. Because we view role personality as determined or influenced by both role characteristics and global dispositions, we suspect that the within-person variability across roles is due to the effects of role-specific demands and constraints, whereas the between-person consistency is likely due largely to the effect of global dispositions that are being expressed across multiple roles.

Given our substantive interest in the workplace and the prediction of a work-related criterion (i.e., job satisfaction), we will focus on *work personality*, that is, characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors at work. For comparison purposes and to show unique and incremental validity, in Study 1 we also assess *home personality*, defined as characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors at home.

### The Main Effect of Work Personality on Job Satisfaction

Previous studies have not examined the impact of work personality on job satisfaction. Conceptually, role personality corresponds better in its level of specificity with role satisfaction than does global personality (Ajzen, 1987). Thus, we expect that work personality should be an even better predictor of job satisfaction than global personality. Moreover, whereas both global personality and other-role-based (e.g., home) personality measures include patterns of behaviors, thoughts, and feelings that are less relevant to the focal role satisfaction level, focal work personality scales include only content that is directly related to the targeted role (for a similar argument, see also Wood & Roberts, 2006). Finally, drawing from the aforementioned social-cognitive perspective on the self (e.g., Linville & Carlston, 1994), one's "employee self-concept" should be

more accessible at work because of its greater relevance than a more global conception of the self or a “self-in-a-different-role” (home) conception; thus, the currently activated “employee self-concept” should exert a powerful, proximal influence on the worker’s behaviors, experiences, and attitudes at work.

Additional support for the importance of work personality can be found in the “Frame of Reference” (FOR) studies that show that a role-specific reference (e.g., at work) can be used to increase the predictive validity of personality tests (e.g., Bing, Whanger, Davison, & VanHook, 2004; Hunthausen, Truxillo, Bauer, & Hammer, 2003; Schmit et al., 1995). Preliminary findings within this line of research have demonstrated considerable predictive validity for student personality in the prediction of college grade point average; this validity was larger than that obtained for noncontextualized personality (Schmit et al., 1995). These findings were recently replicated and extended to a field setting with actual job performance ratings as the criterion (Hunthausen et al., 2003); moreover, the FOR effect was also shown to be robust even after controlling for cognitive ability (Bing et al., 2004; Hunthausen et al., 2003) and general personality (Bing et al., 2004). Importantly, our study extends the FOR findings beyond job performance or school performance to job satisfaction. We will examine the validity of work personality relative to both global and home personality in predicting job satisfaction.

### Work Personality as a Mediator

In addition to its main effect on job satisfaction, we also posit that work personality can help elucidate the dispositional source of job satisfaction. As discussed above, job satisfaction researchers are moving beyond main effects and are seeking to understand the psychological processes explaining the personality–job satisfaction link (e.g., Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005). Role personality is an ideal candidate, given that it is the manifestation of one’s global personality within the structural constraints and demands imposed by a social role (Wood & Roberts, 2006; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) and, as discussed in the previous paragraph, should also be strongly tied to role satisfaction.

More specifically, we reasoned that given (a) the considerable temporal stability of global personality (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000) and its strong genetic basis (e.g., the Big Five traits are, on

average, 55% inherited; see Jang, Livesley, & Vernon, 1996) and (b) the fact that people are not born married or employed but rather with global dispositions (Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004), global personality serves as an antecedent factor of both role personality and role satisfaction. Moreover, given the contextual nature of role personality, as well as suggestive findings from the FOR literature (e.g., Bing et al., 2004) showing stronger associations for contextual personality than global personality in the prediction of role performance, we view work personality as a more proximal factor to job satisfaction than is global personality. Taken together, these arguments support the following causal sequence: Global dispositions influence personality at work, which, in turn, influences one's job satisfaction. Thus, we expected role personality to mediate the link between global personality and role satisfaction.

### Overview of Studies

We conducted two studies to investigate both the main effect of work personality on job satisfaction (Study 1), as well its mediation of the effect of global personality on job satisfaction (Study 2). In the first cross-sectional study we examined the validity of work personality in predicting job satisfaction vis-à-vis the traditional global assessment of personality and another-role (home) personality in a large sample of recently married couples. We also assessed marital satisfaction in order to establish the discriminant validity of our findings; that is, we expected to find that work personality will *not* emerge as the best predictor of marital satisfaction.

Based on the aforementioned conceptual arguments and empirical findings, we made the following hypothesis: H1: Work personality will be a better predictor of job satisfaction than either global personality or home personality and will show unique, incremental validity controlling for both global personality and home personality in predicting job satisfaction.

The primary purpose of the second study was to take the findings of Study 1 one step further by examining whether work personality can account for the relation between global personality and job satisfaction. Thus, in Study 2, a three-wave 1-year longitudinal study, we examined whether work personality will mediate the effect of global personality on job satisfaction. More formally we made the following hypothesis: H2: Each of the Big-Five work personality

dimensions (e.g., work extraversion) will mediate the effect of its corresponding global trait (e.g., global extraversion) on job satisfaction.

Similar to Study 1, we again examined the discriminant validity of these findings by showing that, whereas work personality is strongly related to job satisfaction, it does not play a substantial role in relationship satisfaction.

## STUDY 1

### Method

#### *Participants and Procedure*

Participants were 147 recently married couples<sup>1</sup> from eastern Iowa who participated in a large multiwave longitudinal study, the Iowa Marital Assessment Project (IMAP; for more information, see Watson & Humrichouse, 2006; Watson et al., 2004). The original IMAP sample consisted of 291 newlywed couples who were assessed between June 2001 and December 2001. At that time, the couples had been married an average of 154 days (range = 25 to 452 days), that is, approximately 5 months. They indicated that they had known each other an average of 4.69 years and had begun dating approximately 3.5 years earlier ( $M = 3.54$  years). The participants had a diverse range of occupations. Half of the current sample (50.3%) described themselves as professionals; other participants worked as managers, clerical workers, skilled laborers, and manual laborers.

