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Why Power does not Guarantee Happiness across Cultures

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Why Power does not Guarantee Happiness across Cultures

Abstract

Recent literature has shown that power enhances happiness in the Western context. However, it is likely that this may only hold true in cultures that promote independent and autonomous expression of self. For those in collectivist contexts, it is argued that power could reduce happiness since power can thwart them from achieving relationship harmony. The current paper presents research on the psychological effects of power on happiness carried out in the Western context and the Philippine context. Future directions towards developing a culturally-sensitive theory of power are also elucidated.

Introduction

In a world where inequalities are ever present, it is not surprising that some people are driven to acquire and exercise power. To a large extent, this is due to the belief that power serves as an essential force not only in social relationships but also in society (Fiske, 1993). Past literature defined power as the inclination to control resources in various relational spheres (Anderson, John, & Keltner, 2012; Kifer, Heller, Perunovic, & Galinsky, 2013). As power was associated with success (Anderson et al., 2012), previous empirical studies have explored the beneficial consequences of power on the psychological functioning of individuals. Power positively predicted emotional well-being (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000), self-esteem (Adler et al., 2000), and life satisfaction (Kifer et al., 2013). These evidences clearly suggest that power may potentially enhance well-being. However, most of the studies to investigate power and well-being outcomes (e.g. Adler et al, 2000; Kifer et al., 2013) were executed in the Western context which places greater premium on personal achievement and independence. In other words, the advantageous impact of power on well-being cannot be generalized across cultures, especially in contexts that promote interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Uchida & Ogihara, 2012).

This paper aims to provide empirical and theoretical explanations on why power may not always lead to optimal psychological outcomes across cultures. First, it summarizes foregoing literature on power and its psychological consequences. Second, it utilizes self-construal theory as cultural psychological framework to explain how power impacts individuals' well-being across cultures. Third, it discusses studies that could provide evidences on the distinct effects of power on the well-being of individuals in independent and interdependent cultures.

Theories on Power

As power was construed as a basic force in social interactions (Fiske, 1993), past literature focused on refining how we understand power in various contexts. One of the earliest models is the *asymmetrical outcome dependency theory* (Fiske & Dépret, 1996) which posits that power refers to the extent to which various outcomes are contingent on others. This model asserts that people have basic desires to gain power and they are likely to enjoy power since it gives them a higher sense of control. In contrast, people with low power had very restricted influence on their outcomes. The *social dominance theory* (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) contends that group-based hierarchy that promotes inequality is universally experienced across contexts and organizations which lead to the emergence of power. Individuals from dominant groups enjoy greater amount of important resources (i.e. money, physical facilities, and health) than those from subordinate groups. Consequently, people from dominant groups place premium on the stratification in the society and consider their selves as worthy to be selected in managerial positions while those from subordinate groups consider their selves as justifiable to get subordinate positions.

More recent theorizing looked at power as a way to fulfil not only personal wants but also others' needs (i.e., facilitating incentives). For instance, Overbeck and Park (2001)

contended that power can be further dichotomized into *personal and social power*. Social power was defined as intentional desire to control others through facilitating incentives and punishments (Mondillon et al., 2005; Tiedens, 2001). Personal power is the capability to engage in actions that stem from one's own volition (Tiedens, 2001). In addition, the *identity model of power* (Simon & Oakes, 2006) assumes that power serves as a consensual dynamic and productive force. Instead of focusing on the control over outcomes, power was seen as the extent to which others can directly contribute to one's projects.

While there were several conceptual definitions proposed in past literature to describe power, the present paper focuses on delineating power as "individual's relative capacity to modify others' states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments" (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003, p. 265). In other words, power refers to the extent, to which people can practice unequal influence on how valued resources (e.g., money or physical facilities) are allocated in various relational contexts. Given that we commonly experience and perceive inequality in the distribution of resources at home (allowances from parents), school (credit in an academic requirement), government (public services), and other practically significant scenarios, concentrating on this operational definition seem to be relevant in our daily lives. This conceptualization shares similarities with the definition of Fiske and Dépret (1996) as well as Overbeck and Park (2001) in terms of power as the asymmetrical control on the valued resources. At the same time, it differs from definitions of power by Keltner et al. (2003). The latter argue that the beneficial consequences of power can be explained by its ability to enhance approach-related style of thinking. Individuals with approach-related style of thinking are likely to experience positive emotions (i.e. happiness, pride), to focus on social rewards, and to expect that others would fulfil their aspirations and preferences. In contrast, people with low power are likely to endorse an inhibition-related way of thinking. These individuals are inclined to experience negative emotions (i.e. depression and anxiety), to pay more attention to punishments, and to see their selves as instrumental in the attainment of others' goals. These findings also propose that there is a need to examine the specific beneficial and adverse impact of endorsing greater control on valued resources. In the following, the positive and negative psychological effects of power on individuals' cognitive, affective, and other relevant performance outcomes will be described.

