An Overdue Critical Look at Soft Power Measurement:
The Construct Validity of the Soft Power 30 in Focus

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In the vast scholarship on soft power, researchers continue to disagree about the measurement of soft power and soft power resources. There is also a neglect of the issue of construct validity. Calling attention to the unsettled state of measurement affairs, this study brings to light the literature's twofold disagreement: the first over the operational definitions of soft power and the second over whether indicators are of soft power resources or not. This study then goes further to assess the Soft Power 30 project, an exemplar index of soft power resources as recognized by Nye, as a showcase for assessing construct validity. Results show the project is problematic in two ways—it confuses the distinction between means of soft power and outcomes of soft power, and it overlooks the military as an essential dimension of soft power resources. This study concludes by proposing ways to render the index not only more valid for measurement but also more fruitful for substantial theory building, followed by a call for future research to address disagreements over the operational definitions of soft power.

Keywords: Public diplomacy, Soft power, Measurement, Construct Validity, The Soft Power 30

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of soft power made a debut in 1990 in world politics and now has attained a primary status in public diplomacy. Soft power's ascendancy finds its place in recent definitions of public diplomacy, not least of which is Gilboa's (2015) view: "Soft power provides the theoretical and intellectual foundations for public diplomacy" (3). Such centrality of soft power has long commanded high recognition not only from international relations, but also from other disciplines concerned with public diplomacy, such as international public relations and marketing.

Along the way, the general scholarship on soft power has moved well into its measurement over more than a decade (McClory, 2013). Indeed, the scholarship, beyond its coming of age, should now be sufficiently developed to have some agreed-upon valid measures in the least, if not 'the.' At this time, however, the scholarship has hardly settled on the measurement issue, as Blanchard and Lu (2012) observed, "A deficiency in the literature is the operationalization of soft power" (570). Such a diagnosis of the literature has been echoed by others as well, such as Buhmann and Ingenhoff (2015), who found the measurement affairs suffering from gaps in the conceptual and empirical development of instruments.

Efforts to measure soft power have proliferated since Nye (2004) laid out the course for its operationalization. Such endeavors have proceeded on two parallel tracks: first one concerned with soft power itself and later another with soft power resources. Within each of the measurement tracks, however, a dissensus has continued.

Works on the first track, in line with Nye's (2004) view of soft power as attraction, measure it through subjective perceptions of a foreign country; nonetheless, they deeply diverge over the operational definitions of soft power. Some studies (Holtzhausen and

Fullerton, 2015; Yang, Shin, Lee, and Wrigley, 2008) conceive and operationalize soft power in terms of country reputation (Passow, Fehlmann, and Grahlow, 2005). Others (N. Chen, 2012; Knott, Fyall, and Jones, 2017; Grix and Brannagan, 2016; Grix and Houlihan, 2014) do so by way of nation brand (Anholt, 2007) and national image in a general sense (H. Chen, 2012; Fullerton, Kendrick, and Broyles, 2017; Simons, 2015; Yun and Kim, 2008). Still, another group claims to operationalize soft power in its own right true to Nye's conceptualization (Goldsmith and Horiuchi, 2012; Goldsmith, Horiuchi, and Wood, 2014; Köse, Özcan, and Karakoc, 2016; Lee, 2008; Rose, 2016; Whitney and Shambaugh, 2009).

Meanwhile, works on the second track, following Nye's (2004) view of soft power resources as the assets that produce attraction, measure them through objective indicators of a country's attribute, behavior, and performance; however, they deeply disagree over what indicators are to be treated as of soft power resources or not. A point of disagreement, among others, centers on indicators of people flow, including students, tourists, and immigrants from abroad. These are viewed as soft power resources by Nye, Treverton and Jones (2005), and the Soft Power 30 project (McClory, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018), but to the contrary, as outcomes of soft power by Olivié and Molina (2011) as well as Trunkos (2013).

Still in such dissensus, many of these measurement studies (e.g., Rose, 2016) have also attempted to build larger substantial theories of soft power by inquiring its web of causalities with antecedents and consequences—but without heed to the validity of the measures of soft power employed. Surely building a substantial theory for a criterion concept is the final pitch to put the academic field on firm footing. The prospect for a superstructure, however culminating, is just as good as the promise of the basis—of soft power measurement and its construct validity. As Peter (1981: 133) stated, "Construct validity is a necessary condition for theory development and testing."

Thus, it is high time for soft power research both to recognize such a dissensus over measures and to ensure the construct validity of measurement. The purpose of this study is twofold, the first part of which is to bring to light the unsettled state of measurement affairs by mapping out areas of dissensus. To this end, this study critically reviews the general measurement literature on soft power and soft power resources, from international public relations to international marketing to international relations. Such a multidisciplinary, broad perspective will contribute to soft power scholarship by offering it a holistic view of problems with measurement.

The second part is to go beyond a mere review of the measurement literature, into an assessment of the construct validity for extant soft power measures. To this end, this study builds a framework for validity assessment and then apply it to assessing an index of soft power resources as a showcase, which is the Soft Power 30 project (McClory, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018). The index is chosen as a showcase on two grounds. First, beginning in 2010 onward, the project has quantified soft power resources almost annually for as many as 30 countries, arguably second to none in the scale and scope of measurement, becoming one of the most widely consulted indexes among practitioners worldwide. Second, it is the only index that has been recognized by Nye as an exemplar measure of soft power resources (McClory, 2015).