The data reported here are from a follow-up assessment that was conducted between July 2003 and November 2003, that is, approximately 2 years later (see Watson & Humrichouse, 2006, for more details). The couples were seen in small group sessions that involved a maximum of six couples and that lasted approximately 2 hr. Each individual was compensated \$50 for participating. To ensure privacy and independent responding, each participant sat quietly at a separate desk when completing the measures used in this study.

#### *Measures*

*Global personality.* We used the Big Five Inventory (BFI; Benet-Martinez & John, 1998; John & Srivastava, 1999) to assess the traits

1. Data from these participants are also reported in Watson et al. (2004) and in Watson and Humrichouse (2006); however, whereas these articles focused on assortative mating and personality development, our article focuses on work personality.



comprising the Five-Factor model. The BFI contains 8-item scales assessing Neuroticism and Extraversion, a 10-item Openness scale, and 9-item measures of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. Participants were asked to indicate “the extent to which you agree or disagree” with each item on a 5-point scale ranging from *disagree strongly* to *strongly agree*. The BFI scales were used with standard trait instructions; that is, respondents rated their general characteristics without reference to any specific role or context. The BFI scales had coefficients  $\alpha$  of .85 (Neuroticism), .88 (Extraversion), .81 (Openness), .80 (Agreeableness), and .80 (Conscientiousness) in this sample (median = .81).

*Work personality and home personality.* Role-based personality was assessed with 20 adjectives (e.g., anxious, extraverted, intellectual, warm, self-disciplined), 4 adjectives per each dimension, drawn from the sets of Big Five factor markers developed by Goldberg (1992). Participants were asked to indicate how they generally feel, think, and behave at work or at home. The work versions of the scales had coefficients  $\alpha$  of .70 (Neuroticism), .71 (Extraversion), .50 (Openness), .63 (Agreeableness), and .64 (Conscientiousness; median = .64). The home versions of the scales had  $\alpha$  reliabilities of .75 (Neuroticism), .66 (Extraversion), .50 (Openness), .66 (Agreeableness), and .66 (Conscientiousness; median = .66).

*Job satisfaction.* Overall job satisfaction was measured with the five-item Brayfield and Rothe (1951) measure and three items from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with statements such as “I feel fairly satisfied with my job,” “Each day at work seems like it will never end” (reverse scored). This eight-item measure had a coefficient  $\alpha$  of .95 in this sample.

*Marital satisfaction.* Marital satisfaction was assessed using a single global rating derived from the Locke–Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (H. J. Locke & Wallace, 1959). Participants chose “the number which best describes the degree of happiness, everything considered, that you feel in your present marriage”; these ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from *very unhappy* to *perfectly happy*.

## Results and Discussion

### *Descriptive Statistics*

*Mean level differences.* We first examined the existence of differences between work personality and home personality. Table 1

**Table 1**  
A Comparison of Work Personality and Home Personality

	Work Personality Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	Home Personality Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Neuroticism	8.55 (2.71)	8.63 (3.00)	-.03
Extraversion**	14.34 (3.09)	14.94 (2.91)	-.50
Openness to Experience**	15.25 (2.10)	14.60 (2.13)	.31
Agreeableness	15.14 (2.52)	15.16 (2.72)	-.01
Conscientiousness**	17.31 (2.20)	15.87 (2.61)	.60

*Note.*  $N = 294$ . Cohen's  $d$  calculated as Work-Home.

\*\*Means differ significantly at  $p < .01$ .

presents the means and standard deviations for work and home personality as well as effect sizes and tests of significance. Systematic differences were found between roles. In particular, our participants were significantly more conscientious, open to experience, and less extraverted at work compared to home.<sup>2</sup>

*Rank-order consistency.* We also examined the rank-order consistency of role personality. As shown in Table 2, the correlations between the same work and home personality dimensions were all significant and moderate in magnitude ( $r = .36-.59$ , mean  $r = .50$ ). These results are generally consistent with previous findings (Donahue & Harary, 1998) in showing considerable rank-order stability in role-based personality, although a bit lower in magnitude, perhaps due to the slightly lower reliability of our scales. Whereas the previous set of findings of mean level differences between work and family roles were indicative of change or variability, these correlations provide evidence for consistency between roles.

2. It is difficult to compare our findings to previous results due to differences in our more general conceptualization of the home role compared to the more nuanced approach adopted in previous research, which differentiated between different home roles such as friend, spouse, and parent as well as the limited investigation of the work role. However, our findings clearly converge with those obtained in previous research (Donahue & Harary, 1998; Sheldon et al., 1997) in showing the high levels of conscientiousness exhibited at work compared to other social roles.

**Table 2**  
**Correlation Among Work Personality, Home Personality, and Global Personality in Study 1**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Work personality															
1. Work N	—														
2. Work E	-.17**	—													
3. Work O	-.14*	.36**	—												
4. Work A	-.40**	.11	.06	—											
5. Work C	-.32**	.15*	.15**	.26**	—										
Home personality															
6. Home N	.53**	-.20**	-.15*	-.29**	-.25**	—									
7. Home E	-.17**	.36**	.18**	.20**	.12*	-.24**	—								
8. Home O	-.20**	.26**	.51**	.20**	.21**	-.20**	.36**	—							
9. Home A	-.34**	.09	.21**	.53**	.24**	-.51**	.23**	.31**	—						
10. Home C	-.27**	.17**	.09	.27**	.59**	-.29**	.24**	.27**	.26**	—					
General personality															
11. General N	.59**	-.23**	-.16**	-.14*	-.16**	.66**	-.18**	-.19**	-.32**	-.21**	—				
12. General E	-.08	.68**	.27**	.10	.09	-.18**	.41**	.27**	.03	.20**	-.28**	—			
13. General O	-.13*	.27**	.58**	.13*	.09	-.12*	.12*	.50**	.19**	-.03	-.07	.23**	—		
14. General A	-.33**	.18**	.16**	.58**	.31**	-.33**	.21**	.19**	.53**	.32**	-.37**	.25**	.11	—	
15. General C	-.26**	.15**	.06	.23**	.64**	-.18**	.15*	.14*	.12*	.69**	-.20**	.17**	.01	.35**	—

*Note.*  $N = 294$ . Convergent correlations are shown in boldface. N = Neuroticism; E = Extraversion; O = Openness to Experience; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness.  
 \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

We also found that global personality traits correlated significantly with their corresponding contextualized traits (see Table 2). Specifically, global personality correlated strongly with both work personality ( $r = .58-.68$ , mean  $r = .61$ ) and home personality ( $r = .41-.69$ , mean  $r = .56$ ). These findings are clearly consistent with previous research demonstrating considerable associations between global personality and role-based personality (Donahue & Harary, 1998; Wood & Roberts, 2006).

