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# The Good Life of the Powerful: The Experience of Power and Authenticity Enhances Subjective Well-Being

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## Abstract

A common cliché and system-justifying stereotype is that power leads to misery and self-alienation. Drawing on the power and authenticity literatures, however, we predicted the opposite relationship. Because power increases the correspondence between internal states and behavior, we hypothesized that power enhances subjective well-being (SWB) by leading people to feel more authentic. Across four surveys representing markedly different primary social roles (general, work, romantic-relationship, and friendship surveys; Study 1), and in an experiment (Study 2a), we found consistent evidence that experiencing power leads to greater SWB. Moreover, authenticity mediated this effect. Further establishing the causal importance of authenticity, a final experiment (Study 2b), in which authenticity was manipulated, demonstrated that greater authenticity directly increased SWB. Although *striving* for power lowers well-being, these results demonstrate the pervasive positive psychological effects of *having* power, and indicate the importance of spreading power to enhance collective well-being.

## Keywords

well-being, individual differences

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The human need to believe in a just, predictable, and structured world often causes the emergence of complementary victim-enhancing stereotypes (e.g., Lerner, 1980). For example, the powerful are often seen as miserable and self-alienated, and the powerless as authentic and happy (e.g., Guinote & Vescio, 2010). Rather than capturing reality, such perceptions may serve to justify the status quo, and legitimize inequality by indicating that every class gets different but equally important benefits (Kay et al., 2007). These iconic prototypes raise two questions. First, who achieves higher levels of happiness, the powerful or the powerless? Second, what accounts for this difference?

The research reported here examined whether and how power is linked to subjective well-being (SWB)—the affective and cognitive evaluation of one's own life in general and in specific roles. Achieving a high level of SWB is considered by many people to be the most valued goal in life (Diener, 2000; Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004). Building on both theory and research linking power to increased correspondence between internal states and behavior, we posit that power, whether dispositional or contextual, is associated with enhanced SWB, and that this effect is driven by the experience of authenticity.

Put simply, because the powerful can navigate their lives in congruence with their internal desires and inclinations, they feel more authentic and, consequently, achieve greater SWB than the powerless do.

## Power and SWB: Differential Effects of Having Versus Pursuing Power?

Social power, perhaps the most basic and pervasive feature of human social life, is typically defined as asymmetrical control over other individuals or valued resources in social relations (Magee & Galinsky, 2008); control over valued resources produces the potential to influence other people in psychologically meaningful ways. At work, at home, and in relationships with other individuals, power relations are experienced in every aspect of life (Anderson, John, & Keltner, 2012). Power can be an objective situational characteristic (e.g., a boss being

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surrounded by her subordinates), a dispositional one (i.e., having a relatively stable overall sense of power; Anderson et al., 2012), or a generalized, diffuse psychological-episodic state (e.g., recalling a recent experience of power; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). Power can be exerted by either “soft” means, such as charisma or rewards, or by hard tactics, like punishment (Guinote & Vescio, 2010).

Because the pursuit of power is extrinsic in nature, and extrinsic aspirations are linked to decreased SWB (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, 1996), it is hardly surprising that striving for power is associated with reduced levels of SWB. For example, individuals whose goals are more directed toward obtaining power experience higher levels of negative affect (Emmons, 1991) and lower levels of life satisfaction (Veroff, 1982). Moreover, various negative physiological symptoms, such as infectious and cardiovascular diseases, release of stress hormones, and an impaired immune system, are linked to power-seeking motivations, particularly when those motivations are frustrated in some way (McClelland, 1989).

Although aiming for power decreases one’s SWB, we argue that the possession of power does not. That is, we propose that having power enhances SWB, and that it does so by increasing authenticity. Several lines of research demonstrate that power is associated with increased expression of preexisting predispositions and temporary inclinations. Because power reduces dependence on other people for acquiring and maintaining resources, the powerful are capable of satisfying their desires without relying on the resources of others or being concerned with how they are seen by others (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). Consequently, power leads people to behave more consistently with their internal traits and desires (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008; Keltner et al., 2003), allowing them to express their true feelings (Hecht & LaFrance, 1998), attitudes (Galinsky et al., 2008), value orientations, and dispositions (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; Galinsky et al., 2008).