This paper begins by reviewing in order public diplomacy and soft power; Nye's (2004) vertical theory of soft power; the measurement affairs of both soft power and soft power resources; and the notion of construct validity. What follows afterward is a section on the results of a validity assessment of the 2018 Soft Power 30 (McClory, 2018). This paper concludes by discussing ways to render the index not just more valid for measurement of soft

power resources but also more conducive to substantial theory building, followed by a call on future research to address the divergence over the operational definitions of soft power.

2. SOFT POWER

2.1 Public Diplomacy and Soft Power

Nation states have long communicated with foreign publics to further their interests in the name of public diplomacy. In this communicative endeavor, success has always rested upon those publics, and more so upon their positive image of the nation practicing public diplomacy. Despite this continuity in practice, however, the conception of national image has always experienced the opposite—conceptualized in various forms over time and in correspondence with the national interests sought.

In the so-called traditional public diplomacy (Gilboa, 2015), whose goal is to ultimately influence the target government's policies at the state level via public opinion, national image was seen largely as favorability toward a country—i.e., attitude toward a country, defined as "a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner (Fishbein and Azen, 1975: 6). However, in what is termed economic public diplomacy (Yun and Toth, 2009), where the trading state seeks its economic interests from directly communicating with foreign publics as consumers, tourists and investors, national image has been seen from the perspective of international marketing.

Originating in the literature of country-of-origin effects, this marketing-informed conception of country has produced such constructs as nation brand and country reputation (Buhmann and Ingenhoff, 2015). Nation brand is defined as "the unique multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences" (Dinnie, 2008: 15); country reputation, according to Buhmann (2016), is the long-held esteem or prestige in which a country is collectively and socially held by global publics.

Against this backdrop, another notion of country's image has emerged outside the marketing discipline—from international relations. It is soft power, defined as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment" (Nye, 2004: x). Soft power is primarily political in its theorized effects (Mattern, 2005), as the title of Nye's book speaks volumes: "soft power: the means to success in world politics." Indeed, Nye (2004, 2011) views soft power as a strategic means for statecraft to achieve principally, though not exclusively, political interests and policy goals in the long run—rather than as a means for economic statecraft.

Because of its vision—that even countries lacking military and economic hard power can succeed in world politics with attractive power from soft and intangible assets like culture —soft power has invigorated contemporary public diplomacy, attracting more and more countries to the practice (Hall, 2010).

2.2 Nye's Vertical Theory of Soft Power

Nye (2004) first discussed his vertical theory of soft power, i.e., his conceptualization and operationalization of soft power. Here all critical components of such a theory were presented, if not completely, with propositions on soft power definition, its content domain

and constitutive dimensions, and even ways of operationalization for measurement. There, he offered what has now become the most established nominal definition of soft power: "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment" (x). As such, soft power has the notion of attraction, which is subjective residing in the minds of the beholder, as its definitional DNA (i.e., content domain), and the expressions of such DNA is the process through which attraction works its way to achieve given ends or goals. As he put it, the process has been envisioned by "shaping the preferences of others" (2). This power of shaping, he added, evinces itself when country A admires country B's values, its level of prosperity and openness and then wants to follow its example—without the presence of sticks and carrots.

As for soft power's constitutive dimensions, Nye (2004) discussed three main sources of soft power: culture, political values and foreign policies. He explained, "The soft power of a country rests on primarily three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)" (11). Nye also went on to discuss the possibility of expanding soft power's constitutive dimensions beyond the three soft ones aforementioned—to include even hard power resources. According to Nye, in certain contexts hard resources also can generate the same attraction that soft resources produce: "Sometimes countries may be attracted to others with command [military] power by myths of invincibility…A strong economy not only provides resources for sanctions and payments, but can be a source of attractiveness" (7).

Although Nye (2004) expounded on what soft power is, how it works, and where it comes from, he faced a critique: that theoretical explanations are lacking for what makes attraction a power behavior. Among other critics, Hall (2010) argued, "Nye's writings present attraction as a psychological mechanism, but the psychology behind it is missing" (206). However, progress on his vertical theory resumed when Nye (2011) further articulated the psychology behind attraction. He did so with Vuving's (2009) elaboration of attraction's three 'power currencies': benignity, brilliance and beauty—a refinement with the potential to specify the constitutive dimensions of attraction per se, not those of its resources. These are currencies with which attraction can assume power, and from which arise diverse yet coherent forms of soft power.

Benignity, Vuving (2009) reasoned, comes when the agent is considered generous, kind and unselfish by helping, protecting and doing good to others. It is translated into soft power because the client feels gratitude and sympathy and wants to reciprocate the received benignity in turn. On the other hand, brilliance is the competence of a country in its domestic affairs, rather than relational. It comes when a country achieves "a strong and awesome military, a wealthy and vibrant economy, a rich and radiant culture, a peaceful and well-run society" (10). Likewise, brilliance exerts soft power in a manner that others admire and respect it first and then want to learn, adopt and emulate what brings about it. Finally, beauty refers a country's charisma in championing the perceived shared ideals, values, causes or vision. A country has such beauty when it acts as a leader to protect and advance those shared ideals, entailing in the minds a sense of security, self-extension, trust, credibility, legitimacy and even moral authority.