Support was also obtained for the aforementioned idea that rank-order consistency in personality across roles is due partly to the influence of one's global personality or dispositional tendencies on both types of contextual personality. Controlling for the corresponding global personality trait, the partial correlations between work and home personality dropped by 39%–69% compared to the zero-order correlations with a mean drop of approximately half of the magnitude of the original correlation. The partial correlations for all traits, however, still were significantly different than zero: neuroticism (.24), extraversion (.11), openness (.31), agreeableness (.32), and conscientiousness (.26).

#### *Validity of Global, Home, and Work Personality in Predicting Job and Marital Satisfaction*

Due to the significant association between spouses' scores on certain variables (most notably on marital satisfaction; see Watson & Humrichouse, 2006; Watson et al., 2004), we used multilevel modeling procedures to examine the validity of the various types of personality measures in predicting the satisfaction scores while taking into account this nonindependence in our sample of couples (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). We tested the following basic model:

The spouse Level 1 (within-dyad) equation was

$$\text{Job/Marital Satisfaction}_{ij} = b_{0j} + b_{1j} * (\text{Work/Home/Global}) \text{ Personality Dimension}_{ij}.$$

At Level 2 (the dyad level), we developed the following model:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Intercept: } b_{0j} &= G_{00} + U_{0j} \\ \text{Personality: } b_{1j} &= G_{01}. \end{aligned}$$

In this model,  $G_{00}$  represents the mean intercept and  $G_{01}$  represents the mean personality slope.  $U_{0j}$  represents between dyad variance in

intercepts. The slopes for the various personality dimensions were modeled as fixed (i.e., constrained to be equal across dyads) due to the small number (i.e., a maximum of two) of lower level units (Kenny et al., 2006). We used the Proc Mixed procedure in SAS to test all hierarchical models (Singer, 1998).

Table 3 presents a summary of the multilevel regression findings for predicting job satisfaction and marital satisfaction from each of

**Table 3**  
Multilevel Regressions for Predicting Job Satisfaction and Marital Satisfaction From Work, Home, and General Personality

Criterion Predictor	Job Satisfaction	Marital Satisfaction
Work personality		
Work N	- 1.38*** (8%)	- .04* (0%)
Work E	1.01*** (9%)	.04* (0%)
Work O	1.36*** (11%)	.09** (1%)
Work A	1.29*** (5%)	.04 (0%)
Work C	.86** (4%)	.04 (0%)
Pseudo- $R^2$ (within)	21%	0%
Home personality		
Home N	- .77*** (0%)	- .12*** (0%)
Home E	.66** (1%)	.09*** (4%)
Home O	.97** (5%)	.12*** (3%)
Home A	1.00*** (3%)	.15*** (0%)
Home C	.82** (0%)	.03 (0%)
Pseudo- $R^2$ (within)	6%	5%
General personality		
General N	- .39*** (1%)	- .04* (1%)
General E	.26** (0%)	.01 (0%)
Work O	.24* (4%)	.02* (1%)
Work A	.43*** (1%)	.02* (0%)
Work C	.38** (1%)	.00 (0%)
Pseudo- $R^2$ (within)	6%	0%

*Note.*  $N = 288-294$ . N = Neuroticism; E = Extraversion; O = Openness to Experience; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness. The unstandardized pooled regression coefficients are reported, and in parentheses an estimate of variance explained. These pseudo- $R^2$  values were computed as the proportional reduction in the variance component of Level 1 (within couple) after the introduction of predictors; see Singer (1998).

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .0001$ .

the personality dimensions, conducted separately for each type of personality measure. We also tested for any gender main effect or moderation of the effects of personality on both types of satisfaction; because we obtained only 1 significant finding out of 30 analyses, all reported analyses are collapsed across gender.

Supporting our predictions, all regression coefficients for predicting job satisfaction from work personality were statistically significant and considerable in magnitude (4%–11% variance accounted for). Moreover, supporting our hypothesis H1, the overall pattern of findings clearly indicates that job satisfaction was better predicted by work personality (pseudo- $R^2 = 21\%$ ) than by either home personality (pseudo- $R^2 = 6\%$ ) or global personality (pseudo- $R^2 = 6\%$ ).

Table 4a presents a more direct comparative test of the validity of the different types of personality in predicting job satisfaction. Specifically, we tested the unique validity of work personality in a series of multilevel regression analyses that were conducted on a dimension-by-dimension basis using job satisfaction as the criterion; either the corresponding global dimension or home personality dimension was entered as the predictor in the initial model, after which the corresponding work personality dimension was added to the model. These analyses examine whether role personality predicts same-role satisfaction after controlling for the effects of either global personality or other-role personality. Findings indicated that whereas work personality was a significant unique predictor of job satisfaction in four out of five regression analyses (with the exception of work conscientiousness), global personality was only a unique, marginally significant ( $p < .06$ ) predictor in one out of the five analyses. Based on changes in pseudo- $R^2$ , we estimated that each of the work personality dimensions accounted for an additional 4%–10% (mean = 5.6%) within-dyad variance in job satisfaction beyond global personality. In a similar fashion, whereas work personality was a significant unique predictor of job satisfaction in four out of five regression analyses (again with the exception of work conscientiousness), home personality was only a unique significant predictor in two out of five analyses. Based on changes in pseudo- $R^2$ , we estimated that each of the work personality traits accounted for an additional 2%–7% (mean = 4.8%) within-dyad variance in job satisfaction beyond home personality. Taken together, these findings provide strong support for our first hypothesis.