## The Implications of Authenticity for Well-Being

Given this increased correspondence between internal experiences and behavior among the powerful, we propose that power enhances SWB by enhancing feelings of authenticity, the degree to which individuals connect with and enact their true selves in various situations (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Rogers, 1961). Recent work has found that power can increase feelings of authenticity in social interactions (Kraus, Chen, & Keltner, 2011). Other research and theory has connected authenticity to SWB. We link these disparate findings into a causal path from power to authenticity to SWB.

Scholars, writers, and philosophers have argued that authenticity is a fundamental aspect of individuals’ well-being and healthy functioning (e.g., Rogers, 1961; Yalom, 1980). Indeed, some schools of psychotherapy ascribe to the belief, expressed in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, that psychological health

can be achieved only by expressing one’s true inner thoughts and feelings (Rogers, 1961).

In work supporting these notions, Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, and Ilardi (1997) found that authenticity significantly correlated with satisfaction within social roles, and Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, and Joseph (2008) demonstrated that different aspects of authenticity are associated with increased SWB. However, although these studies clearly demonstrated an association between authenticity and SWB, the presumed causal effect of authenticity on SWB has never been tested.

## Overview of the Current Research

Integrating evidence that power enables the expression of the true self with data linking authenticity to SWB, we hypothesized that power increases the experience of authenticity, which mediates the link between power and SWB. We tested this hypothesis in three studies. Study 1 was a large multi-survey, observational study in which we measured dispositional sense of power, general authenticity, and SWB, as well as role-specific power, authenticity, and satisfaction within work, romantic-relationship, and friendship roles. This study tested whether power, both dispositional and role-specific, is positively related to SWB and role satisfaction through authenticity. In Study 2a, we manipulated the experience of power and examined its effect on state authenticity and SWB, and tested whether state authenticity mediated the power-SWB link. Our final study (Study 2b) complemented Study 2a by examining the second part of the proposed causal sequence, testing whether manipulated authenticity directly increased SWB. Thus, the combination of Studies 2a and 2b provided strong evidence for the hypothesized causal chain (power → authenticity → SWB) because our proposed mediator, authenticity, was both measured and manipulated. Although past studies have found associations between authenticity and SWB (e.g., Sheldon et al., 1997; Wood et al., 2008), this study provides the first causal test of this relationship.

## Study 1: Dispositional and Role-Specific Power, Authenticity, and SWB

In Study 1, we tested our hypothesis that dispositional power is a positive predictor of SWB and that general authenticity mediates this link. We further investigated whether the power–authenticity–role satisfaction sequence holds true in markedly different social roles—work, romance, and friendship—characterized by varying levels of satisfaction (Heller, Watson, Komar, Min, & Perunovic, 2007), and differences in the salience and levels of power (Anderson et al., 2012; Roberts, 2007). For example, whereas power at work may win the power holder desirable rewards in this competitive, agentic environment, power within a romantic relationship may impair a sense of connection and communality, and therefore have a weaker positive association with relationship satisfaction.

Nonetheless, given our theoretical rationale regarding a fundamental link between power, authenticity, and SWB, we hypothesized that power would predict SWB, and that the direct effects of power on SWB would be mediated by authenticity, generally and within the specific roles. We tested our hypothesis using data from four surveys.

## Method

**Participants.** We recruited a sample of 351 participants (201 women and 150 men; mean age = 32.34 years,  $SD = 7.04$ ) for the first, general, survey. Of these initial participants, 242 (144 women and 98 men; mean age = 32.63 years,  $SD = 7.67$ ) completed the second survey, which focused on the work domain; 183 (110 women and 73 men; mean age = 33.32 years,  $SD = 8.30$ ) completed the third survey, which focused on romantic relationships; and 177 (112 women and 65 men; mean age = 33.98 years,  $SD = 8.02$ ) responded to the fourth survey, which covered friendships.<sup>1</sup>