Psychological Consequences of Power

Positive Effects of Power

Consistent with the arguments of Keltner et al. (2003), previous studies have shown that power can lead to optimal psychological outcomes. Some research revealed that people who have high power manifested greater inclinations to develop an approach way of thinking (Brauer & Bourhis, 2006; Keltner et al., 2003). On the one hand, powerful individuals are likely to attend to social incentives which lead to more positive emotions. On the other hand, powerless ones are inclined to see their selves as a means to achieve others' goals which lead to negative emotions. In fact, there were a number of neurobiological and physiological

evidences that supported the contention that power is strongly connected to approach-related cognitions and behaviors (Boksem, Smolders, & De Cremer, 2012; Scheepers, De Wit, Ellemers, & Sassenberg, 2012).

Before discussing the notable results of past empirical studies, common approaches in carrying out research and experiments that investigated the positive effects of power are shortly elaborated. Particularly, it is very apparent that most experimental studies reported in this section (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008; Guinote, 2007; Lammers, Dubois, Rucker, & Galinsky, 2013) manipulated power based on the cognitive priming approach of Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee (2003): individuals in the high power condition are instructed to imagine and narrate past experience wherein they have controlled others while those in the low power condition were tasked to imagine and narrate an experience wherein they were controlled by others. Some studies (e.g. Smith, Jostmann, Galinsky, & Van Dijk, 2008) also utilized the scrambled-sentence priming approach of Smith and Trope (2006).

Several studies revealed that power facilitates optimal psychological outcomes. To support this claim, power was associated with sound thinking functions (Guinote, 2007; Smith et al., 2008) such as faster generation of concrete action plans, thinking of goal-directed behaviors, forming implementation intentions and executive functions (e.g. inhibiting and planning) in American university undergraduate students (Guinote, 2007), reduced sensitivity to environmental, situational and social factors when making specific actions among undergraduate and graduate students in a university (Galinsky et al., 2008), and favourable job application outcomes in Dutch and French students (Lammers et al., 2013).

Taken together, results in the abovementioned empirical studies propose that possessing power has advantageous effects on some important cognitive and performance outcomes. As what have been depicted in extant literature, power essentially facilitates approach-related cognitions (Guinote, 2007), enhances executive thinking functions (Smith et al., 2008), and even in successfully passing job interviews (Lammers et al., 2013). In other words, these studies strengthened the assertion that possessing power could potentially enable individuals to nurture adaptive cognitive and behavioral competences. These findings, therefore point to the “good side” of endorsing power across situations. However, solely focusing on the beneficial consequences of power is problematic in that it could offer a myopic picture on the psychological impact of a powerful life. To portray a more objective viewpoint on how power affects fundamental psychological processes, the following section presents some research on the potential adverse effects of power.

Negative Effects of Power

As in the case of most psychological constructs, there are ostensible detriments when individuals endorse greater power. Contemporary and previous literature offers significant evidence that possession of power could also lead to dysfunctional psychological outcomes. To elaborate how power can exert debilitating effects on various behaviors, this section presents some empirical studies that talk about the disadvantageous side of having power.

Compared to how power was manipulated in the experimental studies about the positive effects of power, studies that are reported in this section varied on the manipulation of power. For example, while Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, and Gruenfeld (2006) employed the cognitive priming approach of Galinsky et al. (2003), Inesi, Gruenfeld, and Galinsky (2012) used the scrambled-sentence priming approach of Smith and Trope (2006). Even, the hierarchical role approach (Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008) was utilized by Inesi et al. (2012): participants were told to write essays about their actual work experience with a subordinate (high power condition) and with a peer or colleague (control condition). Despite the varying approaches in manipulating power, there seems to be a common theme on the negative aspect of becoming powerful.