**Table 4a**  
**Predicting Job Satisfaction: Moderated Multilevel Regressions of Role and Global Personalities**

Predictor Entered First	Home Personality		Global Personality	
	<i>b</i>	Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> (Within)	<i>b</i>	Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> (Within)
Step 1: Home N/Global N	-.16	0%	.08	1%
Step 2: Work N	-1.29***	7%	-1.27***	7%
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		7%		6%
Step 1: Home E/Global E	.31	1%	-.11	0%
Step 2: Work E	.90***	8%	1.17***	10%
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		7%		10%
Step 1: Home O/Global O	.38	5%	-.07	4%
Step 2: Work O	1.16**	11%	1.47***	11%
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		6%		7%
Step 1: Home A/Global A	.52*	3%	.15	1%
Step 2: Work A	1.00***	5%	1.11***	4%
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		2%		3%
Step 1: Home C/Global C	.61*	0%	.26	1%
Step 2: Work C	.42	2%	.44	3%
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		2%		2%

*Note.* *N* = 292–293. N = Neuroticism; E = Extraversion; O = Openness to Experience; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness. The unstandardized pooled regression coefficients are reported for the second step. Pseudo-*R*<sup>2</sup> values were computed as the proportional reduction in the variance component of Level 1 (within couple) after the introduction of predictors; see Singer (1998).

\**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .0001.

### *Discriminant Validity*

We sought to establish the discriminant validity of our findings regarding the validity of work personality by conducting a parallel set of multilevel analyses, this time using marital satisfaction as the criterion. In general, the findings for marital satisfaction were considerably weaker than those obtained for job satisfaction in our sample, perhaps due to the short amount of time that the participants had been married at the time of the assessment (which meant that they reported generally high levels of marital satisfaction with somewhat restricted variability; see Watson & Humrichouse, 2006). Indeed, in several cases the variance explained as assessed by the pseudo-*R*<sup>2</sup>

estimate was slightly negative, in which case it was reported as zero (Kenny et al., 2006).

Nevertheless, we found support for our prediction in the pattern of findings suggesting that home, and *not* work personality is the best predictor of marital satisfaction. Specifically, (a) with one exception (the correlation for home conscientiousness), all the regression coefficients for predicting marital satisfaction from home personality were highly statistically significant and (b) marital satisfaction was best predicted by home personality (pseudo- $R^2 = 5\%$ ) relative to both work personality (pseudo- $R^2 = 0\%$ ) and global personality (pseudo- $R^2 = 0\%$ ).

We obtained even more conclusive support for discriminant validity in a direct comparative test of the validity of the different types of personality in predicting marital satisfaction. Paralleling the earlier analyses and as shown in Table 4b, we conducted a series of multilevel regression analyses on a dimension by dimension basis, with marital satisfaction as the criterion; either the corresponding global dimension or work personality dimension was entered as a predictor in the initial model, after which the corresponding home personality dimension was added to the model. Impressively, whereas home personality was a significant unique predictor of marital satisfaction in four out of five regression analyses (with the exception of home conscientiousness), work personality was not a unique predictor in any of the five analyses. Based on changes in pseudo- $R^2$ , we further estimated that each of the home personality dimensions accounted for an additional 0%–3% (mean = 1%) within-dyad variance in marital satisfaction beyond work personality. In a similar fashion, whereas home personality was a significant unique predictor of marital satisfaction in four out of five regression analyses (again with the exception of home conscientiousness), global personality was not a unique predictor in any of the five analyses. Based on changes in pseudo- $R^2$ , we estimated that each of the home personality dimensions accounted for an additional 0%–4% (mean = 1%) within-dyad variance in marital satisfaction beyond the global personality dimensions.

### *Summary of Study 1's Findings*

In sum, our findings in Study 1 showed both mean-level differences and rank-order consistency in work personality and home person-



**Table 4b**  
**Predicting Marital Satisfaction: Moderated Multilevel Regressions of Role and Global Personalities**

Predictor Entered First	Work Personality		Global Personality	
	<i>b</i>	Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> (Within)	<i>b</i>	Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> (Within)
Step 1: Work N/Global N	.02	0%	.00	0%
Step 2: Home N	-.13***	0%	-.12***	0%
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		0%		0%
Step 1: Work E/Global E	.01	0%	-.01	0%
Step 2: Home E	.08***	3%	.10***	4%
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		3%		4%
Step 1: Work O/Global O	.03	1%	.01	1%
Step 2: Home O	.10**	3%	.11**	2%
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		2%		1%
Step 1: Work A/Global A	-.05	0%	-.01	0%
Step 2: Home A	.18***	0%	.17***	0%
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		0%		0%
Step 1: Work C/Global C	.03	0%	-.01	0%
Step 2: Home C	.02	0%	.05	0%
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		0%		0%

*Note.* *N* = 288–290. N = Neuroticism; E = Extraversion; O = Openness to Experience; A = Agreeableness; C = Conscientiousness. The unstandardized pooled regression coefficients for the second step are reported. Pseudo-*R*<sup>2</sup> values were computed as the proportional reduction in the variance component of Level 1 (within couple) after the introduction of predictors; see Singer (1998).

\*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .0001.

ality. They also showed substantial concurrent associations between work personality and both global personality and job satisfaction. Of importance, supporting our first hypothesis, we found that work personality was a better predictor of job satisfaction than either global personality or home-role personality; moreover, it showed incremental validity beyond the other two types of measures in predicting job satisfaction. A very different pattern of findings was obtained for the three types of personality measures in relation to marital satisfaction, establishing the discriminant validity of our findings.

As a whole, our results are also supportive of a causal sequence in which global personality is an antecedent of role personality, which, in turn, influences role satisfaction. However, the cross-sectional nature of Study 1 limits our ability to test this temporal sequence. Another potential limitation of this study was its reliance on relatively short scales to assess our main psychological constructs—role personality (four items per each dimension) and marital satisfaction (a single item). Thus, we designed a second longitudinal study to explicitly test whether work personality mediates the effect of global personality on job satisfaction. We tested these relations using longer and, consequently, more reliable scales to assess both role personality and marital satisfaction.