**Procedure and measures.** Four online surveys—a general survey plus work, romantic-relationship, and friendship surveys—were administered over a period of 3 months to fully employed, romantically involved Israeli community members. In each survey, we explored the link between dispositional power and SWB or between role power and role satisfaction, as well as the mediating role of authenticity. To decrease memory and demand effects, we separated consecutive surveys by 2 to 3 weeks. Additionally, to control for order effects, we randomized the order of the questionnaires within each survey. Unless otherwise noted, all ratings were made using 5-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Participants were recruited via diverse methods (e.g., advertisements on bulletin boards, e-mails, word of mouth) and varied considerably in profession, socioeconomic status, and professional seniority. To eliminate the potentially confounding effects of dispositional extraversion and neuroticism—which have previously been documented to correlate (positively and negatively, respectively) with power (e.g., Anderson et al., 2012) and SWB (e.g., Heller et al., 2004)—we controlled for both in all of our analyses. Moreover, because women tend to feel less powerful than men in certain contexts (e.g., Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000), we also controlled for gender.<sup>2</sup> Finally, to capture the unique contextual links between role power and role satisfaction, we also controlled for dispositional power and general SWB in the analyses of the work, romantic-relationship, and friendship surveys.

**Power.** Dispositional and role power were assessed via the Sense of Power scale (Anderson et al., 2012). This eight-item scale asks respondents to report their beliefs about the power they have. Sample items are “I think I have a great deal of power” and “Even when I try, I am not able to get my way” (reverse-scored). To measure role power, we adjusted the instructions to fit each role. Alphas for the general, work,

romantic-relationship, and friendship surveys were .83, .85, .79, and .79, respectively.

**Dispositional extraversion and neuroticism.** Participants reported the extent to which each of a subset of Goldberg’s (1992) 100 trait-descriptive adjectives described themselves. Nine items were used to measure dispositional extraversion (e.g., “assertive” and “shy”), and 9 were used to measure dispositional neuroticism (e.g., “anxious” and “moody”). Alphas for extraversion and neuroticism were both .76.

**SWB.** Life satisfaction was assessed by asking participants to estimate the extent to which they agreed with each of the 5 items on the Satisfaction With Life Scale (e.g., “In most ways my life is close to my ideal”; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985;  $\alpha = .76$ ). Positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) were measured using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The PA scale includes 10 items, such as “enthusiastic” and “excited,” and the NA scale includes 10 items, such as “afraid” and “ashamed.” Participants were asked to estimate the extent to which they generally (i.e., on average) experienced these emotions. Alphas for PA and NA were .79 and .86, respectively. We computed SWB by summing the standardized life-satisfaction and PA scores and then subtracting the standardized NA score (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

**Role satisfaction.** For each role, we assessed satisfaction using a validated scale designed to capture the unique contextual aspects of satisfaction within that role. Job satisfaction was measured with Brayfield and Rothe’s (1951) five-item measure and two items from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983; e.g., “I feel fairly satisfied with my job”;  $\alpha = .91$ ). Romantic-relationship satisfaction was measured using a modified version of Norton’s (1983) six-item marital-satisfaction measure, adapted to refer to romantic relationships instead of to marriage (e.g., “My relationship with my partner makes me happy”;  $\alpha = .95$ ). Finally, to measure friendship satisfaction, we adjusted five items from Hendrick’s (1988) relationship-satisfaction scale to refer to a friend’s role (e.g., “How well does your friend meet your needs?”; scale from 1, *low satisfaction*, to 5, *high satisfaction*;  $\alpha = .81$ ).

**General authenticity.** Our measure of general authenticity was the 12-item general authenticity scale developed by Wood et al. (2008; e.g., “I live in accordance with my values and beliefs”;  $\alpha = .77$ ).

**Role authenticity.** To ensure a broad and reliable assessment of role authenticity, we utilized eight items, drawn from two distinct scales: Fleeson and Wilt’s (2010) three-item authenticity scale (e.g., “I feel authentic in the way I act”) and the five-item role-specific scale developed by Sheldon et al. (1997; e.g., “I experience this aspect of myself as an authentic part of who I am”). Items were adjusted to fit each of the three roles. The correlations between the two scales were .66, .60, and .65 for the work, romantic-relationship, and friendship roles, respectively, and the corresponding alphas were .85, .82, and .85.<sup>3</sup>

## Results and discussion

Results were consistent with our predictions. Dispositional power emerged as a significant positive predictor of SWB ( $b = 2.18$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and this association held even after controlling for gender, dispositional extraversion, and dispositional neuroticism ( $b = 1.38$ ,  $SE = 0.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Analyzing the three role surveys confirmed our predictions that this effect of power generalizes to various contexts, as role power significantly predicted role satisfaction in all three roles (controlling for gender, dispositional extraversion, dispositional neuroticism, dispositional power, and SWB; Table 1).