Some empirical studies have supported the conjecture regarding the undesirable effects of power. Power was associated with greater likelihood of violating social norms (Ward & Keltner, 1998), lower inclination to understand the emotional sufferings and appreciation of the perspectives of others (Van Kleefe et al., 2008). Supporting the aforementioned findings, Inesi et al. (2012) found that powerful individuals are likely to see that other's good actions and favors are selfishly motivated compared to the powerless ones and the works of others as less trustworthy than those in the equal power condition.

These empirical findings propose that power could inflict detrimental effects among individuals. To a large extent, endorsing greater inclinations to control important resources or others across distinct situations potentially impairs individuals' ability to establish and maintain meaningful relationships. This is because extant literature showed that power shrinks one's capability to understand others' perspectives and compassion to those who are presently suffering (Galinsky et al., 2006; Van Kleefe et al., 2008). Hence, it is probable that the powerful would enjoy higher control on valued tangible, intangible, and social resources at the expense of experiencing relational problems.

Despite the burgeoning literature on the psychological effects of power, it is conjectured that it may not always be safe to generalize these results in all sociocultural settings especially that culture plays a very powerful role in shaping basic psychological processes (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The purpose of the next section is to elucidate how culture could affect the relations between power and important psychological outcomes.

Culture, Power and Well-Being

The existing evidences that talk about the relations between power and happiness seem to represent a Western pathway to happiness wherein individuals are more inclined to put greater premium on freely expressing personal dispositions and wants. In other words, it is realistic to say that for collectivist individuals who are prone to give much consideration to relationship harmony, having more power does not guarantee happiness. To explain why the psychological impact of power on happiness would vary across cultures, this section utilized two distinct theoretical models; *individualism vs. collectivism* (Hofstede, 1980) and the *self-construal theory* (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

One of the possible theoretical justifications on the proposed cultural distinctions in power can be seen in the *power distance* and *individualism vs. collectivism* facets of the cultural dimensions theory of Hofstede (1980). *Power distance* was defined as the degree of perceived inequality that people can accept relative to cultural expectations. People in societies that value independence (i.e. USA) would likely display higher levels of *power distance* compared to those in contexts that placed much worth on interdependence (e.g. China, Korea, and Philippines). The model also posits that some societies give much importance to personal accomplishments and rights (individualism) while other contexts placed greater premium on ensuring that life-long cohesive and stable network of relationships are maintained. That said, it is very probable that people in societies that foster *high power distance* and *individualism* would reap the benefits of endorsing power than those who live in contexts that emphasized *low power distance* and *collectivism*. However, this section focused more on the implication of *individualism vs. collectivism* dimension in understanding the effects of power across cultures.

Even though Hofstede's (1998) framework offers possible directions in exploring why cultural differences in behaviors exist, Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gelfand (1995) sensed the need to extend the conceptualization on *individualism vs. collectivism* given the complex nature of contextual and social factors that underlie various psychological processes in distinct cultural settings. On one hand, individualism can be further divided to *vertical individualism* (degree to which one prioritizes uniqueness and special status) and *horizontal individualism* (extent to which individuals aspire uniqueness without wanting to gain a special status). On the other hand, collectivism was further dichotomized to *horizontal collectivism* (extent to which one is inclined to preserve interdependence without being too submissive) and *vertical collectivism* (degree to which individuals value interdependence and seek competition with out-groups). They argued that it is relatively crucial to investigate how this theoretical extension would lead to better understanding why various behaviors operate differently in different contexts.

Consistent with the theoretical model of Singelis et al. (1995), Torelli and Shavitt (2010) argued that power can be conceptualized in terms of how it addresses significant cultural goals. In other words, power is seen as a precursor towards the attainment of important culturally-prescribed aspirations. Whereas some individuals exercise power to actualize their personal agenda, some individuals realize powerful goals to help others (Whiting & Whiting, 1975). Torelli and Shavitt (2010) further asserted that for individuals who are vertical individualists, they are inclined to endorse a personalised power concept where the primary considerations are social prestige and status. Those who are horizontal individualists prioritize their personal wants and preferences to exercise influence on others. However, horizontal collectivists are likely to endorse a socialized power concept where prosocial and compassionate motives are seen as important reasons for exercising power. This is essentially similar in the case of vertical collectivists might show inclinations to endorse more complicated pattern of power expression as they could potentially manifest a personalized and a socialized conception of power.