## STUDY 2

### Method

#### *Procedure*

Online surveys, conducted over a period of 1 year, were used for data collection. Links to the online surveys were e-mailed to participants three times. The first survey included measures of general personality; the second survey, sent out 3–4 weeks later, measured work personality. One year after the first survey, participants completed the third survey, which included measures of job satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. To increase the response rate, we sent two reminder e-mails in each of the assessment waves to participants who had not completed a given survey: The first was sent after 1 week and the second was sent after 3 weeks.

#### *Participants*

Participants were recruited from the alumni database of a large Canadian university.<sup>3</sup> We recruited alumni in order to ensure participants were sampled from a wide variety of organizations, reducing the impact of organizational context on our findings. In exchange for their participation, participants were entered into a draw for gift certificates to a national book retailer. We recruited 1,721 participants for the first survey, with 1,366 completing the second survey 3–4 weeks later. After 1 year, 290

3. Data from these participants are also reported in Brown et al. (2007); however, whereas the previous article examined social comparison processes, the current article focuses on work personality and additionally incorporates a year-long lag between the initial and final survey.

participants responded to our third survey, a 21% response rate. Participants worked in a diverse set of occupational fields including teaching, law, social work, accounting, and human resources.

Of the 290 participants who completed the third survey, 41 had changed jobs in the intervening year, and a further 40 were not in a relationship at the time of the third survey; thus, these individuals were not included in the analyses, leaving a final sample size of 208. On average, these individuals had worked in their current organizations for roughly 10 years and were approximately 42 years old (57% male).

To ensure that the participants who completed the final survey were representative of our original sample, we conducted  $t$  tests to ascertain whether the two groups exhibited differences on any of the study variables. No significant differences emerged between the two groups in age,  $t(1,698) = -.14$ ,  $p > .10$ , gender,  $t(1,705) = .78$ ,  $p > .10$ , tenure,  $t(1,684) = -1.84$ ,  $p > .06$ , general neuroticism,  $t(1,716) = 1.55$ ,  $p > .10$ , work neuroticism,  $t(1,359) = 1.29$ ,  $p > .10$ , general extraversion,  $t(1,716) = 1.88$ ,  $p > .06$ , general agreeableness,  $t(1,716) = 1.34$ ,  $p > .10$ , work agreeableness,  $t(1,359) = .23$ ,  $p > .10$ , general conscientiousness,  $t(1,716) = 1.02$ ,  $p > .10$ , work conscientiousness,  $t(1,359) = 0.94$ ,  $p > .10$ , general openness;  $t(1,716) = 0.29$ ,  $p > .10$ , and work openness,  $t(1,359) = -.94$ ,  $p > .10$ . However, a significant difference emerged between the groups on work extraversion,  $t(1,360) = 2.53$ ,  $p < .05$ , such that those who completed all waves had lower work extraversion levels ( $M = 3.33$ ) than the original sample ( $M = 3.46$ ).

### *Measures*

*General personality.* Participants again completed the BFI (John & Srivastava, 1999), which was described in Study 1. Scale coefficient  $\alpha$  ranged from .76 to .90 in this sample.

*Work personality.* Participants completed a 45-item adjective-based measure of personality (9 items per personality factor) drawn from a large list of factor markers (Goldberg, 1992). Participants indicated how accurately traits such as “anxious” and “bold” described them on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *very inaccurate* and 5 = *very accurate*). The scales were modified to assess work personality by altering the scale stem to read “At work, I am . . .” before the trait adjectives (see also Schmit et al., 1995). Scale coefficients  $\alpha$  ranged from .79 to .88.

*Job satisfaction.* Job satisfaction was assessed using the same eight-item measure described in Study 1. The scale had a coefficient  $\alpha$  of .94 in this sample.

*Relationship satisfaction.* Relationship satisfaction was measured using a modified version of Norton's (1983) six-item marital satisfaction measure. Items were changed to refer more broadly to relationships instead of specifically to marriage. Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Sample items include "Our relationship is very strong" and "My relationship with my partner makes me happy" ( $\alpha = .96$ ).

### *Analytical Strategy*

The hypothesized model and paths were tested using AMOS 6.0. The covariance matrix was used as input and the parameters were obtained using maximum likelihood estimates (Chou & Bentler, 1995). Following previous recommendations (Hall, Snell, & Foust, 1999), item parcels were formed to create three indicators each for all the study constructs. Item parcels were created to reduce the sample-size-to-parameter ratio because this ratio can unfavorably impact the standard errors and stability of estimates. Items were randomly assigned to parcels because this method was shown to provide comparable fit to more complex methods (Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000).

The five proposed mediation models were tested in two stages (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). First, a measurement model was fit to the data; next, the underlying structural model was tested. To evaluate the fit of the tested model, the following indices were examined: (a) chi-square goodness-of-fit to degree of freedom ratio, (b) Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973), (c) root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990), (d) standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR; Bentler, 1990), (e) and the comparative fit index (CFI). Satisfactory model fit is indicated by TLI and CFI values of .90 or greater, RMSEA values no higher than .08, SRMR values no higher than .10, and a chi-square goodness-of-fit to degrees of freedom ratio no greater than 2 (Bentler, 1990; Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

## Results and Discussion

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Table 5 presents the means, standard deviations,  $\alpha$ s, and intercorrelations of the measured variables. Consistent with Study 1's findings, global personality was strongly positively related to work personality, with correlation coefficients ranging from .60 to .75 (all  $p < .01$ ). In addition, with the exception of conscientiousness ( $r = .03$ , *ns*), all the global personality traits were positively and significantly related