Before such a subsequent reformulation of soft power's constitutive dimensions, from the onset Nye (2004) had touched up the issue of measurement. In so doing, he concerned himself with measuring not only soft power (i.e., attraction) but also soft power resources, with a distinction between both constructs: "in behavioral terms soft power is attractive

power. In terms of resources, soft-power resources are the assets that produce such attraction" (6). He then proposed potential ways for operationalizing both constructs for each, with a selection of indicators. As for soft power, he demonstrated measuring U.S.' soft power with evaluations of the country's popular culture, technology, political system, business and tradition, from the 2002 Pew Global Attitude Project poll. Regarding soft power resources, he presented 18 objective indicators, including development assistance, immigrants, tourists, students, UN HDI, and the like. Consequently, Nye's (2004) move as such has set in motion two lines of measurement affairs, one of soft power and the other of soft power resources.

2.3 Measurement Affairs

2.3.1 Soft Power
The measurement of soft power began to catch on following Nye's (2004) conceptualization of it as a country's attraction. Since then, a variety of soft power measures has taken form across the general empirical scholarship on soft power, including international public relations, international marketing and international relations. Over the course, however, operational definitions of soft power, as well as their attending instruments, have become widely diverged depending upon the various traditional conventions across the disciplines.

The predominant practice in international public relations scholarship has been to operationalize soft power through its conventional lens, a general category of country constructs. The category includes those of national image in a broad sense, country reputation and nation brand. To begin with national image, "if asked to pick a single term to represent soft power," H. Chen (2012) argued, "national image is likely to be the choice of many international public relations scholars" (755). Studies subscribing to this view often use indicators of favorability (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) as measures of attitude towards a country. For instance, Yun and Kim (2008) used the feeling thermometer—a single favorability indicator—from polls by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations to measure foreign countries' attraction among U.S. citizens. Similarly, Simons (2015) looked to favorability in his study of Russian soft power among citizens of the Baltic States. H. Chen (2012), however, went on with more complexity studying how performance on mega sport-events such as the Olympic Games leads to soft power. His measure of soft power consists of three indicators, of favorability toward a country and evaluations of the country's athletic ability and general strength. At one extreme stands a study by Fullerton *et al*. (2017), who used a great assortment of indicators—though for a heuristic purpose—to measure Cuban soft power among U.S. citizens. The indicators used run the gamut from favorability to knowledge to country reputation to an open-ended question about national image.

In parallel, other scholars have gravitated toward operationalization of soft power through country reputation. Take, for example, Wang (2006), who proclaimed reputation as "a form of power and, in Nye's term, soft power" (92). The reference measure of country reputation in the widest circulation is one compiled by Passow *et al*. (2005). Officially called the Fombrum-RI Country Reputation Index, their instrument developed from a study to measure the country reputation of Liechtenstein among citizens of six foreign countries, including the U.S. The index consists of six dimensions such as emotional, physical, financial, leadership, cultural, and social appeal; and of 20 items such as "I like, trust, respect [country]" for emotional appeal, for instance. Yang *et al*. (2008), of the opinion that effective management of country reputation can contribute to soft power, adapted the measure of Passow *et al*. by adding a new dimension of political appeal, with questions about a country's diplomacy and

political system. A rare study of soft power's effects, their work probed the impact of country reputation of South Korea on U.S. citizens' intentions to visit the country for tourism and to purchase Korean products. In a similar vein, Holtzhausen and Fullerton (2015), albeit not explicitly using the term soft power, measured the country reputation of South Africa employing Yang et al.'s measure.

Public relations scholarship also turned to nation brand to operationalize soft power. N. Chen (2012) studied the formation process by which nation brand accrues from hosting mega sport and technology-events such as the Olympics Games and World Expo, with the case of China. Few studies have followed suit, however.

Research based on nation brand instead has gained more currency in the disciplines of international marketing (particularly place branding) and international relations. Pioneers in this frontier include Fan (2008), who conceived nation brand as a form of national soft power. Many scholars in these disciplines, Grix and Brannagan (2016) observed, tend to think of soft power as a new buzzword for nation brand, or a new bottle for old wine.

The baseline measure of nation brand in the widest currency is the Anholt-Gfk Nation Brands Index. Beginning in 2005 and ever since, the index has annually measured the brand image of 50 countries among over 20,000 people in 20 panel countries. It captures international perceptions of six aspects, or dimensions, of a country with 23 items: exports, governance, culture, people, tourism and immigration/investment. For instance, concerning the governance dimension evaluations are elicited of a country's performance on both domestic and global governance.

Virtually all nation brand-based research of soft power has preoccupied itself with probing the formation process, from antecedents to soft power. And the most prevalent of the antecedents studied is mega-sport events. Knott *et al*. (2017) studied these events as a communicator of nation brand identity, with an impact on soft power as nation brand image. So, too, did Grix and Houlihan (2014) and Grix and Brannagan (2016), conceiving these events to be part of a nation's soft power strategy.