To illustrate the magnitude of the association of dispositional and role power with SWB and role satisfaction, we calculated the predicted levels of life satisfaction, PA, NA, and role satisfaction of high-power (90th percentile) and low-power (10th percentile) individuals and then compared the two groups (see Fig. 1). Participants with high dispositional power were 16% more satisfied with their lives, and experienced 15% more PA and 10% less NA, than participants with low dispositional power. Moreover, role power was associated with substantially higher levels of satisfaction in all roles: Powerful employees were more satisfied with their jobs than their powerless colleagues ( $\Delta = 26\%$ ), powerful romantic partners were more satisfied in their romantic relationships than powerless ones ( $\Delta = 18\%$ ), and powerful friends derived greater satisfaction in their friendships compared with powerless friends ( $\Delta = 11\%$ ).

We also found that dispositional power predicted general authenticity ( $b = 0.42$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $p < .01$ ), an effect that remained significant even after controlling for gender, dispositional extraversion, and dispositional neuroticism ( $p < .01$ ). Furthermore, role power was a positive predictor of role authenticity in all three roles: work ( $b = 0.50$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $p < .01$ ), romantic relationship ( $b = 0.45$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and friendship ( $b = 0.65$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < .01$ ); again, these effects remained significant after controlling for gender, dispositional extraversion, dispositional neuroticism, dispositional power, and general authenticity ( $p < .01$ ).

Finally, we tested the mediating role of authenticity in the link between power and SWB using bootstrap procedures to construct bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence intervals (CIs) based on 5,000 random samples with replacement. Mediation is present when the size of an indirect effect differs significantly from zero (e.g., Preacher & Hayes, 2008). As predicted, none of the 95% BCa CIs included zero, a result indicating that dispositional authenticity mediated the link between dispositional power and SWB, and role authenticity mediated the link between role power and satisfaction for all three roles (see Table 2 for total, direct, and indirect effects, as well as the CIs).<sup>4</sup>

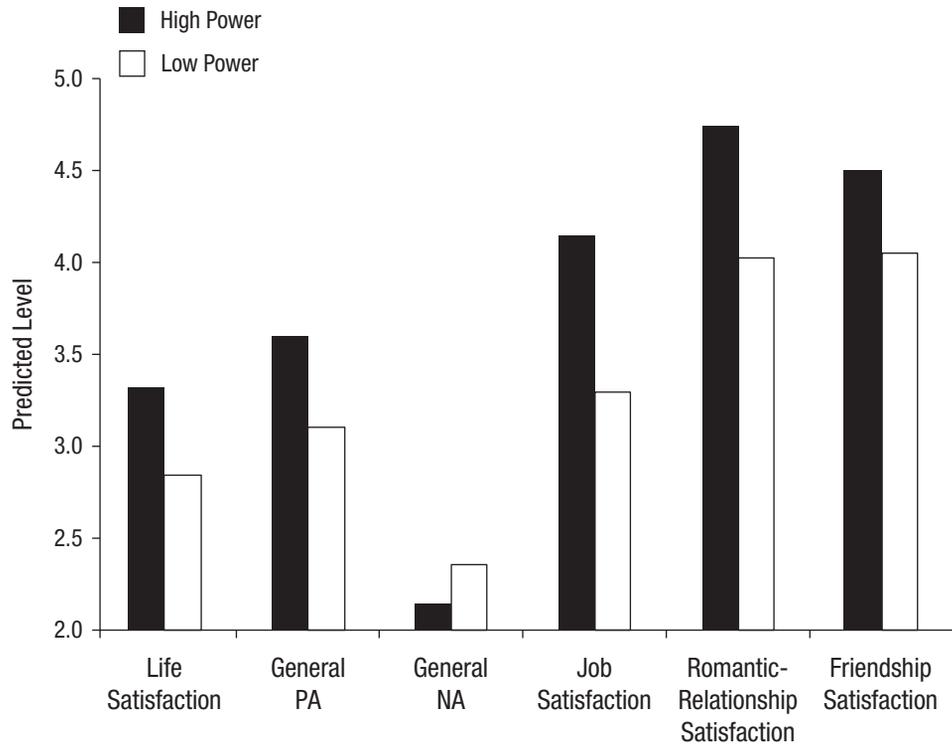
Taken together, these findings indicate that power, whether dispositional or contextual, is consistently linked to SWB and role satisfaction, and that authenticity is the mechanism underlying this link.

