

Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

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OPHI

Research in Progress series 2012

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OPHI gratefully acknowledges support from the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)/(DFID) Joint Scheme, Robertson Foundation, Praus, UNICEF N'Djamena Chad Country Office, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (GIZ), Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), John Fell Oxford University Press (OUP) Research Fund, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report Office, national UNDP and UNICEF offices, and private benefactors. International Development Research Council (IDRC) of Canada, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UK Department of International Development (DFID), and AusAID are also recognised for their past support.

Poverty as lack of autonomy: Bridging the absolute/relative divide?

ABSTRACT: In this paper, we present a definition of poverty centred on the notion of autonomy, understood as self-rule, and articulated around the various rights and freedoms required for the existence and exercise of autonomy. This definition, we argue, can accommodate both the relative concept of deprivation proposed by Townsend and the absolute concept proposed by Sen, and thus help to provide a unified account of poverty that applies across low, middle and high income countries. This hypothesis is tested empirically using datasets from the Philippines, Chile and the UK, showing a remarkable constancy across countries in the levels of autonomy or empowerment experienced by poor individuals, independently of the total number of poor individuals, their relative position in society, their absolute income levels and their functionings achievements.

JEL Codes: I32, I30, I39

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Version: March 9th 2012

“Poverty most of all things breaks down a noble man,
More even, O Cynus, than hoary age and hot-ague. (...)
For every man subdued by poverty
Can neither say nor do anything
But his tongue is bound.” (Theognis, pp. 227, §167-183).

This paper asks a simple, yet often overlooked question, namely why do we still use the term poverty to describe the predicament of the people at the bottom of the income distribution in industrialised societies, although these people hardly display any of the deprivations traditionally associated with poverty, such as hunger, illiteracy or preventable diseases? In fact, in these countries, poverty is increasingly associated with symptoms, such as obesity, that are usually considered antithetical to poverty¹. This may not be so surprising when we contemplate the fact that, even after adjusting for differences in purchasing power, the official poverty line in the U.S. today is higher than the average income in the top income decile in Cote d’Ivoire, and almost seven times higher than the top decile income of a Burundian or Congolese².

One obvious way of resolving this apparent incongruity might be to conclude that the social ills currently experienced by developed countries are of a fundamentally different and incomparable nature from those originally described by the term poverty, and which continue to dominate in poorer countries. This approach suggests that we should move away from the term poverty in industrialised countries, opting instead for concepts, such as social exclusion or inequality to describe the condition of the socially disadvantaged members of those societies (Byrne, 1999). This paper will take a different approach, and start from the premise that the insistence by most high income countries to continue to use the term poverty to describe their social realities – and the fact that the people at the bottom of those societies often self-identify as poor – translates something fundamental about the common understanding of poverty that transcends both cultural and economic divides. Consequently, the objective of this paper will be to try to identify conceptually as well as empirically what features poor individuals in high and low income countries share, that make their societies –and themselves – identify

¹ We are purposefully disregarding here the well known economic explanations for obesity, such as the lower cost of so-called junk food compared to healthy food. While such factors can provide important empirical insights about statistical regularities, they do not amount to a logical or conceptual explanation of the link between poverty and obesity. The reason is that the opportunity set of the obese individual always includes the option to eat less so as to avoid obesity (even though he might still suffer from an unbalanced diet, which is a separate problem), whereas the opportunity set of a starving individual does not include the option of avoiding starvation. In that sense, we cannot say that the obese person is deprived of the capability to be well-nourished in the same sense as that the starving person is deprived of that capability.

² In 2011, the U.S. poverty line was set at US\$14.710 per year for a household of 2 persons (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), whereas the average income of an individual in the top income decile in Cote d’Ivoire was US\$6.385 (author’s calculations based on World Development Indicators for 2010: PPP adjusted GNI figures in current US\$, total population, and income share of top 10% of the population – income distribution figures for Cote d’Ivoire from 2008). In Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the corresponding figure was around US\$1.100 per capita in 2010 (income distribution estimates from 2006).

them as poor in their respective social contexts, despite their divergences in terms of income as well as in terms of most basic functionings.

In so doing, we hope to contribute in a modest way to resolving one of the great semantic anomalies of our time, namely the fact that we effectively today need two different definitions of poverty to describe the same concept in different contexts. Indeed, most low and middle income countries still use an absolute definition of poverty (Sen A. , 1979), based on the minimum income required to purchase some version of the minimum food basket initially used by Rowntree (1901). By contrast, most high income countries rely on a relative concept of poverty, set as a percentage of median income, following Townsend's (1979) suggestion that poverty be defined as the lack of resources to participate in society³. Empirically, of course, the use of different definitions of poverty for different income levels poses a problem for intertemporal and international comparability of poverty figures⁴. Conceptually and normatively, it raises questions about what criteria and mechanisms should be used to determine when to transition from one definition of poverty to the next. Should we, for instance, judge Equatorial Guinea by the absolute standards by which we judge other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa – on the grounds that the living conditions for most of its population are no different from those of neighbouring countries – or should we use the relative definition of poverty proposed by Townsend, which is normally used for countries in the same GDP range as Equatorial Guinea⁵? If judged by the latter standard, it is in fact quite possible that Equatorial Guinea may outperform many industrialised countries, as the resources required to participate in Guinean social life may be quite modest, due to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Guinean population remains entirely untouched by the country's extraordinary oil wealth.

In section 1 of this paper, we will review the main existing definitions of poverty and discuss their applicability to the various contexts described above. In section 2, we will propose a unified definition of poverty, understood as lack of autonomy, that can provide a coherent description of poverty across

³Several hybrid definitions and indices have been proposed to address these issues (e.g. (Ravallion & Chen, 2009) and (Foster J. E., 1998)). However, such hybrids remain just that: mixtures between two different definitions of poverty, and as such do not necessarily solve the conceptual problems associated with either definition or the conceptual incompatibility between them.

⁴According to George Kings' 1697 analysis of tax records there were 1.3 million 'paupers' in England in 1688 (approx. 23% of the population), with an average family income of 5 pounds per year, representing about 16% of the average household income at the time (Gordon, 2006). In his famous study of 1899, Rowntree (1901) estimated that 28% of the population lived poverty, based on the study of the allegedly representative town of York and using a poverty line equivalent to 2.652GBP per year for a family of 2 adults and 3 children in 2000 prices (equivalent to a relative poverty line of approximately 25% of average national disposable income per household of 5) (Webb, 2002). The latest poverty figures produced by the UK Department of Work and Pensions put the proportion of the population living below the official poverty line (60% of the median income or 14.976GBP per year for a family of two adults and two children under 14 after deducting housing costs) at 25% for North-East England (York) and 28% in London (www.poverty.org.uk, accessed on November 11th 2011). It may be tempting to conclude that there has been no progress in reducing poverty in England over the past three centuries...

⁵ In 2010, Equatorial Guinea's had a GDP per capita of US\$34.500 compared with US\$35.800 for the UK and US\$31.500 for Italy (figures from the World Bank's World Development Indicators, current international US\$ at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)). In the same year, Equatorial Guinea's Human Development Index was lower than that of Ghana, whose GDP per capita did not exceed US\$2.500 in PPP terms.

economic contexts. In section 3, finally, we will explore empirically the extent to which the various definitions of poverty discussed in sections 1 and 2, may provide a coherent description of poverty across countries.

1. Three definitions of poverty

Utility

In a strict interpretation of the original neoclassical economic framework, which is built on a utilitarian normative framework, poverty would ultimately have to be thought of as a lack of utility. In this concept, therefore, an individual, i , would be considered poor if her level of utility, u_i^* , falls below a minimum acceptable threshold of utility, \underline{u} . Utility can here be written as a function of a vector x_i of valuable goods, $x_{ij}, j = (1, \dots, d)$, consumed by individual i , as well as an idiosyncratic term, v_i , describing the subjective valuation by individual i of the consumed goods, such that $u_i^* = u(x_i, v_i)$. Since u_i^* is an unobservable latent variable we cannot know with certainty when $u_i^* \leq \underline{u}$. However, we know that individuals face budget constraints, such that:

$$\sum_{j=1}^d p_j x_{ij} \leq y_i$$

Where p_j is a price vector, which we will, for simplicity, assume to be equal to unity. Consequently, and assuming that individuals behave in standard utility-maximising and non-satiable manner, we can replace the vector x_i by y_i in the utility function and re-write the inequality $u_i^* \leq \underline{u}$ as:

$$u(y_i, v_i) \leq u(\underline{y})$$

(1)

Where \underline{y} is the minimum income required to purchase the minimum necessary quantity of essential goods, $x_{ij}, j = (1, \dots, d)$. If we assume that subjective variations in happiness or utility, v_i , are normally distributed with mean zero, or have been normalised to be so, it becomes easy to show that the aggregate poverty headcount, P^U , can be approximated by the following inequality:

$$P^U = \sum_{i=1}^N I(y_i \leq \underline{y})$$

Where N represents the total population under study, and $I(\cdot)$ is an indicator function taking the value 1 if $y_i \leq \underline{y}$ and 0 otherwise. Empirically, it is possible to question whether y_i can provide a good approximation for u_i^* at the individual level, given the subjective variations, v_i (Easterlin, 2001; Suh, Diener, & Fujita, 1996; Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978). Normatively, Sen has questioned whether psychological factors should count at all in objective assessments of wellbeing. How should we, for instance, treat someone with expensive tastes who will have very low utility unless his food basket

includes caviar and champagne (Cohen, 1989). Furthermore, v_i may be adaptive in the sense that poor individuals may learn to be content with very limited achievements, thus deriving a high level of psychological wellbeing, u_i^* , despite having very poor objective functioning achievements (Sen A. K., 1984, pp. 308-309).

The criticism of this approach has given rise to at least two alternative conceptualisations of poverty: The first, proposed by Sen, defines poverty in absolute terms as the inability to achieve certain minimum functionings. The second, advocated by Townsend, focuses on people's relative position in society, and their ability to participate in the social life of their community.

Functionings

We may assume, without violating the premises of the neoclassical framework, that individuals derive utility mainly from achieving certain valuable functionings, f_{ij} , where $j = (1, \dots, d)$, are the number of relevant dimensions (e.g. health, education, etc.). As Sen (1985) pointed out in his critique of Rawls' concept of primary goods, the transformation of goods into functionings will depend on both individual variations (e.g. intelligence or strength), ε_i , and environmental variations (e.g. climate), ε . Stewart (1989) has described the function $f(x_{ij}, \varepsilon_i, \varepsilon)$ as a meta-production function describing how individuals transform consumption into valuable outcomes. We assume for simplicity that each functioning, f_{ij} is produced by a single good x_{ij} and that $f(\cdot)$ is a monotonically increasing function of x_{ij} .