The mainstream of international relations scholarship, home to Nye's (2004, 2011) theory of soft power, however, has sought to measure soft power on its own heritage and convention. So diverse a measure has appeared over the course of substantial theory building. To probe the formation of soft power from such antecedents as ethnic, sectarian and religious identities, Köse *et al*. (2016) measured soft power with two items—for evaluations of a foreign country's regional involvement and of the ideality of the country's political system for one's own country. Inquiring the contribution of U.S. foreign aid to the country's soft power, Goldsmith *et al*. (2014) measured soft power by a single item evaluating the job performance of U.S. leadership. Meanwhile, Rose (2016), studying the effects of soft power on exports, measured soft power with a single item evaluating a country's influence in the world—claiming the indicator "to be a manifestation of soft power" (219). Goldsmith and Horiuchi (2012) examined the causality from American soft power among citizens in foreign countries to support for, for instance, their governments to send troops to the Iraq War. A single item was used to measure American soft power, one that evaluates whether American foreign policy has a positive or negative influence on their country.

Some noteworthy studies have come out solely dedicated to measurement of soft power, not part of building a substantial theory. Lee (2008) measured Chinese soft power among South Koreans using secondary data from an existing global poll. Evaluations were asked for about five dimensions: Chinese influence over the world and Korea, China's global governance and culture and technologies, and affinity toward China and its people. It is arguably Whitney

and Shambaugh (2009) that has been the first global survey ever to measure soft power in a primary fashion, claiming to operationalize soft power the way Nye (2004) conceived it. Their survey captured the soft power of six countries: the U.S., China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and Indonesia. It looked into five dimensions with 26 questions—culture, human capital, diplomacy, politics and economy. With the dimension of human capital, for example, evaluations were asked for, in regards to the country's quality of education.

2.3.2 Soft Power Resources

The measurement of soft power resources has taken off following Nye's (2004) showcase of measuring them in terms of a variety of objective indicators. Following in his footsteps, further measures of soft power resources have come out mostly from the discipline of international relations—but with major differences in dimension typology and measures of choice. For instance, Treverton and Jones (2005) presented a three-dimension typology of economy, culture and ideation, and proposed such indicators as the number of foreign students for the dimension of ideation. Olivié and Molina (2011) also set forth a similar three-dimension scheme, including such indicators as international patents and foreign aid overseas. Similarly, Trunkos' (2013) typology came out consisting of five dimensions, diplomacy, economy, culture, education, and innovation, and it has such indicators as the number of cultural missions abroad for the dimension of diplomacy.

Arguably, the most representative model of measuring soft power resources is McClory's, Soft Power 30 project, formerly known as the New Persuaders before 2015. It was proclaimed to mark the first full-scale, empirical attempt at measuring soft power resources—"a departure from the standard opinion surveys that dominated soft power metrics" (2011: 14). Not only did this project make such claim, but its archetypal status was recently recognized by Nye: "This project does an admirable job" in measuring soft power resources by way of objective metrics and "It builds upon my own work in developing the concept of soft power" (McClory, 2015: 7).

The project is an ongoing endeavor growing extensive in dimensions and indicators (see Table 1 for the 2018 Soft Power 30), as well as in countries being compared. The inaugural five dimensions of 2010 consisted of diplomacy, government, culture, education, and business/innovation. The dimension of diplomacy, for instance, had such indicators as foreign aid overseas and the Anholt-Gfk Nation Brands Index.

The original typology then has been lately reconfigured into six: engagement, government, culture, education, enterprise and digital. Indeed, the number of objective indicators expanded to 71 from 23 during this period, and so did the scope of comparison from 26 to 30 countries.

Underneath such surface differences in dimensional typology among the measures, however, runs a deeper and more theoretical disagreement—over whether indicators are to be treated as resources of soft power or not. A point in focus concerns indicators of people flow, i.e., numbers of incoming students, tourists and immigrants from abroad. Nye (2004) and Treverton and Jones (2005) and the Soft Power 30 discerned these people flows as resources of soft power; however, Olivié and Molina (2011) as well as Trunkos (2013) disagreed, instead considering them outcomes of soft power. Trunkos further went on to criticize the Soft Power 30's, and Nye's scheme by extension, for suffering the failure to distinguish resources of soft power from its outcomes: it does "not separate the resource variables (foreign aid, language, etc.) from the outcome variables (national branding, tourism, etc.)" (5).

Thus far, my comprehensive review has surveyed the unsettled state of measurement

Table 1. Soft Power 30 (McClory, 2018)

Engagement		
-development aid overseas	-permanent missions to	-embassies in a country
-visa freedom	international orgs.	-embassies abroad
-audience size of state	-memberships of	-consulate general abroad
broadcaster	-environmental treaties signed	-environmental performance
-cultural missions abroad		-asylum seekers
Government		
-UN HDI	-shadow economy	-capital punishment
-good governance	-societal violence	-income inequality
-freedom	-homicide rates	-gender inequality
-trust in government	-government accountability	-press freedom
-economic democracy	-government effectiveness	-think-thanks
Culture		
-tourism (tourists)	-visitors to the world's top 100	-size of music market
-foreign correspondents from	art museums	-Michelin starred restaurants
abroad	-quality of national air carrier	-films appearing at major film
-language popularity	-UNESCO World Heritage Sites	festivals
-Olympics medals	-top 10 albums abroad	
-FIFA ranking (men)		
Education		
-top global universities	-education spending	-foreign students
-PISA performance	-tertiary enrolment	-scholarly publications
Enterprise		
-global patents	-economic freedom	-foreign investment abroad
-business competitiveness	-R&D spending	-unemployment rate
-corruption	-small, medium-sized firms	-business start-up cost
-innovation	-doing business	-high-tech exports
Digital		
-Internet users	-Facebook followers abroad to	-Facebook engagement abroad
-Internet servers	the foreign ministry	of the foreign ministry
-Internet bandwidth	-to the head	-of the head
-mobile phone users	-government online service	
-fixed broadband users	-e-participation	

affairs in the general scholarship on soft power, illuminating a twofold dissensus over measurement: one over the operational definitions among measures of soft power and the other over what are valid objective indicators of soft power resources. This state of affairs makes one thing urgent: the need to ensure the construct validity of soft power measurement. The following section turns to the notion of construct validity as a framework within which to assess the Soft Power 30 as a showcase.