While the study of Torelli and Shavitt (2010) advanced our understanding on the interplay between culture and power, one possible limitation of this integration is that the

culture was treated in a society-level. To address this, I will briefly discuss the framework of Markus and Kitayama (1991) which posits an individual-level conceptualization of culture. Then possible implications of the model in understanding the potential impact of power were elaborated.

The *self-construal theory* (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) posits that differences on self-views of people in individualist and collectivist cultures explain why cultural distinctions on cognition, emotion, and even motivation exist. People in individualist contexts are likely to endorse an *independent self-construal*, a view of self that emphasize autonomous expression of one's dispositions and wants. Alternatively, those in collectivist cultures are prone to endorse *interdependent self-construal*, a view of self that gives much importance to establishing and maintaining sound relationships.

One important implication of the fundamental difference in the self-construal of individuals in independent and interdependent cultures is a corresponding distinction on what makes them happy and satisfied with their lives. To support this claim, previous literature revealed that self-esteem appeared to be a stronger predictor of happiness in the Western context (Diener, 2012; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Uchida, Norasakkunkit, & Kitayama, 2004; Uchida & Ogihara, 2012) while relationship harmony seemed to be a more robust determinant of well-being in collectivist cultures (Diener, 2012; Diener et al., 1999; Uchida et al., 2012). These findings imply that attainment of happiness is largely shaped by specific personal and social factors that are valued in various cultural milieus. Therefore, it is relatively important to look at culture-specific antecedents of happiness to have a clearer picture of what constitutes a happy and satisfying life in contexts that prioritize independence and interdependence.

With the influence of self-construal on individuals' thinking patterns, emotions, and behaviors, it seems logical that even the expression and consequences of power may differ depending on one's cultural context. Since power involves controlling important resources (e.g. administrative decisions) in specific situations, it may not be safe to assert that powerful individuals are likely to be happy regardless of their environmental context. This is especially true in the case of individuals who endorse *interdependent self-construal* who are more concerned with establishing harmonious interpersonal relationships.

As what have been emphasized in the abovementioned theoretical models, it is quite obvious that culture has important implications on how power operates in various contexts. With the significant role that culture plays in the effects of power on various outcomes, it is invalid to assume that the findings presented in the previous sections of this article may be generalized to all cultures especially that most of the participants in such research involved American and Dutch participants. In the following sections, I provide some studies that aim to look at how power affects happiness in the Western and Asian contexts.

Power and Happiness in the Western Context

Even though the psychological benefits of power in fostering approach-related thinking (Guinote, 2007), executive thinking functions (Smith et al., 2008), and job interview success (Lammers et al., 2013) especially in individualist cultural milieus were cited in the previous

sections of the article, these empirical studies have not examined the impact of endorsing power on well-being. As the focal argument of my paper revolves around justifying why there is no guarantee that power will lead to well-being in individualist and collectivist settings, this section exclusively discussed the psychological effects of power on happiness in the Western context.

Kifer et al. (2013) combined cross-sectional and experimental studies to explain why power may lead to subjective well-being. Consistent with previous theories on the benefits of congruence between internal states and behaviors, they proposed that power leads to greater authenticity and happiness. In the first study, a cross-sectional design was utilized to examine the effect of dispositional power on dispositional authenticity and well-being along with the impact of role power on role authenticity and well-being. Results divulged that both dispositional and role power predicted happiness and these relations were mediated by authenticity. The second study also provided a support on the assumed impact of power on authenticity and authenticity on happiness given that participants in the high power condition had higher scores in authenticity while those in the high authenticity condition had higher happiness.

One possible explanation for the beneficial consequences of power in the Western context is that there are cultural milieus that encourage the use of power. Lorenzi-Cioldi (2002) argued that *idiosyncratic credit concept* pertains to the extent to which individuals can depart from the normative social practices. Specifically, some cultural contexts permit high power people to deviate from the expected norms without the risk of getting punished for doing so. In other words, it is probable that people in individualist cultures may realize the significance of power in their lives since they are embedded in an environmental context that placed much importance on freely expressing one's personal disposition and preferences. The authors, however, cautioned about generalizing these findings to collectivist cultures that give much significance to harmonious relationships since participants of the study were recruited from the Western context.