**Table 5**  
**Descriptive Statistics, Zero Order Correlations, and  $\alpha$ s for Variables in Study 2**

	Mean	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Age	41.94	8.51	—														
2. Gender	.43	.50	-.21**	—													
3. Tenure (in months)	118.12	95.34	.46**	-.17*	—												
4. General Neuroticism	2.53	.68	-.14*	.23**	-.12	<b>.80</b>											
5. Work Neuroticism	2.21	.66	-.13	.01	-.01	.66**	<b>.82</b>										
6. General Extraversion	3.08	.88	.03	.03	-.03	-.23**	-.20**	<b>.90</b>									
7. Work Extraversion	3.33	.76	-.01	.07	-.10	-.26**	-.34**	.75**	<b>.88</b>								
8. General Conscientiousness	3.90	.60	.13	.03	.00	-.28**	-.16*	.13	.05	<b>.79</b>							
9. Work Conscientiousness	4.11	.59	.11	.14*	.02	-.17*	-.28**	.07	.07	.68**	<b>.83</b>						
10. General Agreeableness	3.85	.57	.01	.22**	-.02	-.33**	-.33**	.06	-.01	.28**	.18**	<b>.76</b>					
11. Work Agreeableness	4.16	.49	.08	.22**	-.08	-.16*	-.37**	.06	.04	.20**	.23**	.66**	<b>.79</b>				
12. General Openness	3.68	.64	.06	-.03	-.03	-.14*	-.13	.28**	.22**	-.03	-.05	.08	.07	<b>.81</b>			
13. Work Openness	3.49	.22	.21**	-.04	.11	-.08	-.05	.20**	.20**	.03	.03	-.04	.14*	.60**	<b>.72</b>		
14. Job Satisfaction	3.91	.74	.23**	.04	.07	-.20**	-.31**	.22**	.29**	.03	.16*	.14*	.19**	.22*	.18*	<b>.94</b>	
15. Relationship Satisfaction	4.24	.80	-.00	.04	-.09	-.03	-.08	-.07	.03	.18**	.14*	-.01	.04	.16*	.11	.14*	<b>.96</b>

*Note.* *N* ranges between 207 and 209;  $\alpha$ s are on the diagonal in bold. Gender: 0 = male and 1 = female.  
 \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

to job satisfaction. An even stronger pattern emerged for work personality, such that all five traits were correlated with job satisfaction, with correlation coefficients ranging in size from  $-.31$  (for work neuroticism,  $p < .01$ ) to  $.29$  (for work extraversion,  $p < .01$ ).

Consistent with the principle of higher validity for role personality in the prediction of role-congruent satisfaction, a weaker pattern of associations emerged for the prediction of relationship satisfaction from both global personality and work personality. Of the global personality traits only conscientiousness ( $r = .18$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and openness ( $r = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were significantly associated with relationship satisfaction. Of greater interest for our purposes here, with the exception of work conscientiousness ( $r = .14$ ,  $p < .05$ ), none of the work personality traits had significant associations with relationship satisfaction, thereby again testifying to the discriminant validity of work personality in predicting job, but not relationship, satisfaction.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, these findings help reduce concerns regarding the effects of methodological artifacts such as common method bias or a general response style, thereby enhancing the validity of our findings.

*Testing the measurement model.* We next tested, for each of the dimensions, the fit of a three-factor measurement model (i.e., general personality factor, work personality factor, and job satisfaction) to the data. Table 6 reports the fit statistics for the measurement models. When evaluated in terms of the recommended benchmarks, the fit indices indicate that each of the five measurement models fit the data well.

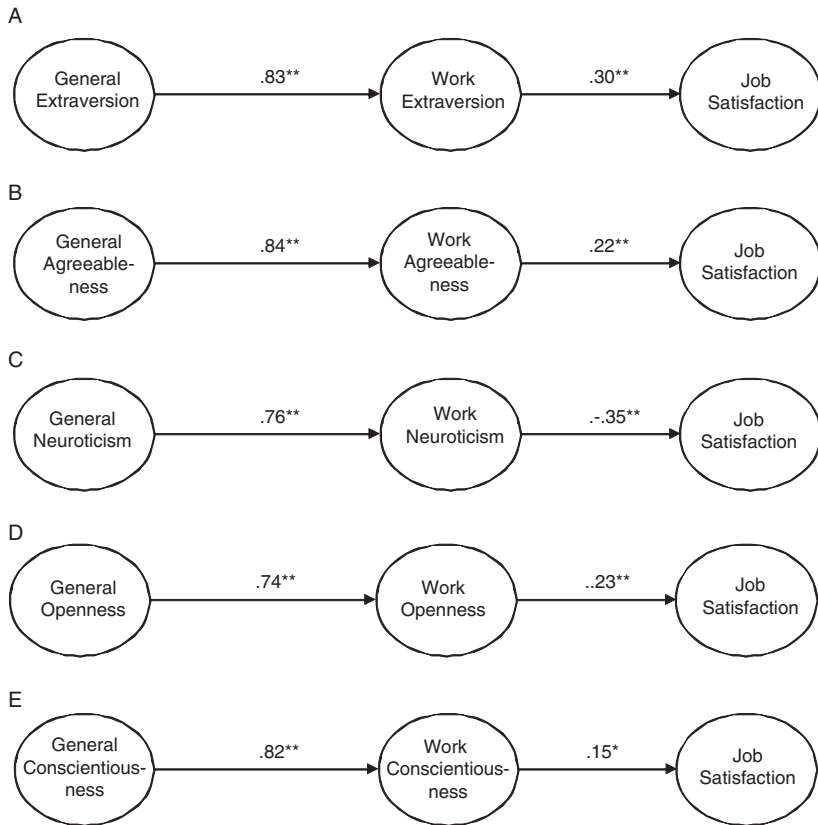
*Testing the structural model.* Given the good fit of the measurement models, we next tested the fit of our hypothesized structural models (see Figure 1). Specifically, we tested five models in which the effect

4. In additional analyses, we further examined the discriminant validity of work personality by including relationship satisfaction in each of the Figure 1 models. We compared models that did not specify a link between relationship satisfaction and work personality against models in which this link was included. In all cases, the inclusion of a link between work personality and relationship satisfaction did not significantly increase model fit, suggesting work personality demonstrates discriminant validity in predicting job, but not relationship, satisfaction. Furthermore, in contrast to the aforementioned significant zero-order correlation between work conscientiousness and relationship satisfaction, once we included the effect of global conscientiousness in the model, these two variables were no longer related.