3. CONSTRUCT VALIDITY

It is Cronbach and Meehl (1955) who placed construct validity into the full perspective

of nomological network. The network is, in their view, the sum of all laws that govern the construct, to the effect that it fully specifies the meaning. Thus conceptualization becomes the act of weaving and elaborating the network—theorizing all the laws. Construct validity involves two types of law within the network: one that governs the relationships of the construct with others inside a semantic network—its antecedents and consequences— and then forming the horizontal, substantive or structural theory; and another that dictates those of the construct with empirical observables, then constituting the vertical, auxiliary or measurement theory.

To begin, matching a vertical theory and its ensuing instrument is commonly referred to as translational or operational validity (Trochim, Donnelly, and Arora, 2015). Thus, operational validity refers to the extent to which the instrument reflects our theoretical knowledge and understanding of the construct. The key to ensuring such validity hinges on first articulating the theory by specifying the vertical laws. In this regard, "Careful conceptualization is critical in increasing measurement validity," observed Mueller (2004: 163). From this significance of theory emerges the standard approach to assess operational validity and a validity assessment begins top-down by first specifying the vertical theory. The vertical specifications are foremost informed by the conceptualization on the construct's relevant content and its full domain: The content is the construct's definitional DNA, making it for what it is while postulating the golden criteria that determine the construct's full domain, whose specifiable constitutive aspects form its dimensions. This process of conceptualization guides the researcher to select the empirical observables for measurement, and indeed, it does much of the specification of vertical laws.

Once the specifications of vertical theory have been articulated, an assessment of operational validity boils down to whether the chosen measures cover the content (definition) in nature as well as the full domain (dimensions) in scope. This state of correspondence is thus decided as the touchstone for operational validity: content validity—commonly defined as comprehensive representativeness of measures—under which face validity is subsumed. Measures are said to be content-valid if they capture "the full scope of the definitional content" (McDonald, 2005: 942). There is another characteristic of content validity also. For content validity, as much important as capturing the full scope of a construct's relevant content is not capturing impurities—that is, any irrelevant contents from theoretically distinct constructs. From this perspective, Rubio (2005) defined content validity as "the extent to which items in a measure all come from the same content domain" (496).

Both perspectives together offer a complete conception of content validity, as the homogenous yet exhaustive representation of the relevant content domain. Then, it can be assessed by determining if the operationalized measures suffer a lack of both purity and completeness—in other words, if contamination and deficiency are identified among the measures. When a construct is operationalized content-invalid it wreaks havoc on the construct itself by changing its very nature. In fact, the presence of contamination and deficiency can change the conceptual domain of the construct.

Moreover, content invalidity poses further problems for warding off measurement error and later building a substantial, horizontal theory centered on a focal construct. For one thing, contamination and deficiency at the level of operationalization remain the sources of two types of systematic error at the level of measurement. Contamination leads to what Heneman (1986) referred to as "systematic [error] variance in the obtained criterion score that is not present in the true criterion score," and deficiency is another type of systematic error variance "in the true criterion score that is not present in the obtained criterion score" (813). More

important, contamination in particular limits the growth of the larger substantial theory. When a measure of a focal variable contains traits of extraneous variables, either causal or consequential —according to Bollen and Paxton (2000)—the structural relationships between the focal and its extraneous constructs stand little chance of being an issue of empirical research, even if the linkages are all the more insightful for theory building.

Content validity, as discussed so far, is the prime touchstone for operational validity, which involves matching the vertical laws and empirical observables of a construct. Meanwhile, there is another type of validity that is still within the framework of the nomological network, with more than operational validity in scope. This is what is referred to as nomological validity, conceived of both the vertical and horizontal laws incorporated: It is defined as "the extent to which the observables of a construct are associated with those of other constructs in correspondence with the theoretical relationships between the constructs" (Carmines and Woods, 2004: 1172).

Determining operational validity primarily involves a theoretical assessment whereas determining nomological validity demands an empirical and statistical one. The job of assessing the construct validity of an instrument begins first with an assessment of operational validity. For this reason, this study focuses on operational validity of the Soft Power 30, i.e., on the extent to which the instrument of soft power resources embodies Nye's (2004, 2011) vertical theory of soft power, as has been previously articulated in this paper. The following section presents the results of the validity assessment.

4. ASSESSMENT OF SOFT POWER 30'S CONSTRUCT VALIDITY

The content domain of soft power resources serves as the benchmark to assess the operational validity of the Soft Power 30. According to Nye (2004), soft power resources are the assets that produce attraction. That is, the domain of resources consists of all attributes, performances, and behaviors of a country that potentially make it into the target's perception of benignity, competence, and charisma. In other words, 'the assets' or the domain of resources means the very substances of a country where people make sense, form an image and perceive power currencies.