Under the assumption that individuals behave in standard maximising fashion, we can consider that achieved functionings will provide reasonable estimates of a person's maximum achievable capability. We are thus assuming away, as statistically insignificant occurrences, the possibility that individuals may voluntarily choose to undergo hardships (e.g. fasting) when they have the capability to avoid it. Formally, we would simply say, in the one-dimensional case, that $c_{ij} = f(x_{ij}, \varepsilon_i, \varepsilon)$ given that $p_j x_{ij} = y_i$, i.e. given that she is consuming on her budget frontier, y_i ⁶.

In this conception, an individual, i , will thus be said to be deprived in dimension j , if $f_{ij} \leq \underline{f}_j$, meaning that she cannot achieve the minimum normatively acceptable standard, \underline{f}_j , defined for that particular dimension (e.g. 2000 calories per day for the nutrition dimension, sometimes adjusted for personal and environmental characteristics, ε_i and ε), even if she is consuming on her budget frontier.

By focusing directly on achieved functionings, we avoid the normative problems associated with the subjective component, v_i . Empirically, the focus on individuals' capability to achieve specific valuable

⁶We are intentionally – for the sake of simplicity – disregarding all non-monetary constraints (e.g. social norms, discrimination, etc.), which are important in Sen's conception of capabilities. It is easy to expand this representation to non-monetary constraints, without altering the argument presented here.

functionings, such as literacy or nutrition, rather than income or other proxies allows us to bypass the empirical problems associated with the error terms ε_i and ε^7 .

Two features of this conceptualization of poverty are of particular interest for the issue being explored here. First, Sen sees deprivations as being constitutive of poverty, in the sense that poverty is defined simply as the aggregate of an individual's capability deprivations (Sen A. K., 1985, p. 669)⁸. We can thus write capability poverty, P^C , as the weighted sum of individual capability deprivations:

$$P^C = \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=1}^d w_j I(f_{ij} \leq \underline{f}_j)$$

(2)

Where w_j represents the weight of the j th dimension and $I(\cdot)$ is an indicator function taking the value 1 if individual i is deprived in dimension j , such that $f_{ij} \leq \underline{f}_j$, and 0 otherwise. The difference, in this account, between someone suffering only a single minor deprivation (e.g. inability to ride a bicycle) and someone suffering multiple severe deprivations (e.g. starvation, illiteracy and ill-health), will thus only be one of degree – although for policy purposes, one might wish to define a threshold below which people deserve particular attention.

Secondly, Sen has argued forcefully that, even if the resources required to achieve certain valuable functionings may vary across societies, poverty should be conceived of as being absolute in the space of capabilities, in the sense that the outcome sought – be it literacy, nutrition or self-respect – is the same regardless of whether one is in Africa or America. Consequently, Sen proposes that the notion of poverty should be constructed around an “irreducible core” of (absolute) capabilities, including nutrition, shelter, clothing and health, which can be expanded to include more advanced capabilities, when and if these become more prominent in a society's conception of what is essential to a decent life:

“The more physical needs tend to dominate over the needs of communal participation, on which Townsend focuses, at this less affluent stage both because the nutritional and other physical needs would tend to have a more prominent place in the standard-of-living estimation and also because the requirements of participation are rather easily fulfilled. For a richer community, however, the nutritional and other physical requirements (such as clothing as protection from climatic conditions) are typically already met, and the needs of communal participation-while absolutely no different in the space of capabilities-will have a much higher demand in the space of commodities and that of resources” (Sen A. K., *Poor, Relatively Speaking*, 1983, p. 162).

Sen's position lends itself to various possible interpretations, none of which, we will argue, is entirely unproblematic. In Townsend's interpretation, Sen's concept of poverty implied that poverty ought to be assessed primarily in terms of the core deprivations, such as malnutrition or illiteracy, that are common

⁷ In practice, the measurement of capabilities has proven significantly more complex than might be suggested here. In practice, capability practitioners have dealt with these difficulties by relying on the measurement of achieved functionings rather than capabilities (Alkire, 2006, p. 7).

⁸ We define a capability deprivation as the inability to achieve the functionings (being and doings) that people have reason to value (Sen A. K., 1991, pp. 28-29), such as being literate, being healthy, or indeed participating in the life of the community.

in third world countries (Townsend, *A Sociological Approach to the Measurement of Poverty--A Rejoinder to Professor Amartya Sen.*, 1985, pp. 663-664). In other words, Townsend argued, the Sen's concept of poverty would not be applicable to high income countries where deeply entrenched forms of poverty subsist despite the fact that most core deprivations have been eliminated. From the point of view of the hypothesis explored in this paper, this would thus throw us back to the first solution mentioned in the introduction, in which we accept a formal split in the definition of poverty, implying that we no longer talk of poverty in high income countries, but of social exclusion or other social ills.

A second, more literal interpretation of Sen's quote above, would be that poverty ought to be assessed by different standards in different countries – to wit, core deprivations in low-income countries and non-core deprivations in high income countries. In this interpretation, however, Sen would not so much have resolved the tension between absolute and relative poverty, as he would simply have displaced it to another sphere, where it would be replaced by a new dichotomy between core and non-core capabilities. Indeed, if all deprivations are now to be assessed within the same absolute space of capabilities, it would seem that third and first world countries would still be assessed by different dimensions within that space (e.g. nutrition and literacy for the former, and social participation for the latter). This would leave the issue of comparability across different types of countries whole, as well as the normative problem of when to switch from one definition of poverty to the next.

The third interpretation we propose is based on Sen's reply to Townsend (Sen A. K., 1985), and later writings – this interpretation is also dominant in the current literature on capabilities. In this interpretation, poverty is to be evaluated in both low and high income countries by the sum of all core and non-core deprivations experienced by individuals. The first hurdle to applying this method is that it assumes that all deprivations are (a) relevant and (b) comparable across the development spectrum. As argued in the case of Equatorial Guinea, this may not always be the case, and may leave us with ambiguous, incomplete or contradictory assessments of poverty across different types of countries. Even in the event that it were possible to generate consistent and robust comparisons of poverty across economic contexts by using this method, it would mean that high income countries would effectively be assessed only on a small subset of all the deprivations experienced in low-income countries (namely non-core deprivation), which in itself would pose a challenge for our attempt to generate a unified account of poverty across income levels. Such an assessment would also be likely to stand at odds with the actual assessments of poverty made by countries today, which tend to vary much less across countries than income and functionings achievements do.

This would leave us with a fourth possible interpretation of Sen's position, which is that the deprivations that ultimately count, and by which both high and low-income countries are to be evaluated, are the ones corresponding to advanced capabilities of social participation, empowerment etc – to which, presumably, core capabilities such as nutrition, contribute. Such an interpretation, however, would seem to contradict Sen's own statements on the issue about the importance of core deprivations, and take us closer to Townsend's position, which we explore next.

Social Participation

Townsend's conception of poverty differs from Sen's in at least two important respects. First, it focuses only on one particular advanced functioning, namely participation in social life, which, he argues, is constant across economic contexts. We shall designate this functioning as f_{is}^* , where the subscript s indicates that we are dealing with a specific dimension, s , of social participation, and the superscript $*$ indicates that, as in the neoclassical framework, we are dealing with an unobservable latent variable.

And this takes us to the second difference: For Townsend, the relation between poverty and deprivations in functionings other than social participation, is seen as being causal, rather than constitutive. In other words, it is assumed that the failure to achieve of some socially defined goods (e.g. nutrition, clothing, housing, etc.) will, at some point, lead the individual to be unable to "play the roles, participate in the relationships and follow the customary behaviour which is expected of them by virtue of their membership of society" (Townsend, 1987, p. 130). Without endorsing the precise definition of poverty proposed by Townsend, we can note that his conceptual separation between deprivation and poverty will – unlike Sen's constitutive approach – allows us to conceive of cases, in which "people [...] experience one or more forms of deprivation without necessarily being in poverty" (Townsend, 1987, p. 130). By reverse implication, such a separation may also be helpful to understand poverty in industrialized societies, where poverty sometimes occurs in the absence of obvious deprivations – and may even be associated with excess, as in the case of obesity.

Formally, we would say in Townsend's framework that individual i is poor if he is unable to achieve the minimum defined level of social participation \underline{f}_s , such that $f_{is}^* \leq \underline{f}_s$. As in the neoclassical case, it is assumed that this variable is dependent on the achievement of certain valuable functionings, but unlike the neoclassical case, what matters is the individual's achievement in relation to prevailing social standards. We therefore write:

$$f_{is}^* = s(f_{ij}, \bar{f}_j)$$

Where $j \neq s$ and \bar{f}_j is to be understood as the prevailing social standards (e.g. average or median functionings achievements). If f_{ij} is defined as above and individuals conversion factors, ε_i , are normally distributed with zero mean, aggregate poverty can be approximated by the following expression:

$$P^S = \sum_{i=1}^N I(y_i \leq \alpha \bar{y})$$

Where \bar{y} is the reference income required to achieve \bar{f}_j , and α is a parameter determining how far below the reference income an individual has to fall to be considered poor (usually between 40% and 60% of the median income).

Empirically, this approximation presents the advantage over the neoclassical one of bypassing the idiosyncratic utility variations, v_i , between individuals. However, Sen has criticised this approach on conceptual grounds arguing that it confuses the notion of poverty with that of inequality (Sen A. K.,

Poor, Relatively Speaking, 1983, p. 156). Indeed, when taken to its own logical conclusion, the thoroughgoing relativist definition of poverty implies (a) that poverty may never be eliminated as some proportion of the population always will be worse off than the median (Miller & Roby, 1971), and (b) that external shocks which affect the entire society (e.g. a widespread famine or the discovery of oil) will be recorded as having no impact on poverty as long as they are distribution-neutral (Sen A. K., 1983, p. 157).

2. Poverty as lack of autonomy

Autonomy Poverty

In Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Socrates rejected Euthydemus' claim that "those who have not sufficient means to pay for the necessities of life" should be regarded as poor, and argued instead that poverty consists in 'lacking power over oneself'⁹. On the eve of India's independence, Mahatma Gandhi appealed to a very similar concept, namely *Swaraj* – roughly translated as self-governance or self-rule – to describe the plight of the "starving millions" in his country (cited in: Weber, 2011, p. 150)¹⁰. In this section, we will try to build on these important insights to see if and how we can overcome the shortcomings and divisions identified above, so as to arrive at a unified conceptualization of poverty that applies across social and economic contexts.