**Table 6**  
**Model Fit, Partial Mediation, and Discriminant Validity Tests**

	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\chi^2/df$	TLI	RMSEA	CFI	SRMR
Measurement Model Fit								
Neuroticism Model	33.15	24	—	1.38	.99	.04	.99	.03
Extraversion Model	37.23*	24	—	1.55	.99	.05	.99	.03
Conscientiousness Model	36.64*	24	—	1.53	.99	.05	.99	.03
Agreeableness Model	51.33**	24	—	2.14	.97	.07	.98	.05
Openness Model	45.17**	24	—	1.88	.97	.07	.98	.04
Structural Model Fit								
Fully Mediated Neuroticism Model	35.34*	25	—	1.41	.99	.04	.99	.04
Fully Mediated Extraversion Model	37.55	25	—	1.50	.99	.05	.99	.04
Fully Mediated Conscientiousness Model	40.05*	25	—	1.60	.98	.05	.99	.05
Fully Mediated Agreeableness Model	52.11**	25	—	2.08	.97	.07	.98	.05
Fully Mediated Openness Model	47.66**	25	—	1.91	.97	.07	.98	.04
Partial Mediation Tests								
Gen Neuroticism → Job Satisfaction	33.15	24	2.19	1.38	.99	.04	.99	.03
Gen Extraversion → Job Satisfaction	37.23*	24	0.32	1.55	.99	.05	.99	.03
Gen Conscientiousness → Job Satisfaction	36.64*	24	3.41	1.53	.99	.05	.99	.03
Gen Agreeableness → Job Satisfaction	51.33**	24	0.78	2.14	.97	.07	.98	.05
Gen Openness → Job Satisfaction	45.17**	24	2.49	1.88	.97	.07	.98	.04

*Note.* TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index (Tucker & Lewis, 1973); RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation (Steiger, 1990); SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; CFI = comparative fit index.  
 \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .



**Figure 1**

Standardized Path Estimates for Extraversion (A), Agreeableness (B), Neuroticism (C), Openness (D), and Conscientiousness (E) in Study 2's Mediation Analyses.

of each global trait on job satisfaction is mediated by its corresponding contextual trait. The fit indices (presented in the section entitled "Structural Model Fit" in Table 6) suggest that all our hypothesized mediation models provided a good fit when evaluated against the recommended cutoffs for all fit indices.

We next examined alternate models in which we tested for partial mediation by freeing the path between the general personality factor and job satisfaction. If the addition of these paths improves model fit (assessed by the magnitude of the change in chi-square), it would indicate that work personality does not fully mediate the effect of general personality on job satisfaction. The results of these analyses



are presented in Table 6 (in the section entitled “Partial Mediation Tests”). None of the freed paths significantly improved model fit ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 2.19, 0.32, 3.41, 2.14,$  and  $1.88$  for neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness, respectively), indicating that in each case work personality fully mediated the effect of general personality on job satisfaction. Thus, these models, depicted in Figure 1, were retained for hypothesis testing.

Figure 1 presents the standardized direct path estimates for our models. Again, global personality predicted work personality ( $\beta$ s ranged from .74 to .84). The path coefficients linking work personality to job satisfaction were all also significant ( $\beta$ s ranged from  $-.35$  to  $.30$ ). We examined the indirect effects to see if, as hypothesized, work personality would mediate the effects of their corresponding global personality dimensions on job satisfaction. The parameters and significance of the indirect effects were determined using a bootstrapping analysis and the bias corrected percentile method (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). In all models, the five global personality traits had significant indirect effects on job satisfaction: The standardized indirect effects were  $-.27$  ( $p < .05$ ),  $.25$  ( $p < .01$ ),  $.12$  ( $p < .05$ ),  $.18$  ( $p < .05$ ), and  $.17$  ( $p < .01$ ), for neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness, respectively. Taken together, these results provide strong support for the mediating role of work personality in the link between global personality and job satisfaction.

### *Summary of Study 2 Findings*

In summary, our predictions were strongly supported by the structural equation modeling results. Each of the five of the work personality traits fully mediated the effect of global personality on job satisfaction. It is also important to note that work personality was related to same-role (i.e., job) satisfaction, but not to other role (i.e., home) satisfaction, supporting the discriminant validity of these work personality dimensions.

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

### *Work Personality and Job Satisfaction*

Considerable research shows that personality matters for global happiness and domain satisfaction (Heller et al., 2004) in general and

for job satisfaction (Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005) in particular. Drawing from recent developments in personality psychology (e.g., Wood & Roberts, 2006), we conducted two studies (one longitudinal and one cross-sectional) that examined the validity of work personality in predicting job satisfaction as well as its role in mediating the effect of global personality on job satisfaction. First, Study 1 showed that individuals vary systematically in their personality between roles: Our participants were significantly more conscientious and open to experience and less extraverted at work compared to at home. Furthermore, it showed, via multilevel regression analyses, that work personality was a better predictor of job satisfaction than both global and home personality. Moreover, work personality demonstrated incremental validity above and beyond the other two types of personality measures. Of note is that this pattern of associations emerged for job satisfaction but not for marital satisfaction.

Building on these results, we further showed in Study 2 that each of the work personality traits fully mediated the association between its corresponding global personality trait and job satisfaction. Again, we also found evidence for the discriminant validity of our findings in that the work personality dimensions were generally unrelated to relationship satisfaction.

These findings can inform the literature on the dispositional source of job satisfaction in three ways. First, they identify a better predictor of job satisfaction than global measures of personality. That is, similar to the prediction of job performance, a personality measure contextualized to work may provide better validity in the prediction of job satisfaction than traditional measures. Second, the current research provides evidence for a novel mediator of the link between global personality and satisfaction—namely, role personality. As mentioned earlier, researchers are only starting to explore the psychological processes (e.g., job complexity, Judge et al., 2000; mood at work, Weiss et al., 1999; and goal concordance, Judge et al., 2005) that underlie the dispositional source of job satisfaction. Thus, a useful next step would be to investigate the joint and unique effects of work personality and previously established mediators in a single study. Third, our results can help to explain why global personality is limited in its prediction of job satisfaction; that is, it is one's work personality that more directly shapes one's job satisfaction level, rather than more distal global traits.