Of the project's multi-year renditions, the latest 2018 Soft Power 30 and its battery of objective indicators were assessed regarding its operational validity in terms of content validity—with a focus on the extent to which the index suffers from threats of contamination and deficiency.

4.1 Contamination

A close auditing of the instrument reveals evidence of three distinct constructs lumped together. It not only captures the singular content domain of soft power resources—i.e., basic resources—but houses two theoretically distinct constructs under the same roof. The first such construct is of instrumentals or instrumental resources, that is, the vectors for those basic resources; the second is of outcomes—the results of soft power as attraction, in Nye's (2011) literary words, "the shining light from a city on the hill" (94).

For starters, the index rightfully includes measures of basic resources, the attributes, performances and behaviors of a country from which attraction is presumed to arise. Noticeably, the two dimensions of government and enterprise consist of basic resources only,

conducive to a country's competence. For government, the indices range from the UN HDI to gender inequality, for the enterprise from international patents to business environment, and for dimension of education from the quality of universities to the number of scholarly publications. Meanwhile, basic resources home to benignity and charisma appear mostly in the dimension of engagement, such as foreign aid overseas, the number of asylum seekers and environmental treaties signed.

However, trouble sets in with the inclusion of measures of instrumental resources. They are indispensable for basic resources to translate into perceptual attraction, but require a nuanced understanding of their relationships with basic resources. Basic resources are ontological beings that demand epistemology—that is, how do we know how much or less country A is benign, brilliant, and charismatic? They are necessary to aspire to gain attraction, but not sufficient. Echoing this point, Nye (2011: 94) observed, "This attraction by example is the passive approach to soft power," urging for active employment of shaped resources—his term for instrumental resources—such as programs and activities of public diplomacy.

Basic and instrumental resources notwithstanding are far from identical even if inseparable; nor are they fungible to, and substitutable for, one another in the conversion equation. "Cultural events, exchange programs, broadcasting, or teaching a country's language…do not produce soft power directly," Vuving (2009: 13) reckoned. "They provide a first but important step in the translation of benignity, beauty and brilliance into soft power." From the perspective of social psychology (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), instrumental resources can be viewed as the vectors of or routes to belief formation. One route occurs through direct experience or contact with the object or entity, resulting in descriptive beliefs; a second through outside sources of information, such as the old and new digital media, advertising, friends, relatives and so on (informational beliefs), where the study of communication channels is relevant; and the final through inferences (correct or incorrect) of the current stimulus based on previous experience, leading to inferential beliefs.

Of these three ways, informational and descriptive routes likely comprise most of the repertoire of instrumental resources for attraction. Such instrumentals register in the dimensions of engagement (for instance the numbers of cultural missions and embassies abroad), of culture (the number of foreign correspondents from abroad), and of digital (the number of Facebook followers for both the foreign ministry and its head as well as the degree of Facebook engagement by the ministry and head).

Conflation aggravates with measures that are not so much resources as outcomes from attraction. Particularly questionable are those of people flow from abroad including foreign students, the most hailed among the resource camp. Such high expectations notwithstanding, the resource view of student sojourners lacks a firm grounding in both theoretical logic and empirical evidence. Many have become overly enthusiastic about the resource view but have rarely probed the fundamental question—in what capacity those students contribute to attraction. Does the number, or sheer presence, of these foreigners itself radiate any particle of attractive light to begin with, and in the same facility as of basic resources such as quality of higher education and research? Hardly are foreign students among such basic resources.

Then, still within the resource view, the only possible theoretical identification of the sojourners is that they play the role of an instrumental resource. In fact, this instrumental view, though not explicitly articulated as such, cuts across all resource models with foreign students. McClory (2015) argued that foreign students generate reputational gains for the host country through "beneficial ripple effects on indirect participants" (11) when they return home. However, a broader perspective needs to be taken if one wishes to fully construct the

instrumental logic behind it. In the language of instrumental resources students sequentially assume the capacities of both descriptive and informational resources in a two-stage process: At the first stage of conversion, they experience the host country through direct contact, and are thus on the route to descriptive beliefs. Later, during the second stage of diffusion, they become sources of information that shape the informational beliefs and attitudes toward the host country among the general public back home.

Such theoretical qualification as instrumental is one thing, but whether this resource view is backed by empirical evidence is another that is more critical, in fact. On the one hand, evidence for the resource view has never been absent, leading to Han and Zweig's (2010) declaration that hosting foreign students is "a wise policy, as it enhances a host country's soft power" (304). On the other hand, the entire literature on foreign students, spanning more than half a century from the 1950s, unabatedly suggests that supportive evidence is at best mixed and inconclusive—even for the first stage of yielding favorable descriptive beliefs and attitudes. As early as the 1960s, Selltiz and Cook (1962) reviewed findings from the previous decade, and concluded, "it is an oversimplification and overtly optimistic to expect that a period of study in a foreign country will uniformly result in more favorable attitudes toward that country" (11). The same tenor has recurred in subsequent decades by seminal reviews— for example, up to the late '80s (Snow, 2008).