For consistency and semantic precision, we shall refer here to the Kantian notion of autonomy, understood as self (auto)- legislation (*nomos*) (Ameriks, 2000, p. 4), to describe this specific functioning that was vaguely described as self-rule above. It has been argued on several occasions that the functioning¹¹ to make free and autonomous rational decisions is fundamentally different from other functionings and should be treated separately (Foster & Sen, 1997, p. 202; Basu & Lopez-Calva, 2004).

What would matter, on this account, would not be whether an individual achieves a predefined list of valuable functionings, or whether the achievement of such functionings enable him to be integrated in society or provide him with psychological satisfaction, but whether it gives him control over his life and

⁹"(...)to some who have very small means, those means are not only sufficient, but they even save from them, while to many very large fortunes are not sufficient (...). I have known some princes who from poverty have been driven to commit injustices like the very poor people. Then, if such be the case, we must rank such princes amongst the Demos, and those that have but little, we must rank, if they be good managers, among the rich?" (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, pp. 480-481, §4.2-37-38). In fact, Socrates equated the loss of freedom resulting from a lack of resources in poverty with the greed and luxury, *hubris*, resulting from excessive wealth. In both cases, it is the dependence on material possessions that prevents man from being a master of his own actions. For Demosthenes, on the contrary, the mental compulsion experienced by the greedy could not be equated with the force of external material compulsion of poverty, which "forces the free man to do many vile and servile things" (Demosthenes, p. §57.45). It is for this reason that Demosthenes argued that the wealthy ought to be judged by higher moral standards than the poor (Demosthenes, pp. §45.67, *Speech against Stephanos*).

¹⁰ "Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you are contemplating is going to (...) restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *Swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?" (cited in: Weber, 2011, p. 150).

¹¹ We say "functioning", because in the case of autonomy it would be nonsensical to say that someone "chooses not to exercise the capability to be autonomous": that choice in itself would need to be an autonomous choice to be considered valid, and if it were not autonomous, we could not claim that he had the capability.

enables him to become an autonomous individual. To distinguish this definition of poverty from the ones presented above, we would write autonomy as:

$$f_{ia}^* = a(f_{ij})$$

(3)

Where $j \neq a$ and autonomy is represented as an unobservable latent state. This representation differs from Sen's definition in that autonomy is here seen as being causally determined by, rather constituted of, various deprivations. On the other hand, it differs from Townsend's representation, in that autonomy is not necessarily determined by prevailing social standards. In this representation, an individual would be considered poor if f_{ia}^* falls below some minimum acceptable threshold of autonomy, \underline{f}_a .

Autonomy, in the present definition, is ultimately an internal freedom: the freedom of reason to determine the will directly without interference from interests, desires, inclinations, fears, etc. (Kant, 1785, p. 431). But its realization will be promoted by external factors, such as the availability of choice (Mill, 1859, p. 122), whereas its exercise will be conditional on the existence of other freedoms, such as freedom from interference, or the freedom from fear and ignorance which shape and restrict our capacity to make fully autonomous rational decisions, as well as the positive freedom to act in the world (Kant, 1797 a, p. 383). Formally, we will distinguish between four fundamental types of freedom: (1) Negative external freedom from coercion and interference by others, (2) Positive external freedom to act in the world, (3) Negative internal freedom from fear, interests, inclinations, etc. in the pursuit of rational objectives, (4) Positive internal freedom of reason to determine goals (Silva-Leander, 2011).

By re-centering our definition of poverty on this particular functioning, and reordering our account of poverty around the related freedoms, rather than around a distinction between commodities, functionings and capabilities, we may be better able to identify the mechanisms through which various deprivations interact to generate such different forms of poverty as the ones observed in high and low income countries. For instance, this conceptualization will allow us to understand why some individuals, such as Gandhi, may not be considered poor by their societies – or by themselves – even if they suffer multiple and severe deprivations, including capability deprivations, as well as the reverse cases where poverty is experienced despite the apparent lack of functionings deprivations.

It is important to note that this concept of poverty is distinct from, although certainly related to, Sen's concept of opportunity freedom. The reason we regard Gandhi as non-poor in this perspective, is not because he chose to live and ascetic life out of an opportunity set that contained more comfortable life choices or because he always maintained his capability to be well-nourished, even when he underwent long periods of fasting. Instead, we regard him as non-poor because all the hardships that he endured were seen as necessary sacrifices in the pursuit of his political and religious objectives, which never deprived him of the one central capability to maintain "control over his own life and destiny" (cited in: Weber, 2011, p. 150)¹² – and indeed may even have helped him to grow stronger and more empowered. As such, they should be seen as integral part of his capability to pursue his rational life

¹² The emphasis is on rationally held life plans, to exclude aspirations that have been constrained by adaptive preferences rather than by informed and autonomous decisions.

plan. In fact, it is quite possible that Gandhi's repeated spells of extended and rigorous fasting had side-effects on his health, some of which may have been permanent and irreversible, leaving him permanently deprived of valuable capabilities, such as the capability to be in good health. In this concept it is thus not opportunity or capability, *per se*, or lack thereof, which marks the boundary between the poor-and the non-poor, but the ability to choose one's destiny and live in accordance with one's rationally held objectives.

Autonomy and Power

At this point, some clarifications about the scope and nature of our definition of poverty are in order. First, we should note that the fact that we define poverty as a state of lack of autonomy does not automatically imply that all persons who lack autonomy will be considered poor. Children, for instance, are typically not considered to be autonomous because their brains are still in development, but would not automatically qualify as poor. The lack of autonomy that we are interested in here is specifically that which translates social relations of power. Poverty, in this concept is thus an inherently social concept in the sense that it requires a relation of inequality of an individual or a group of individuals with respect either to another individual/group of individuals, or with respect to a collective (e.g. the community taken as a whole). For this reason, we will not, in this definition, say that Robinson Crusoe on his island was poor, since his deprivations did not reflect a power relation beyond that confronting Robinson Crusoe to the force of nature. Similarly, we would not say that a wealthy CEO, who temporarily finds himself deprived of the capability to eat while snowed in during a mountain expedition, is poor, since his deprivation reflects merely an unfortunate concurrence of circumstances and does not, in any way affect his relation of power to any other member of society¹³.

Secondly, it is important to note that the essentially relational¹⁴ understanding of poverty proposed here does not necessarily mean that we conceptualise poverty in relative terms. Power and powerlessness can be collective: The Dutch "hunger winter" of 1944-1945, for instance, had the effect of collectively disempowering the Dutch people, without significantly altering the distribution of power *within* Dutch society. Power can also be individual, in the sense that, once oppression and powerlessness have been internalized, they will not require any external force to keep the poor in a position of poverty.

Material resources undoubtedly constitute one of the main objects of power, as well as being one of the key instruments through which power is exercised in the world. It is therefore proper that the lack of material resources should be closely associated with poverty. But material resources are but one of the many instruments of power. Social norms and invisible barriers that prevent, for instance, low caste Indians, Black Americans and Afghan women from realizing their full potential can be equally crippling, if not more so, than even the most severe material constraints. And as Sen noted on several occasions (Sen A. K., 1984), the most insidious and persistent of all, are the internalized constraints, which hold

¹³ On the issue of transitory poverty among non-working class persons, see (Rainwater, 1990).

¹⁴ On relational poverty, see Mosse (2010).

people captive to their own preferences and lead them, among other things, to consent to oppression (Nussbaum, 2001)¹⁵.

In this perspective, the reason why obesity is seen as an indicator of poverty and recognized as a social problem in the United States and elsewhere, as opposed to being seen merely as a public health issue, is because it conveys information about the specific way in which power is organized and exercised in that society – in the same way as linen shirts conveyed information about power structures in Adam Smith’s Britain (Smith, 1776, p. 352). In the American context, where food is plentiful, the difference between the holders of powers and the powerless will be marked, for instance, by the availability of time, quality education, or family relations. Images of power conveyed through the media, for instance, will consequently associate power and success with slenderness, which reflects awareness of the importance of healthy eating, time to exercise and take care of one’s body, and enjoyment of a generally balanced lifestyle. In a low income country, by contrast, time may be plentiful while control over food resources may constitute the most conspicuous instrument through which power is exercised. In this context, corpulence will be associated with wealth and power, and gaunt with poverty.

Process of Disempowerment

Once we think of poverty in these terms, it becomes much easier to see what the starving African poor have in common with the obese American poor. Indeed, while the markers of power have been entirely reversed between these two situations, the structure and mechanisms of the exercise of power remain essentially unchanged: In both the case of the starving African and the obese American, their powerlessness has been engraved in their bodies as indelible markers of their lack of command over the instruments of power in their respective social contexts: food, education or time¹⁶. In both cases, the humiliation of having their powerlessness exposed to the world at all times through their outward appearance constitutes an integral part of the way in which they experience poverty¹⁷. And in both cases, the repeated humiliation will be gradually internalized as shame¹⁸, as a feeling of inferiority and/or as helplessness¹⁹, which will ensure that the power relation is maintained over time and across generations with only minor help from more overtly coercive methods of control (Bourdieu, 1980)²⁰.

In the case of the starting African, the disempowerment is immediate and unmediated: the individual lacks the essential resources required to be able to function, act and live, let alone to think autonomously. He is literary paralyzed by external material constraints. In the case of the obese American, the main constraints are intangible (social and internal), and the mechanisms of

¹⁵The term “existential poverty” has been employed to describe “a poverty-induced state of mind that manifests as a lack of will to take control of life” (Dixon, 2010, p. 112).

¹⁶ On the role of physical markers in the maintenance of systems of power and control, see Foucault (1977)

¹⁷ On the relation between humiliation and powerlessness, see Silver et al. (1986).

¹⁸ On the difference between shame and humiliation, see Jackson (1999). On the measurement of shame and humiliation, see Zavaleta (2007).

¹⁹ On the various responses to humiliation, see Gaulejac (1989).