**Table 1.** Results of Stepwise Regressions Predicting Role Satisfaction in Study I

Predictor	Work survey (DV = job satisfaction)			Romantic-relationship survey (DV = romantic-relationship satisfaction)			Friendship survey (DV = friendship satisfaction)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Role power	0.64** (0.08)	0.58** (0.08)	0.31** (0.07)	0.65** (0.09)	0.56** (0.09)	0.30** (0.08)	0.48** (0.09)	0.45** (0.10)	0.01 (0.09)
Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)		-0.12 (0.10)	0.02 (0.09)		-0.00 (0.10)	0.13 (0.08)		-0.12 (0.10)	0.05 (0.08)
Dispositional extraversion		-0.04 (0.09)	0.01 (0.08)		-0.28** (0.09)	-0.22** (0.07)		0.10 (0.09)	0.01 (0.07)
Dispositional neuroticism		-0.01 (0.10)	0.04 (0.08)		0.03 (0.09)	0.04 (0.07)		-0.02 (0.09)	0.02 (0.07)
Dispositional power		-0.30** (0.10)	-0.26** (0.08)		-0.00 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.08)		-0.13 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.08)
Subjective well-being		0.14** (0.03)	0.09** (0.02)		0.13** (0.03)	0.08** (0.02)		0.05* (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)
Role authenticity			0.61** (0.06)			0.71** (0.07)			0.68** (0.07)
$R^2$	.23	.33	.54	.24	.34	.58	.15	.21	.51
$\Delta R^2$		.10	.20		.10	.23		.05	.30

Note: For each survey, Model 1 tested the direct relationship between role power and role satisfaction; control variables were added in Model 2, and Model 3 tested the mediational effect of authenticity (i.e., whether including authenticity in the model reduced the effect of role power on role satisfaction). The table presents unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.  $\Delta R^2$  for Model 3 was calculated relative to Model 2. DV = dependent variable.

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



**Fig. 1.** Results from Study 1: life satisfaction, positive affect (PA), and negative affect (NA) as a function of dispositional power, and role satisfaction as a function of the corresponding type of role power. The bars show mean predicted values of satisfaction for high-power participants (i.e., 90th percentile) and low-power participants (i.e., 10th percentile).

### Studies 2a and 2b: Experimental Tests of the Casual Chain

The next two studies were designed to test the proposed general causal chain: Power enhances authenticity, which, in turn, enhances SWB. For this purpose, we conducted two experiments in which we implemented two distinct approaches for

testing mediation: the measurement-of-mediation approach in Study 2a and the experimental-causal-chain approach in Study 2b (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005). In Study 2a, we manipulated power and examined its causal effect on state authenticity and SWB, and whether the link between power and SWB was mediated by authenticity. The fact that authenticity and SWB were both measured variables rendered the process of

**Table 2.** Results of Mediation Models Testing Whether the Effect of Power on Subjective Well-Being (SWB) Was Mediated by Authenticity in Studies 1 and Study 2a

Study and proposed mediation route	Unstandardized regression coefficients		Bootstrapping procedure	
	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	BCa 95% CI
Study 1 (general survey): dispositional power → authenticity → SWB	1.41**	1.16**	0.24*	0.09–0.46
Study 1 (work survey): work power → authenticity at work → job satisfaction	0.58**	0.31**	0.27*	0.14–0.43
Study 1 (romantic-relationship survey): relationship power → authenticity in relationship → relationship satisfaction	0.56**	0.29**	0.26*	0.12–0.46
Study 1 (friendship survey): friendship power → authenticity in friendship → friendship satisfaction	0.45**	0.01	0.43*	0.24–0.85
Study 2a: manipulated power → state authenticity → SWB	0.96**	0.61**	0.35*	0.01–0.72

Note: All bootstrapping procedures were based on 5,000 random samples with replacement. The bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence intervals (CIs) include correction for median bias and skew. CIs excluding zero are interpreted as being significant.