Hence, reservations about the resource view are warranted. Direct contacts with the host country, in fact all things in the world, undoubtedly lead to belief and attitude change; however, these products of direct experiences hardly always have a positive valence. In this regard, the same reservations likely hold water for other measures of people flow, such as incoming tourists.

Even if the resource view ever proved viable for people flow, it still would face a theoretical dead end due to the sociological nature of people flow that manifests in a two-way street of influence. People from abroad would have to count as soft power resources not only for the host country but also for the sending country if the resource view were true. Take immigrants. The instrumental logic for such individuals is parallel to the case for students, and goes in two stages with their becoming agents of descriptive and later informational beliefs and attitudes. Support for this outlook has emerged since the 1990s from studies on the impact of dual citizenship bestowed to foreign-born American citizens on politics and society within their homelands. At the dawn of dual citizenship, Shain (1999) foresaw U.S. diasporas becoming an instrument of democracy to serve U.S. interests. Similarly, Naim (2002) observed that diasporas impart American values and ideologies to their homelands, such as democracy and pluralism, as well as capitalist entrepreneurial spirit and skills. However, long before the advent of dual citizenship, the literature on ethnic lobbying had persuasively documented U.S. diasporas acting on behalf of their homelands. Much of their ethnic lobbying still plays out in the domain of a specific foreign policy goal, yet there is no reason to see their presence confined only to political lobbying. For instance, American-Israelis are arguably both sources of information beliefs and attitudes on Israel as well as a grass-roots social, cultural force for the country. Given this, it is difficult not to recognize this dynamic in the case of foreign students too.

In contrast with the resource view, the capsizing stance of people flows (that is, the outcome view) is propped up with sound theoretical reasoning, plus a well-established research tradition. Viewing incoming people flows as outcomes of attraction takes firm root in attitude theory within which behaviors are seen as the effects of attitude (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). With foreign students for instance, the outcome logic proves elemental—

simple yet strong. It makes the case by asking, 'What at first has brought them to the host country?' The pullers include their attraction felt to the host country, not merely to its competent education, but to its brilliant life, governance and economy, and its appealing culture. It is telling that they are, even before their visit, positive viewers of the host country, never negative. The literature of country-of-origin effects (Dinnie, 2008), dating back to the 1970s, is built on the foundation of attitude theory. Since its birth, this research tradition has accumulated a cornucopia of findings in support of the outcome view to include a full spectrum of behaviors, from tourism to immigration to investment to study abroad to product purchase, as outcomes of country image.

4.2 Deficiency

A total of six dimensions comprise the 2018 Soft Power 30's operationalization of soft power resources: engagement (diplomacy), government, culture, education, enterprise (business/innovation) and digital. The question to determine deficiency on the level of constitutive dimensions is this. Which dimensions are left out that still have the capacity to elicit attraction in terms of perceived benignity, competence, and beauty/charisma? The answer is likely to be informed by Nye's (2004) vertical theory of soft power, particularly his discussion of the contextual nature of some hard power resources. Nye stated that military and economic might could generate soft attraction in certain contexts, an example of which is military force being applied to humanitarian aid (Noya, 2006).

But the job of assaying a given hard power resource concerning its contextual potential for generating attraction is not straightforward. Contexts have myriad shades of grey and defy clear-cut reasoning. Such challenges notwithstanding, Blanchard and Lu (2012) ventured reasoning that unconditionality is the hallmark of attractiveness regarding economic aid, monetary or material. The 2018 Soft Power 30 took on the larger base of economic hard power—a country's whole economy—under the dimension of enterprise (business/innovation). Instead of GDP or GDP per capita, which are more associated with economic hard power or output, he devised measures of intangible, infrastructure-like software behind the economic hardware, such as competitiveness, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The 2018 Soft Power 30 is on the mark with this point, but as it turns out, his operationalization is critically devoid of the other type of hard power (the whole military dimension of soft power resources)—a glaring deficiency. Like a strong economy, a strong military itself signals how competent the country is in terms of self-defense. But at the same time, military might has dual edges, one of which could be wielded for aggression and coercion, typical of hard power behavior. In this regard, military power—in terms of the sheer size of the defense budget, standing army and arsenals at disposal—can be viewed to induce more fear, suspicion and distrust but less attraction. So the contextual hallmark for the case of military power is most likely when it is exercised for benignity and charisma. Thus, candidate measures for the military dimension can include the uses of military hardware in humanitarian rescue missions for natural and anthropogenic disasters, as well as in U.N. peace-keeping missions.

In short, the 2018 Soft Power 30's index of soft power is deficient in the military dimension and its potential indicators as such.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has so far pursued two goals. First, upon reviewing the general scholarship on soft power, it has mapped out a twofold dissensus over measurement: one over the operational definitions among measures of soft power and the other over what should count as valid indicators of soft power resources. Second, by building a framework for assessment of construct validity, it has assessed as a showcase of validity assessment the 2018 Soft Power 30, a paragon measure of soft power resources endorsed by Nye as such.

Results of assessment suggested the instrument had a problem with construct validity in both terms, contamination and deficiency. First, its indicators are contaminated by representing not only the singular content domain for the construct of soft power resources (i.e., basic resources) but also two other distinct constructs: one of instrumentals and another of outcomes. Second, its indicators are also afflicted with a deficit of an essential dimension for the content domain, of military resources of soft power.