We further emphasize that our findings regarding the importance of work personality for predicting job satisfaction most likely have similar implications for understanding the dispositional source of satisfaction in other roles (e.g., friend, student, or romantic role). That is, we believe they reflect a general principle in which role-based personality measures are better predictors of role-congruent satisfaction compared to both role-incongruent personality and global personality indices.

Moreover, our findings indicating two distinctive personalities at work and home may also inform the work-family literature, suggesting that differences in personality between roles may have important implications for understanding self-regulatory difficulties in making role transitions (i.e., both entry and exit of social roles; Ashforth, 2001) and for work-family conflict, as well as individuals' preferences for keeping work and family role boundaries separate versus integrated (the segmentation–integration continuum; Ashforth, 2001).

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

An important limitation of our study is our inability to draw causal inferences from our findings regarding the associations among our variables. We expected that work personality would mediate the association between global personality and job satisfaction, and our results were consistent with this prediction. However, our findings that controlling for work personality explains the link between global personality and job satisfaction can only establish an intervening role for work personality, as they are consistent with several alternative third-variable effects models in addition to our proposed mediation model; as such, a model in which role personality is a confounding variable in the link between global personality and job satisfaction is statistically equivalent to a mediation one (MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000). Thus, although the temporal precedence among variables in our study is suggestive of our proposed mediation causal sequence, there is a need for a replication of our results with a longitudinal panel study.

The mediation hypotheses and analyses conducted in the current study were based on theoretical arguments (e.g., a social-cognitive perspective), rather than on specific types of statistical analyses (MacKinnon et al., 2000; Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005). That is,

although we argued for a model—based on social-cognitive perspectives of self- and personality—in which role personality causes role satisfaction, the reverse causal association is also plausible. For instance, being a satisfied employee may lead a person over time to become more extraverted and outgoing at work. Support for this notion can be found in two recent longitudinal investigations showing that work experiences, such as job satisfaction, are associated over time with changes in *global* personality (Roberts, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2003; Scollon & Diener, 2006); thus, it seems likely that job satisfaction can also influence one's more proximal personality at work (for a similar argument, see also Wood & Roberts, 2006). In fact, it could be the case that both causal directions linking role personality and role experiences are operating simultaneously, thereby mutually reinforcing each other.

In sum, although mediation tests do not establish this causal sequence with confidence, they are consistent with a mediation model. Whereas theory and accumulated knowledge about the phenomenon guided our specification of the direction and causal nature of the relationships in the proposed model, we acknowledge that a bidirectional causal sequence is also likely and represents a deserving area for future research.

A second potential limitation is that all of our data were self-reports, raising the possibility that common method variance influenced our findings. Based on recommendations by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), we took steps to reduce the likelihood of common-method bias as an explanation of our results, including measuring our antecedents, mediator, and outcomes at different points in time. Moreover, further reducing concerns regarding the influence of method biases, we were able to establish the discriminant validity of our contextual personality measures in that they tended to relate to same-role satisfaction, but not other-role satisfaction. Nevertheless, although these precautionary steps have been taken, our design does not eliminate the influence of common-method variance completely. Future studies should include data from alternative sources, for example, coworkers' ratings of job attitudes or objective job performance measures, or additional and more subtle assessment approaches to work personality (for several such options, see Heller, Watson et al., 2007).

Our research is also limited by our exclusive focus on dispositional antecedents of role personality. As discussed earlier, we believe that

role personality actually is the product of a rich mix of one's general dispositional and role characteristics. Thus, we call for additional research examining the influence of situational antecedents—such as leadership behaviors (Kark & Shamir, 2002; Lord & Brown, 2004)—on traits contextualized to work. The relative magnitude of the influence of global personality and situational characteristics on role personality may be determined by the strength of the situation, which can be defined as the extent to which informational cues are unambiguous, behavioral expectations are clear, there are incentives to comply, and people are capable of meeting the behavioral demand of the situation (e.g., Mischel, 1977). That is, the expression of global personality is inhibited in those situations (i.e., roles) that exert a very strong and clear influence. Applied to Study 1's findings, assuming that work reflects a stronger situation than home, differences in situational strength may explain why people are less sociable, more focused on task, and more open to experience at work relative to home.<sup>5</sup>

This line of research can be extended in many ways, most notably with regard to an examination of the antecedents and implications of *discrepancies* between work personality and home personality. For instance, our main thesis that roles are linked to unique patterns of personality traits raises an important question regarding the implications of this cross-contextual divergence on well-being. Is the “social chameleon”—that is, someone who is very different at her work as a CEO and at home as a mother—happier than a person who is more consistent across roles? Conceptually, a differentiated self could be indicative of high levels of adaptation, specialization, and flexibility in response to environmental demands; or, conversely, it could represent a fragmented self and a lack of a sense of coherence or unity or even a state of paralysis (Heller, Watson et al., 2007). This link with personality variability should be examined using several indicators of well-being, such as life and role satisfaction, stress, and burnout.

Another area for future research relates to our limited understanding of the processes through which an individual's global personality influences or is associated with one's contextual personality. One possibility is that people are attracted to, selected for, and retained in situations or jobs that are consistent with or enable the expression of their global personality (e.g., Emmons, Diener, &

5. We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this helpful suggestion.

Larsen, 1985; Ickes, Snyder, & Garcia, 1997; the Attraction-Selection-Attrition model, Schneider, 1987). A second possibility is that people are able to craft or mold their jobs based on their global personality; the characteristics of these jobs, in turn, influence their work identity. Indeed, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) have argued convincingly that employees can actively craft or shape the tasks and the social network boundaries, the meaning of the work, and their work identities based on their individual needs and motivations. It should be noted that these two processes are not mutually exclusive, but rather are better thought of as complementary. Consider for example an extraverted person selecting (and being selected) to work as a salesperson, who further seeks to craft her job by expanding her social network and by assuming a leadership role in the sales force. Such an employee would clearly exhibit a high level of extraversion at work.

### *Conclusion*

We hope our studies will further stimulate research explicating work personality, including its nature, measurement, antecedents, and consequences. We believe this area of research has important implications for enhancing our understanding of the complex interactions that exist between situations and dispositions in general, and in the workplace in particular.

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