Power and Happiness in the Asian Context

To address the limitations of the study by Kifer and her colleagues (2013) on the applicability of the contention that power leads to happiness in a collectivist context, we examined the impact of power on the subjective well-being among Filipino college students (Datu & Reyes, 2014a, 2014b). We used the 8-item Sense of Power Scale (Anderson et al., 2012) in measuring the tendencies of their participants to endorse power. We found that power is negatively correlated with subjective well-being which implies that increases in endorsement of power may be associated with decreased well-being.

As we were curious about why power was associated with lower levels of well-being in a collectivist context, we also assessed the mediating effects of authenticity on the relations between power and subjective well being. Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, and Joseph (2008) conceptualized authenticity as individuals' inclination to engage in behaviors that reflect their personal dispositions and wants. Authentic people typically experience the

following: (a) actions or emotions which are congruent with one's conscious recognition of cognitive, emotional, and physical state; (b) acceptance of others' influence or conforming to others' expectations; and congruence between conscious awareness and actual experience.

Since espousing greater power enable people to control values resources or others in various situations, it is possible that powerful individuals would experience higher authenticity because they are capable of freely doing their aspirations. Yet, we conjectured that Filipino students will not be significantly happy when they are inclined to show behaviors that represent their actual traits, wants, and values as they do not live in the Western context where independent expression of one's self is highly important (Datu & Reyes, 2014a, 2014b).

To measure authenticity, the 12-item General Authenticity Scale of Wood et al. (2008) was used. Results showed a positive relation between power and authenticity, and both variables correlated negatively with well-being (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Correlational Analyses of Power, Authenticity and Well-being

Variable N = 375	Authenticity	Well-Being
1. Power	.38**	-.12*
2. Authenticity	-	-.11*

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

Consistent with the hierarchical multiple regression approach of Baron and Kenny (1986), series of regression analyses were executed to test the mediating effects of authenticity on the hypothesized relations between power and subjective well-being using the 20th version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. In Step 1, well-being was regressed to power. Then, authenticity was regressed to power in Step 2. Step 3 involves regressing well-being to power after controlling for the effects of authenticity. The results showed that both power and authenticity negatively predicted well-being (see Table 2). These results imply that increases in the levels of power and authenticity may be linked to lower well-being which contradicts findings of Kifer et al. (2013) on the hypothesized benefits of power on optimal psychological outcomes. Furthermore, the findings revealed that authenticity mediated the relations between power and subjective well-being since the negative but significant predictive impact of power on well-being ($B = -.11, p < .05$) was no longer significant ($B = -.09, p = .18$) after controlling the effects of authenticity. The final model explained 1.8% of the variance in well-being which appears to suggest a weak mediation effect. In particular, the mediation model (Figure 1) suggests that as power enhances authenticity and authenticity reduces happiness, power is negatively associated with well-being.

Table 2.
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Testing the Mediating Impact of Authenticity

	Outcome	Predictor	*B*	*SE β*	*Std. B*	R^2
Step 1	Well-Being	Power	-.14	.07	-.11*	.01
Step 2	Authenticity	Power	.88	.11	.38***	.15
Step 3	Well-Being	Power	-.10	.07	-.08	
		Authenticity	-.05	.03	-.09	.02

p < .05, *** *p* < .001. Note: Step 1 shows the regression results of path c; step 2 shows the regression results of path a; step 3 shows the regression results of path c'

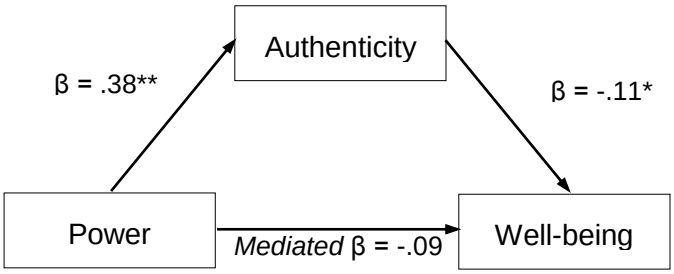

Figure 1. Final model on the mediating impact of authenticity on power and well-being. * p < .05, ** p < .01

Why Power Negatively Predicts Happiness in a Collectivist Context

Yet, we contended that it may not be adequate to simply depend on quantitative results to see why it turned out that power decreases well-being in a collectivist context. This urged us to conduct a follow-up qualitative study that explored possible reasons on the undesirable influence of power on subjective well-being. We recruited five participants from the quantitative phase who had high and low scores in power. Three participants had high scores on power (A, B, & C) while the remaining two participants got low scores on power (D & E).