²⁰ Such, disempowerment takes time, which is why duration constitutes an essential part of our understanding of poverty (Hulme & McKay, 2006).

disempowerment are consequently much more difficult to identify, as the resources she commands – even though modest by her own society’s standards – are not insignificant in absolute terms. In this case, the observed state of poverty may be the results of generations of internalized oppression, humiliation and desperation, which prevent the individual from seizing, or even seeing, the opportunities that for someone else may lie within arm’s reach. The low self-worth resulting from repeated humiliation, may lead her to engage in self-destructive behaviour through drinking or crime or over-eating (Schonfeld-Warden & Warden, 1997), thus further reducing the range of her opportunities and translating her inner powerlessness into an external objective state of incapacity. Although the constraints may be different, their effect –though not necessarily their intensity – will be the same, and like the starving African, she will find herself unable to envision or pursue a rational life plan in which she is the master of her own life and destiny, i.e. to become an autonomous human being.

In this definition, poverty remains absolute, as demanded by Sen, in the sense that the lack of autonomy will be the same from Somalia to Mississippi, regardless of whether it has been caused by the lack of food, or by its excess, or a combination of other factors, and regardless of how many other people suffer the same lack of autonomy. At the same time, this definition allows us to accommodate Townsend’s argument that all deprivations (except autonomy deprivation), including hunger, shelter and clothing, may be construed in relative terms – in the sense that they are socially defined based on prevailing social and economic standards (Townsend, 1985). Hunger itself may thus be relative, in the sense that a Sahelian shepherd may be physically and psychologically more resistant to hunger than a Swiss banker. But once the hunger has set in, it will affect the shepherd and the banker in the same, absolute, way: first by sapping the energy required to act, then by interfering with their ability to concentrate and plan, and eventually it will start to undermine their sense of dignity and self-worth, thus completing the transformation of a relative capability deprivation into an absolute state of autonomy poverty.

3. An Empirical Comparison of Poverty Concepts

Hypotheses

From the above account of poverty, we derive 4 concrete hypotheses (1.a, 2.a., 3, 4) that we will test empirically. In addition, we test two additional hypotheses (1.b, and 2.b), which we call control hypotheses, as we do not hold an *a priori* presumption from theory about how their outcome.

Hypothesis 1.a. (filter): Individuals identified as poor in country A are more disadvantaged in the relevant indicator than people identified as non-poor in country A. Formally, we will test the following hypothesis, where a rejection of the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative is seen as supporting hypothesis 1.a.:

$$H_0: \mu_p^A = \mu_n^A, \quad H_A: \mu_p^A > \mu_n^A$$

Where μ_p^A represents the average value of the variable of interest across all individuals who are identified as poor in society A, using their national poverty line. μ_n^A represents the average of the same

variable across all individuals who are identified as non-poor in the same society. We are assuming here that a higher value of the variable of interest indicates a higher level of deprivation in that domain. For instance, if the relevant variable is subjective wellbeing, we would expect poor people be less satisfied (i.e. be more deprived in subjective wellbeing) than non-poor people in any given country. We call this a filter hypothesis, in that it is a pre-condition for considering an indicator to be a valid candidate for assessing poverty.

Hypothesis 2.a. (strong): Individuals identified as poor in country A exhibit the same *absolute* levels of disadvantage in the relevant indicator as people identified as poor in country B. Formally, we will test the following hypothesis, where a failure to reject the null will be considered as being consistent with hypothesis 2.a.:

$$H_0: \mu_p^A = \mu_p^B, \quad H_A: \mu_p^A > \mu_p^B$$

Where μ_p^B represents the average value of the variable of interest across all individuals who have been identified as poor in society B. In other words, we expect poor people to exhibit, on average, the same absolute levels of, for instance, subjective wellbeing, regardless of which country they find themselves in, and regardless of whether they have been identified as poor using an absolute or a relative poverty line. We call this a strong hypothesis because it assumes that there are no systematic differences in people's understanding of the relevant concepts across societies, so that direct comparisons can be made using the same untransformed indicator in various cultural and economic contexts. This is a particularly strong assumption, when it comes to subjective indicators and complex concepts, which may have different interpretations and meanings in different contexts.

Hypothesis 3 (medium): Individuals identified as poor in country A are more disadvantaged in the relevant indicator than people identified as non-poor in country B and vice versa. Formally, we test the following hypothesis and look for a rejection of the null in favour of the alternative hypothesis, as supporting evidence for hypothesis 3:

$$H_0: \mu_p^A = \mu_n^B, \quad \text{or} \quad \mu_p^B = \mu_n^A$$

$$H_A: \mu_p^A > \mu_n^B, \quad \text{and} \quad \mu_p^B > \mu_n^A$$

Where μ_n^B represents the average value of the variable of interest across all non-poor individuals in society B. This hypothesis is less strong than the previous one, because instead of assuming direct comparability of the levels of the relevant indicator across countries, we are assuming that they will lie within a sufficiently narrow range that rankings of poor and non-poor individuals will be consistent across countries. In other words, even if poor individuals in country A do not exhibit on average the same level of, for instance, subjective wellbeing as poor individuals in country B, we assume that they will still exhibit less subjective wellbeing than non-poor individuals in country B.

Hypothesis 4. (weak): Individuals identified as poor in country A will exhibit the same *relative* level of disadvantage in the relevant indicator as people identified as poor in country B. Formally, we will test the following hypothesis, where a failure to reject the null will be seen as supporting hypothesis 4:

$$H_0: \frac{\mu_p^A}{\mu_n^A} = \frac{\mu_p^B}{\mu_n^B}, \quad H_A: \frac{\mu_p^A}{\mu_n^A} > \frac{\mu_p^B}{\mu_n^B}$$

This hypothesis is the weakest of the three hypotheses being tested in that it does not require any direct equivalence between the levels of, say, subjective wellbeing experienced in different countries. Instead, we assume that poor people will be relatively worse off (e.g. exhibit relatively less subjective wellbeing on average) than the population average, and that the proportion of the poor people's average to the population average will be the same across countries. This hypothesis may be relevant in cases where there is a systematic difference in the interpretation or meaning of a concept across countries or in the subjective perceptions thereof (e.g. country A is a country of optimists and country B is a country of pessimists). For the same reason, this hypothesis will not be relevant for cases where we are dealing with objective indicators, such as nutrition or literacy, which should not vary across countries.

Hypothesis 1.b. (control): Individuals identified as poor (/non-poor) in country A exhibit the same levels of disadvantage regardless of the poverty line used. Formally, we will test the following hypothesis:

$$H_0: \mu_{p1}^A = \mu_{p2}^A, \quad H_A: \mu_{p1}^A > \mu_{p2}^A$$

Where $p1$ and $p2$ represent a high and a low poverty line respectively. We call this a control hypothesis as we do not have an *a priori* presumption from theory about how this hypothesis. This hypothesis is being tested from information purposes only, to see if there is a categorical jump in the level the relevant variable between poor and non-poor people (e.g. there are significant differences between poor and non-poor individuals, but not among poor individuals). As such, this hypothesis should be seen as a complement to the information provided by hypothesis 1.a.

Hypothesis 2.b. (control): Individuals identified as non-poor in country A exhibit the same *absolute* levels of advantage in the relevant indicator as people identified as non-poor in country B. Formally, we will test the following hypothesis:

$$H_0: \mu_n^A = \mu_n^B, \quad H_A: \mu_n^A > \mu_n^B$$

This hypothesis is the mirror-hypothesis of hypothesis 2.a. However, our theory does not necessarily require this hypothesis to hold up every time that hypothesis 2.a holds. It is, for instance, conceivable that, say subjective wellbeing is determined by quite different and culture-specific factors (e.g. family relations, leisure time, etc.) for non-poor people than for poor people, in which case the equality need not hold in the same way for different population groups.

In addition to the above-mentioned hypotheses, we should add an assumption, which underlies the study being undertaken here. The assumption is that national identifications of poverty, as captured by the use of national poverty lines, provide adequate approximations to society-specific definitions of poverty. This assumption is essential for the current investigation, as the above-mentioned hypotheses will be tested by contrasting the variables of interest against the national identifications of poor individuals that have been obtained using the national income poverty lines. This assumption is based on the recognition that national poverty lines have, in most countries, been chosen after wide and

iterative processes of public discussions and significant academic and public scrutiny. Consequently, it is assumed that if those poverty lines (or the individuals identified as poor using those lines) did not reflect some sort of consensus about who that society considers to be poor, there would have been ample opportunity to change them, or the measure would presumably have fallen into disuse if it had been seen as irrelevant to that society's concept of poverty.

Data

In order to test our hypotheses, we have chosen to look at three countries selected to cover a broad range of development levels, namely the Philippines (lower middle income country), Chile (higher middle income country), and the United Kingdom (high income country). The first two countries use absolute poverty lines defined as the income required to purchase some minimum baskets of goods (food basket for the low poverty line and basic necessities for the high poverty line; in addition we consider a higher poverty line set 20% higher than the basic necessities line so as to capture individuals that are vulnerable to fall into poverty). The United Kingdom uses relative poverty lines, defined respectively as 40%, 50%, and 60% of the median household income.

In the case of the Philippines and Chile, we are using purpose made surveys designed to test internationally comparable modules on missing dimensions of poverty, including subjective wellbeing, autonomy, as well as shame and humiliation, violence and employment. The first three of these modules will be used in this study. The Philippines survey was carried out as part of the Community-Based Monitoring System in June 2009 in two municipalities (Pasay City in the National Capital Region 4 province, and Rosario in the province of Batangas), covering 1923 respondents in 420 households. The Chilean survey was carried out over a two months period in 2009 by the Centre for Microdata from the Economics Department at the Universidad de Chile and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative as a module under the national CASEN survey (National Socio-Economic Characterisation Survey). The survey covers 7952 respondents in 2052 households, and was designed to be nationally representative across the country's 14 regions.

In the case of the United Kingdom, we had to rely on two separate surveys, since there was no equivalent purpose made survey on missing dimensions available. For questions related to subjective wellbeing and social participation, we used the 4th wave of the European Value Survey for Britain, which is carried out as part of the World Values Survey initiative. It covers 1561 respondents/households nationwide and was collected between August 2009 and March 2010. This survey was designed to be nationally representative across England, Scotland and Wales. The second survey, used to test the questions related to autonomy, as well as functionings, was carried in July 2009 out as part of the National Statistics Opinions Survey. It was designed specifically to test a modified module on Autonomy, based on the missing dimensions modules fielded in Chile and the Philippines. This survey covered 1051 respondents/households (1 respondent per household). When questions were available in both surveys, they were tested twice.