To render the project more valid, two solutions can be conceived. The first is to fill the deficiency of military basic resources of soft power, and of course any possible lack of critical within-dimension measures. This move would correspond with what McClory (2013) urged most when discussing what to do more with his measures: "Some immediate issues we see with improving measurement would include new indicators for some currently overlooked factors" (14). For this matter, the project can include indicators of military basic resources of soft power, such as financial PKO contributions, PKO staff contributions, military rescue missions, and the like. In so doing, the project may, rather than create a new dimension titled military, incorporate military resources of soft power into the extant dimension of global engagement for two reasons. First, global engagement still captures well the types of soft power currencies that these military resources are presumed to produce: benignity and charisma. Second, use of the term military dimension would likely risk bringing an unwanted confusion into any scheme of soft power resources because of its strong conventional association with hard power.

Though the project being a formative index in nature hinges on the complete representation among measures, it rests far more on putting things in order. That is, the second way is to purge contamination distilling the project's all-in-one measures in two directions. On the one hand, only basic resources—the very substantial attributes, performances, and behaviors of a country that potentially make it into perceptual attraction—are to be preserved for the construct of soft power resources. After all, it is basic resources for attraction—neither instrumentals nor outcomes—that make the theory of soft power truly 'attractive' in the first place. On the other hand, impurities are to be filtered out into two distinct constructs, first into instrumental, or conversion, resources (e.g., public diplomacy activities) and second into outcomes of perceptual attraction.

Such an overhaul will in turn bring out an appealing practical and theoretical prospect. By decoupling basic resources and instrumentals, one can make a more sophisticated, insightful comparison across countries, hence faring better with the strategic management of the conversion process. It will also broaden the horizon of theory building: When the three constructs are reconfigured to form a structural model—not reverting to the single adulterate measurement model—one can inquire the contribution of instrumentals to goal achievement, relative to the basic resources of soft power, for instance. There will arise a chain of follow-up questions, such as what countries punch above their weight, and how? Taken together, this direction will overcome a problem Nye recently lamented over: "We are mesmerized by

concreteness… We are totaling up resources, not [explaining] what behavior they generate" (as quoted in Roselle, Miskimmon, and O'Loughlin, 2014: 71).

5.1 Future Research

Rather than providing a conclusive determination, this study's assessment of the 2018 Soft Power 30 so far seeks to lay out the first steps towards ensuring the construct validity. For this study took a critical look only at operational validity, particularly content validity— in terms of contamination and deficiency in the definitional content.

Another critical issue with the project, however, awaits attention from future study. The issue is a merging of subjective indicators into those objective ones, in order to measure soft power. A standing feature from the onset, the practice has now grown to include eight subjective indicators polled from 25 countries (11, 000 participants) as of 2018. The indicators include country favorability; perceptions of tech products, luxury goods, cuisine, and friendliness to tourists; contribution to global culture; desire to work and study; and trust in foreign policy (McClory, 2018). This marriage between subjective and objective measures arises from the recognition that soft power has an "inherently subjective nature" (McClory, 2015: 22). "Rather than attempt to design against subjectivity, our index embraces the subjective nature of soft power" by incorporating polling data.

However reasonable it may appear, such a hybrid measure needs to be put to question, for it likely introduces a graver contamination into the Soft Power 30. That is to say, a more serious lumping of subjective soft power with objective basic resources, instrumentals, and outcomes, which forecloses substantial theory building on the relationships in-between. For instance, it would be unthinkable to parse out the conversion mechanisms from educational basic resources—through perceptual attraction to them—to the number of incoming international students.

A second direction for future research, which is of utmost importance, needs to involve addressing the divergence over the operational definitions of subjective soft power, which stems from the tendency to identify soft power with the marketing-informed conceptions of country, like country reputation (Passow *et al*., 2005) and nation brand (Anholt, 2007). A proponent of this view, Szondi (2008) stated, "In Nye's original conceptualization, however, nation branding would be a more adequate term to cover the meaning of soft power since both are about attraction" (8).

In fact, although soft power, country reputation, and nation brand are distinct in definition, extant measures of these constructs show considerable similarities at the level of operationalization. For instance, even Whitney and Shambaugh's (2009) index of soft power—one that claimed to operationalize soft power as it is, neither as nation brand nor as country reputation—failed to distinguish itself from the Anholt-Gfk Nation Brands Index. The soft power index has five dimensions: culture, politics, economy, human capital, and diplomacy; the nation brand index, six: culture, governance, exports, people, tourism, and immigration/investment. Indeed, in terms of both dimension and indicator, the soft power index has a substantial degree of conflation with the nation brand index.

Therefore, future studies need to ascertain the discriminant validity of a measure of soft power in operationalization, against nation brand and country reputation. In developing such a measure, one can start from Nye's (2011) refinement of his vertical theory of soft power. Viewing the content domain of soft power as perceived attraction per se, he put forward a new set of its constitutive dimensions, which are, in fact, Vuving's (2009) three power

currencies (benignity, competence, and charisma). In Vuving's view, such power currencies (i.e., what makes attraction a power behavior)—not resources (i.e., vehicles) of attraction such as culture, politics, economy, and diplomacy—should form the constitutive dimensions of attraction. Currently Vuving's three power currencies still remain an idea and await for future scholarship to translate them into operationalization for soft power measurement.

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