Power impairs relationships

One important theme that emerged in the qualitative phase points to the detrimental consequences of exercising power in establishing and maintaining good relationships with others. Most of the participants perceived that power may increase the likelihood of

experiencing conflict with friends, classmates, and teachers. This has been quite evident when **A** claimed:

> "Yes, my relationship with friends changed during those times (where I served as the project leader)…Because before, we are good….As time passes by, especially when we started working on our papers, my behaviors started to change….So it seems like my relationship with my friends changed in a way that we are no longer open to one another…Our bonding moments were minimized…Consequently, when we are in the classroom, we are no longer like before, wherein we are very happy every time that we meet because it was affected by the fact that I always want to dominate the group…"

This experience goes to show how possessing power could prevent individuals from maintaining interpersonal harmony. Other subthemes that represent perceived reasons on the negative influence of power on well-being include:

Reduction of social interaction

> "I think…because of course if you have power, others may be reluctant to approach you….it seems that they might be afraid of you…" - **D**)

Conflict with classmates

> "Because every time that I accomplish the tasks that are assigned to me by my teacher, my classmates are usually upset with me..." – **D**

Increase of rivalry among co-officers

> "There is also a conflict among officers like us…we have different wants…I mean that we cannot meet half way which consequently prompted me to neglect them…" - **B**.

These themes would likely propose that participants perceived that power can disrupt relationships.

Power evokes negative judgement from others

Another essential theme pertains to tendencies of others to negatively evaluate the actions of people who possess and exercise power. Subthemes that are embedded in this general theme involve:

Criticism from others

> "That's it…because other people are thinking that the only reason why she was given that position is due to her financial wealth…That she stays in the position because of the material things that she would beget from it…" - **D**; "It seems like whatever I do, they tend to negatively react on it so it may be better if I will simply give up the power that I have instead of using it which might result to criticisms from them…"- **B**

Increase of negative issues

> "Of course, I have a title; I am not ordinary student wherein if I commit a mistake, it will be left unnoticed…Every time that I engaged in wrong actions, they would usually tell, "Oh, you are also an officer…" - **C**

Negative perceptions from others

> "It seems like whatever I do, they tend to negatively react on it so it may be better if I will simply give up the power that I have instead of using it which might result to criticisms from them…" - **B**

This theme suggests, therefore, that power may lessen well-being since it increases the chances that other people would endorse undesirable remarks towards one's behaviors. Powerful individuals are seen as prone to getting negative evaluations given that others would likely pay attention to their mistakes and shortcomings.

Power comes with a great responsibility

This theme talks about the perception that power does not lead to well-being as it gives individuals greater duties and obligations. The subthemes that comprise this category include:

Fulfilment of other people's expectations

> "When I was still not an officer, I am not following the clean as you go policy…Never mind it…but when I got power, since everyone admire me, I sensed the necessity to do appropriate things which I was not accustomed to before.."- **C**)

Increase of responsibility

> "Of course (pressured), I am always involved if there are planning on the implementation of projects…conceptualization of the projects and implementation of such endeavors…" - **A**; "Presently, I am the president of the IS so for me, it is a

> major responsibility…I have the power to make various decisions in that organization but sometimes it is not helpful…" – **B**

Requirement to compromise or adjust

> "Yes because if you are appointed (by your adviser) to serve as the class president, they believe that you are capable of doing your responsibilities, even the adjustment to your subordinates because it is not only you who will be affected…when you have power, it is not your personal wants that you would need to think of…It is important for you to think of your subordinates, to where you are task to perform your duties because it is not only you who will be affected…" - **B**.

In other words, exercising power may reduce well-being since it entails additional accountabilities and adjustments.

Synthesis

The results in our quantitative and qualitative phase of mixed methods study reinforced the contention that power could decrease well-being in collectivist societies (Datu & Reyes, 2014a, 2014b). We argued that such findings are acceptable given that the Filipino participants endorsed characteristics of people in collectivist cultures (Datu, 2014, September; Grimm, Church, Katigbak, & Reyes, 1999). That said, it is possible that controlling important resources across situations (power) leads to unhappiness since it allows even collectivist individuals to behave in ways that are consistent with their dispositions and wants (authenticity). However, since collectivists are not culturally expected to endorse an autonomous and independent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), they may not readily appreciate the advantageous side of becoming powerful. Instead, collectivist individuals are encouraged to maintain harmonious relationships with others to achieve well-being (Uchida & Ogihara, 2012).