Total household income figures were used to calculate income poverty rates. Table 1 below provides a summary of the income poverty lines used in each country. As Table 1 shows, there are significant differences in the poverty lines across countries, even adjusting for difference in purchasing power. Poverty lines in Chile are roughly twice as high as in the Philippines (39% higher for food poverty), whereas the poverty lines in the UK are almost 10 times higher than in the Philippines.

Table 1: Average of national income poverty lines in PPP-USD per capital per year²¹

Poverty lines (avg. USD pc/py, PPP)	Philippines	Chile	UK ²²
Extreme poor	703	974	7254
Poor	843	1624	8658
Vulnerable	1011	1948	9884

Table 2 below provides a summary of poverty headcount rates calculated using the above-defined poverty lines with each of the available surveys. Poor households are over-represented in the Chilean subsample.

Table 2: Income poverty headcount rates weighted by sampling weights

Poverty Headcounts	Philippines ²³ (1923 obs.)	Chile (7952 obs.)	UK (WVS) (1561 obs.)	UK (opinion s.) (1051 obs.) ²⁴
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²¹ The poverty lines reported here represent the average of the various poverty lines used to calculate the poverty rate at each level in each country depending on location and household size.

²² The poverty lines reported in this table for the UK are based on the official 2010 poverty lines of the Department for Work and Pensions, after deducting housing costs in a household composed of a single adult. The poverty lines used to test the hypotheses and to calculate poverty rates in Table 2 were calculated based on the income distribution of each dataset, so as to account for any systematic error in reporting of the income variable. The median income after deducting housing costs for a household with two adult members is USD16.673 for the British Opinion Survey data and USD24.781 for the British Values Survey. Poverty lines used to calculate poverty rates in each of these surveys are thus set at 40%, 50%, and 60% of their respective median incomes and do vary depending on the number of individuals in the household.

²³ The Philippines survey is not nationally representative.

²⁴ Reported poverty rates in the British Opinion survey are based on corrected income figures. This is due to the fact income question in the survey questionnaire is formulated in such a way that it is unclear whether it refers to total household income or the personal income of the respondent. As a consequence total income figures appear to be significantly under-reported in households with two or more adult household members. Evidence of this is found in the fact that the difference in average income reported by households with one single adult and households with two or more adults is negligible in the British Opinion survey (GBP17.490 p/y and GBP20.079 p/y, respectively), whereas it is of the order of more than 2 to 1 in the British Values Survey (GBP 14.094p/y for single parent households vs. GBP35.284 for households with two or more adults). In order to correct for this problem, we have adjusted the household 'equivalisation' formula, so that only the first adult member of the household is counted when making the adjustment for the number of household members. Adjustments for the number of children in the household are made in the usual way following the 'OECD equivalisation scales' (<http://www.poverty.org.uk/summary/income%20intro.shtml>). Without this correction, we obtain poverty rates of

Extreme poor	18%	8%	11%	13%
Poor	36%	23%	15%	15%
Vulnerable	44%	31%	19%	18%

Table 4 provides a summary of the deprivation headcounts for all variables used to test hypotheses 1 to 4. A detailed description of all variables, and the various deprivation cutoffs used, can be found in Table 19. All multidimensional deprivation indicators have been constructed using the formula provided in equation (2), as the unweighted sum of dimension-specific deprivations:

Table 3: Share of population deprived in relevant variables (medium cutoff 2) , weighted by sampling weights

EVALUATIVE SPACE	DIMENSION	Variable	Philippines average obs	Chile average obs	UK (Opinion Survey) average obs	UK (WVS) average obs.
FUNCTIONINGS	Education	FUNC_edu	0.09 (1773)	0.02 (7446)	0.00 (1049)	
	Employment	FUNC_job	0.25 (714)	0.33 (3559)	0.05 (1051)	
	Health	FUNC_health	0.04 (1923)	0.00 (7952)	0.00 (1051)	
SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING	Happiness (unidim.)	PRX_swb_happy	0.23 (420)	0.18 (2034)		0.08 (1547)
	Overall life satisfaction	SWB_life	0.40 (415)	0.23 (2047)		0.15 (1546)
	Employment	SWB_job	0.40 (405)	0.42 (1926)		0.16 (707)
	Health	SWB_health	0.23 (416)	0.33 (2044)		0.20 (1534)
	Education	SWB_edu	0.27 (414)	0.39 (2015)		0.30 (1500)
SOCIAL PARTICIPATION	Exclusion (unidim.)	PRX_soc_putdown	0.30 (419)	0.07 (1988)	0.24 (1016)	
	Shame	SOC_shame	0.08 (418)	0.04 (1958)		
	Humiliation	SOC_humiliation	0.39 (416)	0.10 (1893)		
	Relatedness	SOC_relatedness	0.06 (416)	0.13 (2001)		
	Respect	SOC_respect	0.24 (419)	0.08 (1976)		
AUTONOMY (unidimensional)	Ladder (unidim.)	PRX_emp_ladder	0.14 (414)	0.11 (2039)	0.12 (1016)	0.12 (1537)
	Ability to change (unidim.)	PRX_emp_change	0.30 (406)	0.48 (1921)		
	Free to live life (unidim.)	PRX_emp_freelife	0.13 (415)	0.19 (2026)	0.08 (1018)	
AUTONOMY (Ryan and Deci)	Employment	AUT_job	0.09 (414)	0.05 (1982)		
	Health	AUT_health	0.07 (411)	0.03 (1937)		
	Household chores	AUT_house	0.07 (411)	0.03 (1930)		
	Violence	AUT_violence	0.07 (407)	0.04 (1918)		
	Religion	AUT_religion	0.04 (418)	0.03 (1916)		
AUTONOMY (decision making)	Employment	DEC_job	0.11 (189)	0.03 (2040)	0.41 (960)	
	Household expenditures	DEC_exp	0.15 (420)	0.09 (2050)	0.28 (1051)	
	Health	DEC_health	0.16 (420)	0.03 (2049)	0.13 (1012)	
	Household chores	DEC_house	0.12 (231)	0.15 (2033)	0.07 (1008)	
	Violence	DEC_violence	0.25 (414)	0.03 (2046)	0.21 (907)	
	Religion	DEC_religion	0.06 (420)	0.01 (1327)	0.02 (1015)	

Results

Functionings: We first test the functionings deprivation index on the four hypotheses enumerated above. The index passes the filter test (hypothesis 1.a.), meaning that individuals who are identified as poor by their national poverty lines tend to have significantly more functionings deprivations than individuals who are identified as non-poor. However, when we compare across countries, we find that there are significant differences between the functionings achievements of poor individuals in different countries, meaning that we are unable to confirm hypothesis 2.a. In particular, we find that poor individuals in the UK are significantly less deprived in the three chosen dimensions than poor individuals in both Chile and the Philippines, while poor individuals in Chile tend to be better off than poor individuals in the Philippines. The differences in functionings achievements are not, however, sufficiently

up to 37% (high poverty line, 60% of median income). This does not affect the main conclusions of the paper, although it tends to reduce the significance of the results.

large to invalidate the intermediate hypothesis (3), and we find that we are unable to reject or confirm the null and alternative hypotheses in most cases for the intermediate hypothesis. This result is, of course, contingent on the dimensions chosen (health, education and employment) and could probably be nuanced or reversed by looking at different dimensions of poverty. However, as discussed in the theoretical sections, it is unlikely that this would ease the problem of comparability of poverty concepts across countries, given the significant variations that exist in the core functionings achievements between first and third world countries. Hypothesis 4 is not tested here, since this index is constructed from objective indicators (see Table 5).

Utility: Secondly, we look at utility, proxied by happiness and multidimensional subjective wellbeing. In the case of the unidimensional indicator, the indicator passes the filter test (hypothesis 1.a.), meaning that poor individuals tend to be significantly less happy than non-poor individuals. However, the variable does not appear to stand up to the first test of interest (hypothesis 2.a.), meaning that happiness levels are not comparable across countries for poor people. In particular, we find that poor people in the UK tend to be significantly more happy than poor people in Chile and the Philippines. In fact, poor people in the UK also declare themselves to be more happy than non-poor people in the Philippines. However, the difference is not sufficient to reject the intermediate hypothesis (3) at the 95% confidence level for the low and medium poverty lines. Furthermore, hypothesis 3 holds in bilateral comparisons between Chile and the Philippines, as well as between Chile and the UK. Hypothesis 4 about the relative disadvantage of poor individuals compared to the population average, is rejected for Chile/Philippines and Chile/UK comparisons for extremely poor individuals, as well as for UK/Philippines comparisons for all poverty lines (see Table 6). When looking at the multidimensional index of subjective wellbeing, we find that the indicator passes the filter test in all but one case (high cutoff for the UK). However, the hypotheses of interest (2-4) are strongly rejected in almost all cases in both the strong and weak versions of the hypotheses (see Table 7).

Social participation: Thirdly, we test the hypotheses in relation to the social exclusion variables. This is the most difficult concept to measure, both because of the complexity of the concept itself, and because of the lack of comparable indicators across all three countries (see Table 19). In the case of the unidimensional variable, we find that the variable does pass the filter test (hypothesis 1.a), meaning that poor individuals tend to feel more put down than their non-poor counterparts. However, the variable is not comparable across countries in its strong version (hypothesis 2.a) with one exception (extremely poor individuals in the UK and the Philippines). In its intermediate version, the comparability hypothesis (3) is rejected in comparisons Chile and the Philippines and between Chile and the UK. However, we are unable to reject it when comparing the UK and the Philippines (rejected at the 90% confidence level for vulnerable individuals). In the case of the weaker version, however, we are unable to reject the null hypothesis at the 95% confidence level in all but one case, which suggests that it might be possible to make relative comparisons of social exclusion across economic context. The weakness of the result, as well as the issues of comparability surrounding the indicator itself, however, make this a very tentative conclusion (see Table 8).

In order to reach more conclusive results across a wider array of indicators of social exclusion, we turn to the multidimensional indicator of social exclusion. This, however, means that we are only able to

compare two countries (Chile and the Philippines). The multidimensional indicator, however, does not provide any more support in favour of the comparability of social exclusion across countries. First of all, the filter hypothesis (1.a.) is inconclusive in the case of the Philippines, at least. Although poor individuals do report a slightly higher level of social exclusion than non-poor individuals, the difference is not statistically significant. Secondly, both the strong and intermediate hypotheses of cross-country comparability (2.a. and 3) are strongly rejected for all cut-off lines. The weak hypotheses is accepted for the low cutoff, but rejected in the two other cases. In other words, there is little evidence to suggest that exclusion, as measured here, is comparable across countries, or even that it is a reliable marker of poverty (see Table 9).