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

establishing directionality difficult, so in Study 2b, we directly manipulated authenticity and examined its effects on state SWB.

### Study 2a: manipulated power, state authenticity, and SWB

In Study 2a, we predicted that participants in a high-power condition would report greater levels of authenticity (the first part of our proposed causal chain) and SWB relative to participants in a low-power condition. Additionally, we predicted that authenticity would mediate the link between power and SWB.

**Method.** Two hundred fifty-two participants<sup>5</sup> (152 women, 100 men; mean age = 32.93 years,  $SD = 11.71$ ) were recruited from a U.S. online pool in exchange for payment. To ensure that participants would not suspect the purpose of the study, we told them that they would be participating in three different tasks. In the first task, we manipulated power by randomly assigning participants to recall and write about an event in which they either had high power (“a situation in which you controlled the ability of another person or persons to get something they wanted, or were in a position to evaluate those individuals”) or had low power (“a situation in which someone else controlled your ability to get something you wanted, or was in a position to evaluate you”). This well-validated technique has been shown to yield results similar to those obtained with manipulations involving actual power roles (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2003; Galinsky et al., 2008).

In the second task, participants completed a seven-item state authenticity scale composed of Fleeson and Wilt’s (2010) three-item authenticity scale and a four-item self-alienation measure adapted from the general authenticity scale of Wood et al. (2008). We used only these four items from Wood et al. because they were the only items that had previously been shown to capture state authenticity (Gino, Norton, & Ariely, 2010). The correlation between these two scales was high ( $r = .58$ ), and the alpha for the full scale was .88.

In the final task, participants reported their life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985), as well as their PA and NA (Watson et al., 1988), “right now.” We computed the SWB composite using the same formula as in Study 1.

**Results and discussion.** As a manipulation check, two independent judges blind to condition and hypotheses coded the essays for how much power the participants reported having (9-point scale: 1 = *low*, 9 = *high*;  $r = .87$ ). As expected, participants in the high-power condition ( $M = 7.50$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) expressed having more power than those in the low-power condition ( $M = 3.07$ ,  $SD = 6.07$ ),  $t(250) = 7.90$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = 1.01$ .

The first part of the hypothesized causal chain was established by the finding that high-power participants ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) reported higher levels of state authenticity than

low-power participants ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ),  $t(250) = 2.00$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = 0.24$ . Greater power also led to higher SWB: High-power participants ( $M = 0.51$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ) reported higher levels of state SWB compared with low-power participants ( $M = -0.44$ ,  $SD = 2.41$ ),  $t(250) = 3.40$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = 0.42$ .

Authenticity was positively related to SWB ( $b = 1.86$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Bootstrapping analyses demonstrated that state authenticity mediated the relationship between power and SWB, as the 95% BCa CI ([0.01, 0.72]) excluded zero (see Table 2 for total, direct, and indirect effects).<sup>6</sup>

### Study 2b: manipulated authenticity and state SWB

The next study was designed to extend the results of Study 2a, which confirmed the first part of our proposed causal chain (power → authenticity). In Study 2b, we manipulated authenticity to determine whether it is causally related to SWB (the second part of our proposed causal chain).

**Method.** One hundred thirty-two participants<sup>7</sup> (93 women and 39 men; mean age = 38.74 years,  $SD = 14.83$ ) were recruited from a U.S. online pool in exchange for payment. Authenticity was manipulated by randomly assigning participants to recall and write about a situation in which they were either authentic or inauthentic. Participants were instructed as follows:

Please recall a particular incident in which you felt **authentic [inauthentic]**. By authentic [inauthentic], we mean a situation in which you were [were not] true to yourself and experienced yourself as behaving [not behaving] in accordance with your true thoughts, beliefs, personality, or values. Try to relive this situation in your imagination. Please describe this situation in which you felt **authentic [inauthentic]**—what happened, how you felt, etc.

Immediately after the manipulation, we asked participants to indicate how authentic they felt when they described their memory, using the same seven-item state authenticity scale used in Study 2a ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Finally, in an ostensibly unrelated task, participants completed the same state SWB measure as in Study 2a.

**Results.** The manipulation was successful. Participants in the high-authenticity condition ( $M = 4.57$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) reported feeling more authentic than those in the low-authenticity condition ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ),  $t(130) = 15.67$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = 2.73$ .