As what have been shown in the abovementioned study, it appears that power reduces well-being in the Philippine context because controlling valued resources in a particular situation (e.g. greater access to physical facilities in the classroom setting) could prevent collectivists from achieving their respective cultural tasks (e.g. relationship harmony). This viewpoint is quite evident in some themes that emerged in the qualitative phase of their research (*power impairs relationships; power evokes negative judgement from others*). It further strengthens Uchida and Ogihara's (2012) assertion that maintaining sound relationships is a more robust determinant of well-being in collectivist cultures. Perhaps, these evidences corroborate with past literature on the possible "downsides" of power since it was found that power decreases sensitivity to social and environmental cues (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008), cooperation in social activities (Tedeschi, Lindskold, Horal, & Gahagan, 1969) and acceptance of advices from others (See, Morrison, Rothman, & Soll, 2011).

Implications to Theory and Future Research

The present paper provides initial support on the debilitating impact of power on well-being among individuals in a collectivist context. While some theoretical assumptions (e.g. self-construal theory; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and empirical studies were utilized to forward potential reasons on why being powerful does not make people happy in interdependent societies, there are empirical issues that must be clarified to advance extant theories on the antecedents and consequences of power. One relevant issue that must be resolved is whether or not power is always detrimental in cultures that give much importance to interdependence. Perhaps, one possible reason that could account for the negative effects of power on well-being is because the definition of power that was proposed by Keltner et al. (2003) represents distinct experiences of powerful individuals in the Western context who are expected to maintain an independent and autonomous self (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

In other words, it is decisive to develop a culturally appropriate model of power that would integrate unique cultural prescribed goals of collectivists. Torelli and Shavitt's (2010) initial work on aligning conceptions of power with individualism – collectivism framework (society–level measure of culture) offers promising insights on how culture may help individuals understand the psychological effects of power in various sociocultural milieus. It might be interesting to investigate how individual-level measures of culture (self-construal) can be incorporated in refining the definition of power. Through "culturalizing" power, a clearer picture on how power impacts well-being and other relevant behavioral outcomes can be visualized. These directions could not only result to advancement in theories of power but also in accurate measurement of power across cultures. Conceivably, assuming that an "interdependent" model of power will be constructed that puts greater premium on utilizing power to achieve harmonious relationships; it is possible that power can lead to greater well-being as the expression of power was aligned with normative goals in collectivist contexts.

Another gap that seems to be evident in power literature is the existence of cross-cultural research on the antecedents and consequences of power in the Western and Asian contexts. Although the results of our study proposed that power hampers well-being in a collectivist context (Datu & Reyes, 2014a, 2014b), it may be more desirable to concurrently examine how culture (self-construal) impacts the consequence of power on subjective well-being. This could further extend our understanding on the role of culture in the relations between power and optimal psychological outcomes.

Conclusions

The current paper offers theoretical arguments and empirical support why power may lessen well-being in a collectivist context. This claim seems contradictive to most studies in this field as they demonstrate that power enhances both authenticity and well-being (e.g., Kifer et al., 2013). However, all studies were empirically tested in individualist countries. The study in the Philippines extends literature on power since we found that power reduces subjective well-being because it could potentially thwart collectivists' abilities to maintain harmonious

relationships. The paper demonstrates that the psychological effects of power on optimal psychological outcomes are largely dependent on the prescribed cultural tasks that are endorsed by people in individualist and collectivist contexts.

The empirical directions proposed in this paper also calls for a need to integrate power with cultural self-construals so that a culture-sensitive conceptualization of power can be forwarded. These routes to refining extant models of power may not only result to advancement in the psychology of power but also to development of culturally appropriate measures of the said construct. In the long run, these directions should lead to a better appreciation of the psychological benefits and detriments of power in various sociocultural contexts.

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Discussion Questions

1. Do you see yourself as someone who is powerful? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that existing theories of power are applicable to people across cultures? Why or why not?
3. What do you think are the benefits of power in the Western context? What do you think are the benefits of power in the Asian context?
4. Discuss the caveats of exercising power in the Western and Asian contexts.
5. Why do you think culture affects the antecedents and outcomes of power in the Western and Asian cultures?
6. How can a culturally-sensitive model of power help in understanding power in non-Western cultures?
7. What are the practical advantages of developing a culturally-sensitive theory of power?

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