Autonomy: Finally we move to autonomy. We start with the standard question on empowerment from the World Value Survey (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Narayan-Parker, 2005). As this question is available in both UK datasets, we are able to test it twice for consistency and robustness. In the case of the World Value Survey all hypotheses are strongly confirmed, meaning that empowerment both appears to be a reliable marker of poverty, as well as being internationally comparable in both absolute, relative terms and in terms of the intermediate hypothesis (see Table 10). The British Opinion Survey dataset yields almost identical results, with all hypotheses being strongly confirmed for all poverty lines. In one case, the relative hypothesis (4) is rejected in comparisons of relative empowerment between Chile and the UK. However, this result is not significant at the 95% level. Furthermore, since the hypotheses is accepted in its stronger versions (2.a, and 3), this should not undermine the overall validity of our results (see Table 11).

This is a very strong result, especially since we are dealing with subjective indicators. However, because of the formulation of the question using the ladder analogy, there is a possibility that individual responses may reflect their self-perceived relative position in society or social class rather than their level of empowerment. In order to control for this possibility, we re-run all four hypotheses, but instead of dividing up the population by poverty lines, we now divide them up by income quintiles (results are only reported for quintiles 2-5, since individuals in quintile 1 are poor in all countries). The presumption in this case is that if individual answers to the empowerment question reflect their self-perceived social position rather than empowerment, then the international comparability should hold for each quintile (e.g. second quintile respondents may report to be on second step of the ladder in both Chile as in the UK, etc.). Interestingly, when formulated in this way, the strong hypothesis (2.a.) is rejected 99% in three out of nine cases and at the 90% level in a further two cases. The intermediate hypothesis holds up slightly better with only one rejection at 99% confidence and one at 90% confidence. However, we are only able to confirm the hypothesis with more than 90% confidence in two out of nine cases. The weak hypothesis (4) is rejected in all but three cases.

A closer inspection reveals that this rejection of the hypotheses is due to a qualitative jump in the levels of empowerment between poor and non-poor individuals. Indeed, individuals belonging to the second income quintile in the UK are non-poor, whereas in the Philippines they are all poor, and in Chile they are partially poor. In the UK, these individuals display similar levels of empowerment to individuals belonging to the third, fourth and fifth income quintiles, and significantly higher empowerment than individuals belonging to the first income quintile (this is also confirmed by control hypothesis 1.b.). In

the Philippines, you observe a very similar qualitative jump, but taking place between the second and third income quintiles (i.e. again between poor and non-poor) rather than between the first and second income quintiles. Chile shows a more gradual progression of empowerment levels across quintiles. In other words, it would seem that the key determinant of disempowerment in these cases is not the respondent's relative position in society (i.e. income quintile), but whether or not they are classified as poor (see Table 12). Similar, but less marked results are obtained when using the British Opinion Survey dataset (see Table 13).

This conclusion is also supported by the multivariate regression analysis in which we control for total household income per capita, as well as average national income, provincial average income, and functionings deprivations (see Table 18). This analysis confirms that being classified as poor is a significant determinant of reported empowerment for all three poverty lines – more so than both household income and national and provincial averages. This results remains even when we control for other social and personal characteristics, such as ethnicity, religion, marital status, age, gender and household size.

Unidimensional: In the case of the two other unidimensional indicators tested here, we obtain results that point in somewhat similar directions, although with weaker results. Both questions (can you change things in your community and do you feel free to live your life as you wish) pass the filter question, meaning that poor individuals report lower levels of empowerment or autonomy than non-poor individuals. In the case of the “change” question, however, the strong and intermediate hypotheses (2.a. and 3) are rejected for poor and vulnerable individuals, whereas the weak hypothesis (4) is rejected at 90% confidence levels but not at 95% confidence for the high and low poverty lines. For the lowest poverty line, we are unable to reject either the strong, intermediate or weak hypotheses at the 95% confidence levels, suggesting that the indicator may be comparable across countries for extremely poor individuals (see Table 14). In the case of the “free life” indicator, the strong hypothesis (2.a.) is strongly rejected for all poverty lines, suggesting that the indicator is not comparable across countries in absolute terms. The intermediate hypothesis (3) holds up at the 95% confidence level for extremely poor individuals, but not for poor and vulnerable individuals, suggesting again that the indicators may be weakly comparable across countries for extreme poverty. The weak hypothesis (4) holds up at the 95% confidence level in all cases except one, suggesting again that the indicator may be comparable across countries in relative terms, although not in absolute terms (see Table 15).

Multidimensional: In the case of the multidimensional indicators of autonomy, the results are inconclusive. The first indicator, based on the Relative Autonomy Index (Ryan & Deci, 2000) yields results that are consistent with the findings of the previous two indicators, in the sense that the comparability appears to hold up in relative terms (hypothesis 4) for all deprivation cutoffs, and holds up in absolute terms for low and medium cutoffs (hypothesis 2.a) and in the intermediate hypothesis (hypothesis 3) for low cutoffs at 95% confidence. However, it is unclear that this indicator constitutes a good marker of poverty in the present case, as the differences in autonomy between poor and non-poor individuals (hypothesis 1.a.) are insignificant in most cases, particularly in the Philippines (see Table 16). The second multidimensional indicator performs even worse as a poverty indicator, since there is little or no evidence that poor individuals are less able to make decisions for themselves than non-poor

individuals. This is probably due to the formulation of the question (“who makes decisions in your household”), which means that the indicator is more likely to pick up intra-household power relations than the wider social relations of power that would be relevant to understand poverty. The question does also not appear to be comparable across countries, as hypotheses 2a. and 3 are rejected in most cases (see Table 17).

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to argue that the long-standing dichotomy between absolute and relative poverty can be, if not resolved, at least abridged through a slight reformulation of Sen’s conception of poverty that separates the notion of poverty from that of deprivations, and re-centers the definition of poverty on a specific functioning, namely autonomy. The proposed representation of poverty builds on and seeks to cohere several different aspects of poverty that have been highlighted in the recent literature, such as the notion of social exclusion, developed primarily for the context of industrialized societies (Byrne, 1999), as well as insights about the importance and role of empowerment both as an explanatory and a constitutive element of poverty in developing countries (McGillivray, 2005; Narayan-Parker, 2005; Kabeer, 1999; Alkire, 2005 a). Empirically, this reformulation is consistent with increasing evidence from participatory poverty assessments regarding the way in which the poor themselves experience poverty primarily in terms of powerlessness and isolation (Narayan, Chambers, Shah, & Petesch, 2000; Adair, 2002)²⁵.

The results presented in this paper underline the importance of understanding and measuring inner constraints that affect poverty, in addition to the external constraints generated by, or observable in, material deprivations. This conclusion should not, however, be interpreted to mean that direct measures of autonomy could or should replace existing measures of poverty. First, as the results from the household decision question illustrate (Table 17), lack of autonomy may occur for reasons that are unrelated to poverty, such as culturally determined gender relations or biologically determined factors in the case of children. Therefore, autonomy will always need to be looked at in the context of, and as a complement to, information about social relations of power and individual deprivations.

Secondly, the complexity and elusiveness of the concept of autonomy means that it will probably not be possible to agree on a unique and measurable definition of autonomy, any more than it has been possible to agree on empirically viable definitions of utility or social participation. Therefore, in practical applications, we will probably need to continue to rely for some time to come on more prosaic measures based on objective and observable indicators, such as income or functionings achievements. Such practical challenges, however, do not in any way diminish the need for conceptual clarity about what it is that these indicators should try to approximate.

²⁵ Particularly in the case of children, poverty is primarily experienced in terms of powerless, isolation and humiliation – this appears to be equally true for industrialized countries, as for low income countries (Camfield, 2010; Redmond, 2008)

Table 4: Hypotheses test results for total household income per year in USD/PPP (low, medium and high poverty lines)²⁶

	Averages Poor (line 1)	Poor (line 2)	Poor (line 3)
Philippines	320.83	497.29	574.70
Chile	570.19	1062.69	1205.64
UK	4670.53	6562.89	7954.75
	Averages Non-Poor (ln.2)	Non-Poor (ln.3)	Non-Poor (ln.3)
Philippines	3077.67	3355.41	3355.41
Chile	5017.07	5385.50	5385.50
UK	49269.16	50789.47	50789.47
Hypothesis 1a (filter): NP>P within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UKP	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 3 (medium): NP>P across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	H0	P>NP**	P>NP***
Phil. / UK	P>NP***	P>NP***	P>NP***
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	Ha***	Ha***	H0
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha***	Ha***	H0
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***

Table 5: Hypotheses test results for multidimensional functionings deprivation indicator (low, medium, high cutoffs – low poverty line)

	Averages Poor (cutoff1/ln Poor (cutoff2/ln Poor (cutoff3/ln.1)		
Philippines	1.25	1.38	2.43
Chile	1.24	1.27	1.90
UK	1.16	1.16	1.82
	Averages Non-poor (ct.1/ Non-Poor (ct.2/ Non-Poor (ct.3/ln.2)		
Philippines	1.16	1.23	1.80
Chile	1.17	1.18	1.71
UK	1.02	1.02	1.69
Hypothesis 1a (filter): P>NP within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	Ha**	Ha***	Ha***
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha**
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	Ha**	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha**	Ha**	H0
Phil. / UKP	Ha*	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 3 (medium): P>NP across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	Ha**	H0	Ha**
Chile / UK	H0	H0	Ha*
Phil. / UK	H0	NP>P*	H0
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	Ha*	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha**	H0	H0
Phil. / UK	H0	H0	Ha***
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	Ha*	Ha***	Ha**
Chile	Ha*	Ha***	H0
UK	H0	Ha***	H0
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	Ha**	Ha**
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	H0
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha**

²⁶ * indicates the result is significant at 90% level.