As predicted, participants in the high-authenticity condition ( $M = 0.38$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ) reported higher levels of state SWB than those in the low-authenticity condition ( $M = -0.46$ ,  $SD = 2.12$ ),  $t(130) = 2.35$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = 0.40$ . This is the first experiment to provide direct evidence that authenticity has a causal effect on SWB.

## General Discussion

Across four surveys representing markedly different contexts (Study 1), as well as two complementary experimental studies (Studies 2a and 2b), we consistently found evidence that more powerful individuals experience greater SWB and role satisfaction, and that these effects of power are largely due to authenticity. Because both power and authenticity were manipulated and measured, and because the participants included more than 700 Israelis and Americans with a wide range of ages and professions, this set of studies offers both internal and external validity.

These results are consistent with past research showing that power increases the correspondence between internal states and behavior. We extended this research by showing that by leading people to be true to their desires and inclinations—to be authentic—power leads individuals to experience greater happiness.

Contributing to the literatures on social power, authenticity, and SWB, our findings establish important benefits of having power and highlight the distinction between striving for and having power. Whereas power is often pursued through inauthentic, extrinsic motivation and, thus, is associated with reduced levels of SWB, our findings suggest that power, once it is achieved, is actually an important ingredient in enabling authentic self-fulfillment, which then serves as a critical foundation for achieving SWB. Furthermore, the experience of power can also explain why higher social status leads to greater SWB (Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner, 2012). Additional contributions of this research are the development of a novel manipulation of authenticity, and the demonstration of the causal sequence running from authenticity to SWB. Although many researchers have proposed this causal sequence (e.g., Rogers, 1961), it has not been subjected to empirical scrutiny until now.

Notably, although we found a robust association between power and satisfaction, its magnitude differed across contexts in Study 1. This variation may have been due to the distinct characteristics of the roles: Whereas workplaces are commonly based on role hierarchies, so that power's implications for role expectations and behavior are pronounced, friendships are associated with affiliation and communality motives and behaviors, and thus power differences may be less relevant to satisfaction within this context (Roberts, 2007).

Several aspects of the present research warrant further investigation. First, because all participants were from Western cultures, which are characterized by the glorification of independence and actualization, rather than interdependence and focus on a larger social unit (as in East Asian cultures; e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991), future research should test for cross-cultural differences in the effects of power on authenticity and SWB. Second, because power can be exerted in various ways, some of which are generally positive (e.g., charisma) and others of which are negative (e.g., physical punishments), future studies should examine whether these differences in the

exercise of power moderate the effects of power on authenticity and SWB. Third, it is important to emphasize that this research focused on social power, which by definition involves control over the outcomes of other individuals. However, power can also be conceptualized as personal power—that is, a lack of dependence on others and the ability to control one's own outcomes—and future research should explore the effect of personal power on SWB (Guinote & Vescio, 2010). Finally, because this research focused on the perception of power and not on the actual possession of power, future research should test the generalizability of our findings by using more objective measures of power.

The current research suggests that giving people a sense of power may go a long way toward improving their well-being. With a little bit of power, people can follow the advice Polonius gave his departing son, Laertes: “To thine own self be true” (Shakespeare, 1992 ed., 1.2.70–72).

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## Notes

1. Given that not everyone returned all four surveys, we examined the correlations between the number of surveys completed and each of the variables and found no significant relationships.
2. Gender did not moderate the effects of power on authenticity, SWB, or role satisfaction in any of the studies (all  $ps > .10$ ), with one exception: Gender did moderate the effect of dispositional power on general authenticity in Study 1 ( $b = -0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Given that moderation by gender occurred in only 1 of 10 tests, we do not discuss it further.
3. All the reported significant effects involving role authenticity were also significant when each of the two scales was analyzed separately.
4. We also used the traditional three-step approach (Baron & Kenny, 1986) to test the proposed mediations and found support for mediation in each survey (see Table 1 for analyses of the role surveys).
5. We removed 29 additional participants from analysis because of problems associated with the priming procedure (e.g., some participants could not recall a time in which they had or lacked power).
6. The proposed mediation was also supported when we used Baron and Kenny's (1986) traditional three-step approach.
7. We removed 12 additional participants from analysis because of problems associated with the priming procedure.

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