** indicates the result is significant at 95% level.

*** indicates the result is significant at 99% level.

Table 6: Hypotheses test results for unidimensional happiness indicator (low, medium and high poverty lines)

	Averages Poor (line 1)	Poor (line 2)	Poor (line 3)
Philippines	2.14	2.12	2.11
Chile	2.25	2.02	1.99
UK	1.89	1.89	1.85
	Averages Non-Poor (ln.2)	Non-Poor (ln.3)	Non-Poor (ln.3)
Philippines	2.00	2.00	2.00
Chile	1.74	1.73	1.73
UK	1.64	1.64	1.64
Hypothesis 1a (filter): P>NP within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	Ha*	Ha**	Ha*
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	Ha*	Ha**
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha**	Ha**
Phil. / UKP	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 3 (medium): P>NP across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	Ha***	H0	H0
Chile / UK	Ha**	Ha***	Ha**
Phil. / UK	NP>P*	NP>P*	NP>P**
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha*	Ha*
Chile / UK	Ha*	H0	H0
Phil. / UK	Ha**	Ha***	Ha**
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	H0	H0	H0
Chile	Ha***	H0	H0
UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***

Table 7: Hypotheses test results for multidimensional subjective wellbeing deprivation indicator (low, medium, high cutoffs – low poverty line)

	Averages Poor (cutoff1/ln Poor (cutoff2/ln Poor (cutoff3/ln.1)		
Philippines	1.26	2.44	4.51
Chile	1.72	3.11	4.31
UK	1.16	1.80	3.12
	Averages Non-poor (ct.1/ln Non-Poor (ct.2/ln Non-Poor (ct.3/ln.2)		
Philippines	1.18	2.20	4.39
Chile	1.31	2.19	3.89
UK	1.09	1.68	3.59
Hypothesis 1a (filter): P>NP within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	H0	Ha*	H0
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha**	Ha*	NP>P***
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha*
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UKP	H0	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 3 (medium): P>NP across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	H0	Ha**	H0
Chile / UK	NP>P**	NP>P***	NP>P***
Phil. / UK	H0	NP>P***	NP>P***
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha**	Ha***	Ha**
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	H0	H0	Ha***
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	H0	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***

Table 8: Hypotheses test results for unidimensional social participation indicator (low, medium and high poverty lines)

	Averages Poor (line 1)	Poor (line 2)	Poor (line 3)
Philippines	3.01	2.87	2.91
Chile	3.43	3.48	3.49
UK	3.17	3.16	3.09
	Averages Non-Poor (ln.2)	Non-Poor (ln.3)	Non-Poor (ln.3)
Philippines	3.08	3.08	3.08
Chile	3.58	3.58	3.58
UK	3.36	3.38	3.38
Hypothesis 1a (filter): NP>P within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	H0	Ha**	Ha**
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha**	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha**	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UKP	H0	Ha***	Ha**
Hypothesis 3 (medium): NP>P across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	H0	Ha**	Ha***
Phil. / UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chille / Phil.	H0	H0	H0
Chile / UK	H0	Ha*	Ha***
Phil. / UK	H0	H0	Ha*
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	H0	H0	H0
Chile	H0	H0	H0
UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***

Table 9: Hypotheses test results for multidimensional social participation deprivation indicator (low, medium, high cutoffs – low poverty line)

	Averages Poor (cutoff1/ln Poor (cutoff2/ln Poor (cutoff3/ln.1)		
Philippines	2.14	4.96	11.35
Chile	1.47	3.47	9.63
UK	1.00	1.00	1.00
	Averages Non-poor (ct.1/ Non-Poor (ct.2/ Non-Poor (ct.3/ln.2)		
Philippines	2.09	4.51	10.79
Chile	1.35	2.44	7.92
UK	1.00	1.00	1.00
Hypothesis 1a (filter): P>NP within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	H0	H0	H0
Chile	H0	Ha***	Ha***
UK			
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha**
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UKP			
Hypothesis 3 (medium): P>NP across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	NP>P***	NP>P***	NP>P**
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UK			
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chille / Phil.	H0	Ha**	Ha**
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UK			
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK			
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***

Table 10: Hypotheses test results for unidimensional autonomy indicator - ladder question, British Values Survey (low, medium and high poverty lines)

	Averages Poor (line 1)	Poor (line 2)	Poor (line 3)
Philippines	6.27	6.31	6.43
Chile	6.29	6.63	6.65
UK	6.52	6.62	6.59
	Averages Non-Poor (ln.2)	Non-Poor (ln.3)	Non-Poor (ln.3)
Philippines	7.44	7.50	7.50
Chile	7.58	7.67	7.67
UK	7.09	7.12	7.12
Hypothesis 1a (filter): NP>P within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	H0	H0
Chile / UK	H0	H0	H0
Phil. / UKP	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 3 (medium): NP>P across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chille / Phil.	H0	H0	H0
Chile / UK	H0	H0	H0
Phil. / UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	H0	H0	H0
Chile	Ha*	H0	H0
UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	H0	H0
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***

Table 11: Hypotheses test results for unidimensional autonomy indicator - ladder question, British Opinion Survey (low, medium and high poverty lines)

	Averages Poor (line 1)	Poor (line 2)	Poor (line 3)
Philippines	6.27	6.31	6.43
Chile	6.29	6.63	6.65
UK	6.57	6.57	6.58
	Averages Non-Poor (ln.2)	Non-Poor (ln.3)	Non-Poor (ln.3)
Philippines	7.44	7.50	7.50
Chile	7.58	7.67	7.67
UK	7.08	7.09	7.09
Hypothesis 1a (filter): NP>P within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha**	Ha**	Ha***
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	H0	H0
Chile / UK	H0	H0	H0
Phil. / UKP	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 3 (medium): NP>P across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chille / Phil.	H0	H0	H0
Chile / UK	Ha*	H0	H0
Phil. / UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	H0	H0	H0
Chile	Ha*	H0	H0
UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	H0	H0
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha**	Ha***	Ha***

Table 12: Hypotheses test results for unidimensional autonomy indicator - ladder question, British Values Survey (2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th quintiles)

	Averages Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4
Philippines	6.38	7.41	6.96
Chile	6.81	7.24	7.69
UK	7.16	7.06	7.05
	Averages Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
Philippines	7.41	6.96	8.08
Chile	7.24	7.69	7.97
UK	7.06	7.05	7.29
Hypothesis 1a (filter): NP>P within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	Ha***	H0	Ha***
Chile	Ha**	Ha***	Ha**
UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha*	H0	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha*	H0	Ha***
Phil. / UKP	Ha***	H0	H0
Hypothesis 3 (medium): NP>P across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	Ha**	H0	Ha*
Chile / UK	H0	H0	P>NP**
Phil. / UK	H0	P>NP*	H0
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	Ha*	Ha**
Chile / UK	Ha***	H0	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha**	Ha*	H0
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	Ha***	H0	H0
Chile	Ha**	Ha***	Ha***
UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	Ha***	H0
Chile / UK	H0	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	H0	H0	Ha***

Table 13: Hypotheses test results for unidimensional autonomy indicator - ladder question, British Opinion Survey (2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th quintiles)

	Averages Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4
Philippines	6.38	7.41	6.96
Chile	6.81	7.24	7.69
UK	6.60	6.97	7.32
	Averages Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
Philippines	7.41	6.96	8.08
Chile	7.24	7.69	7.97
UK	6.97	7.32	7.47
Hypothesis 1a (filter): NP>P within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	Ha***	H0	Ha***
Chile	Ha**	Ha***	Ha**
UK	Ha*	Ha*	H0
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha*	H0	Ha***
Chile / UK	H0	H0	Ha**
Phil. / UKP	H0	Ha*	H0
Hypothesis 3 (medium): NP>P across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	Ha**	H0	Ha*
Chile / UK	H0	H0	H0
Phil. / UK	Ha**	H0	Ha**
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	Ha*	Ha**
Chile / UK	H0	H0	H0
Phil. / UK	H0	H0	Ha*
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	Ha***	H0	H0
Chile	Ha**	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha*	Ha*	Ha*
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	Ha***	H0
Chile / UK	H0	Ha**	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha*	H0	Ha***

Table 14: Hypotheses test results for unidimensional autonomy indicator - change question (low, medium, and high poverty lines)

	Averages Poor (line 1)	Poor (line 2)	Poor (line 3)
Philippines	3.23	3.04	3.04
Chile	3.52	3.48	3.46
UK	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Averages Non-Poor (ln.2)	Non-Poor (ln.3)	Non-Poor (ln.3)
Philippines	2.71	2.66	2.66
Chile	3.31	3.30	3.30
UK	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hypothesis 1a (filter): P>NP within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile	Ha**	Ha***	Ha***
UK			
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha*	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UKP			
Hypothesis 3 (medium): P>NP across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	H0	NP>P**	NP>P***
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UK			
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chille / Phil.	Ha*	H0	Ha*
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UK			
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	H0	H0	H0
Chile	H0	H0	H0
UK			
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UK			

Table 15: Hypotheses test results for unidimensional autonomy indicator – free life question (low, medium, and high poverty lines)

	Averages Poor (line 1)	Poor (line 2)	Poor (line 3)
Philippines	3.32	3.34	3.38
Chile	2.89	3.05	3.03
UK	3.09	3.07	3.10
	Averages Non-Poor (ln.2)	Non-Poor (ln.3)	Non-Poor (ln.3)
Philippines	3.48	3.46	3.46
Chile	3.22	3.25	3.25
UK	3.22	3.22	3.22
Hypothesis 1a (filter): NP>P within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	Ha*	Ha*	H0
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha**	Ha***	Ha**
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha**	H0	H0
Phil. / UKP	Ha**	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 3 (medium): NP>P across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	H0	P>NP*	P>NP**
Chile / UK	Ha**	Ha**	Ha**
Phil. / UK	P>NP*	P>NP**	P>NP***
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chille / Phil.	Ha*	H0	H0
Chile / UK	Ha**	H0	H0
Phil. / UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	H0	H0	H0
Chile	Ha**	H0	H0
UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	H0	H0	H0
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***

Table 16: Hypotheses test results for multidimensional autonomy indicator – Ryan and Deci question (low, medium, and high cutoffs, low poverty line)

Averages Poor (cutoff1/In Poor (cutoff2/In Poor (cutoff3/In.1)			
Philippines	1.14	1.29	2.42
Chile	1.12	1.21	1.55
UK	1.00	1.00	1.00
Averages Non-poor (ct.1/ Non-Poor (ct.2/ Non-Poor (ct.3/In.2)			
Philippines	1.18	1.33	2.31
Chile	1.08	1.17	1.37
UK	1.00	1.00	1.00
Hypothesis 1a (filter): P>NP within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	H0	H0	H0
Chile	Ha*	H0	Ha***
UK			
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	H0	H0	Ha***
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UKP			
Hypothesis 3 (medium): P>NP across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	NP>P*	NP>P**	NP>P***
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UK			
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chille / Phil.	H0	H0	H0
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UK			
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	Ha**	Ha***	Ha***
Chile	Ha**	Ha***	Ha***
UK			
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK			
Phil. / UK			

Table 17: Hypotheses test results for multidimensional autonomy indicator – household decision question (low, medium, and high cutoffs, low poverty line)

Averages Poor (cutoff1/In Poor (cutoff2/In Poor (cutoff3/In.1)			
Philippines	2.21	2.87	2.96
Chile	2.08	2.38	2.82
UK	2.89	3.24	4.78
Averages Non-poor (ct.1/ Non-Poor (ct.2/ Non-Poor (ct.3/In.2)			
Philippines	2.14	2.76	3.05
Chile	2.07	2.33	2.72
UK	2.73	3.03	4.63
Hypothesis 1a (filter): P>NP within countries (Ha)			
Philippines	H0	H0	H0
Chile	H0	H0	Ha*
UK	Ha**	Ha**	H0
Hypothesis 2a(strong): P=P across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	H0
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UKP	Ha***	Ha**	Ha***
Hypothesis 3 (medium): P>NP across countries (Ha)			
Phil. / Chile	NP>P*	NP>P***	NP>P**
Chile / UK	NP>P***	NP>P***	NP>P***
Phil. / UK	NP>P***	NP>P*	NP>P***
Hypothesis 4 (weak): P/NP=P/NP across countries (H0)			
Chille / Phil.	H0	H0	H0
Chile / UK	Ha**	H0	H0
Phil. / UK	H0	H0	H0
Hypothesis 1b (control): P1=P2=P3, NP2=NP3 within countries (H0)			
Philippines	Ha***	H0	Ha***
Chile	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Hypothesis 2b (control): NP=NP across countries (H0)			
Chile / Phil.	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Chile / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***
Phil. / UK	Ha***	Ha***	Ha***

Table 18: Multivariate regression results (OLS regression) - Ladder question, British Values Survey/ British Opinion Survey²⁷

Dep. Var.	PRX_emp_lad (WVS)	PRX_emp_lad (WVS)	PRX_emp_lad (WVS)	PRX_emp_lad (WVS)	PRX_emp_lad (BOS)	PRX_emp_lad (BOS)	PRX_emp_lad (BOS)	PRX_emp_lad (BOS)
OBS	3,109	3,109	3,109	3,109	3,309	3,309	3,309	3,307
R2	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.05
USD_total_hh	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
SQR_total_hh								
USD_total_missing								
HC1_total_hh	-0.73 ***				-0.69 ***			
HC2_total_hh		-0.80 ***				-0.76 ***		
HC3_total_hh			-0.84 ***	-0.81 ***			-0.82 ***	-0.77 ***
A0_FUNC2	-0.48 ***	-0.43 ***	-0.43 ***	-0.44 ***	-0.51 ***	-0.49 ***	-0.49 ***	-0.49 ***
USD_total_ctymed	-0.00 **	-0.00 **	-0.00 **	-0.00 *	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
USD_total_regmed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
DMY_female				0.01 (0)				0.09
HH_size				-0.26 ***				-0.18 **
SQR_size				0.02 **				0.01
IND_age				-0.01				-0.03 *
SQR_age				0.00 (0)				0.00
DMY_indigenous				0.20				-0.33
DMY_ind_missing				0.03 (0)				-0.50 *
DMY_religious_minority				0.03 (0)				0.04 (0)
DMY_rel_missing				0.28 (0)				-0.02 (0)
DMY_civ_separated				0.68 **				0.76
DMY_civ_partner				0.49 **				0.62
DMY_civ_annulled				-2.06				-1.88
DMY_civ_divorced				0.55				0.43 (0)
DMY_civ_widowed				1.10 ***				0.91
DMY_civ_single				0.63 *				0.66
DMY_civ_missing				(omitted) ***				1.20 (0)
constant	7.95 ***	8.05 ***	8.05 ***	8.43 ***	8.43 ***	8.14 ***	8.22 ***	9.07 ***

²⁷ The prefix “SQR_” indicates that it is a squared variable. The prefix “DMY_” indicates that it is a dummy variable. The prefix “HC_” indicates that it is a dummy variable taking the value one if the individual is classified as income poor and 0 otherwise (the number indicates whether it is a low,1, medium, 2, or high,3, poverty line). The suffix “_missing” indicates that it is a dummy controlling for missing observations or non-responses. “_ctymed” stands for country median or national median income. “_regmed” stands for regional median or sub-national median income.

Table 19: Description of variables and deprivation cutoffs.

	Education	SWB_education	Not at all satisfied	(1) + Not very satisfied	(1) + (2) + fairly satisfied	UK question: "how much confidence do you have in the education system?"
	Overall life satisfaction	SWB_life	Not at all satisfied	(1) + Not very satisfied	(1) + (2) + fairly satisfied	
SOCIAL PARTICIPATION (exclusion)	Throughout your life, how seriously have you felt harmed by being put down?	PRX_soc_putdown	A lot	(1) + Fairly	(1) + (2) A bit	UK question: "Sometimes I feel that I am being pushed around in life." (Strongly agree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree)
SOCIAL PARTICIPATION (MD)		A0_SOC				Chile and Philippines only.
	Shame	SOC_shame	Always or almost always	(1) + Often but not always	(1) + (2) + Occasionally	Feeling embarrassed, ridiculous, self-conscious, humiliated, stupid, childish, helpless, blushing, laughable, disgusting.
	Humiliation	SOC_humiliation	A lot	(1) + Fairly	(1) + (2) + Occasionally	Feeling put down, excluded, ridiculed, discounted, cruelly criticised, called names.
	Respect	SOC_respect	Always disrespected	(1) + Often disrespected	(1) + (2) + Sometimes disrespected	Do you feel people treat you with respect/unfairly?
	Relatedness	SOC_relatedness	Not at all	(1) + Somewhat true	(1) + (2) + Fairly true	Get along with people, close to people, people care about me.
AUTONOMY (Relative Autonomy Index)		A0_AUT				Chile and Philippines only. RAI= 3xIntegrated regulation - introjected regulation - external regulation - no choice (Chirkov, R., & Kaplan, 2003; Chirkov, Ryan, & Willness, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2004; Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995)
	Education	AUT_edu	RAI < -1	RAI < 0 (i.e. external motivations dominate)	RAI < 1	
	Employment	AUT_job	RAI < -1	RAI < 0 (i.e. external motivations dominate)	RAI < 1	
	Household chores	AUT_house	RAI < -1	RAI < 0 (i.e. external motivations dominate)	RAI < 1	
	Health	AUT_health	RAI < -1	RAI < 0 (i.e. external motivations dominate)	RAI < 1	
AUTONOMY (Change)	Do you feel you can change things in your community?	PRX_emp_change	No, not at all (i.e. cannot change)	(1) + Yes, but with great difficulty	(1) + (2) + Yes, but with some difficulty	Only Chile and Philippines
AUTONOMY (ladder)	Where are you on a ten step ladder of empowerment	PRX_emp_ladder	PRX_emp_ladder < 3	PRX_emp_ladder < 5	PRX_emp_ladder < 7	"Imagine a ten step ladder, where on the bottom, the first step, stand people who are completely without free choice and control over the way their lives turn out,"...
AUTONOMY (free life)	I feel free to decide for myself how to lead my life.	PRX_emp_free	Not true at all	(1) + Somewhat true	(1) + (2)	Options: (1) not at all true; (2) Somewhat true; (3) Fairly true; (4) Completely true.
AUTONOMY (decisions)		A0_DEC				"Who usually makes decisions at home about ...?"
	Employment	DEC_job	Neither respondent nor spouse decide	(1) + Respondent's spouse decides	(1) + (2) + respondent and spouse decide jointly	
	health	DEC_health	Neither respondent nor spouse decide	(1) + Respondent's spouse decides	(1) + (2) + respondent and spouse decide jointly	
	household expenses	DEC_house	Neither respondent nor spouse decide	(1) + Respondent's spouse decides	(1) + (2) + respondent and spouse decide jointly	
	personal safety	DEC_violence	Neither respondent nor spouse decide	(1) + Respondent's spouse decides	(1) + (2) + respondent and spouse decide jointly	
	religion	DEC_religion	Neither respondent nor spouse decide	(1) + Respondent's spouse decides	(1) + (2) + respondent and spouse decide jointly	

Evaluative Space	Dimension	Indicator name	Deprivation cutoffs (deprived if...)			Comment
			Low (1)	Medium (2)	High (3)	
AUTONOMY (Relative Autonomy Index)		A0_AUT				Chile and Philippines only. RAI= 3xIntegrated regulation - introjected regulation - external regulation - no choice (Chirkov, R., & Kaplan, 2003; Chirkov, Ryan, & Willness, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2004; Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995)
	Education	AUT_edu	RAI < -1	RAI < 0 (i.e. external motivations dominate)	RAI < 1	
	Employment	AUT_job	RAI < -1	RAI < 0 (i.e. external motivations dominate)	RAI < 1	
	Household chores	AUT_house	RAI < -1	RAI < 0 (i.e. external motivations dominate)	RAI < 1	
	Health	AUT_health	RAI < -1	RAI < 0 (i.e. external motivations dominate)	RAI < 1	
AUTONOMY (Change)	Do you feel you can change things in your community?	PRX_emp_change	No, not at all (i.e. cannot change)	(1) + Yes, but with great difficulty	(1) + (2) + Yes, but with some difficulty	Only Chile and Philippines
AUTONOMY (ladder)	Where are you on a ten step ladder of empowerment	PRX_emp_ladder	PRX_emp_ladder < 3	PRX_emp_ladder < 5	PRX_emp_ladder < 7	"Imagine a ten step ladder, where on the bottom, the first step, stand people who are completely without free choice and control over the way their lives turn out,"...
AUTONOMY (free life)	I feel free to decide for myself how to lead my life.	PRX_emp_freeife	Not true at all	(1) + Somewhat true	(1) + (2)	Options: (1) not at all true; (2) Somewhat true; (3) Fairly true; (4) Completely true.
AUTONOMY (decisions)		A0_DEC				"Who usually makes decisions at home about ...?"
	Employment	DEC_job	Neither respondent nor spouse decide	(1) + Respondent's spouse decides	(1) + (2) + respondent and spouse decide jointly	

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