‘If you’re poor then you can’t be my friend’: Intersections of shame, humiliation, isolation and poverty
If you're poor then you can't be my friend.

Intersections of shame, humiliation, isolation and poverty.
OPHI’s Missing Dimensions

- Quality of work
- Empowerment
- Physical safety
- Psychological wellbeing
- Social connectedness – shame and humiliation, and social isolation
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• Physical safety
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• Social connectedness – shame and humiliation, and social isolation
‘Even if you are hungry... You can’t go to them [neighbours] to ask for food or money because they are judging you that you are poor...they won’t give you money...so it’s better that you isolate yourself’ (FG, South Africa)

‘They do isolate themselves because they are being classified as the poor...they will isolate themselves, full of hatred to anyone’. (Male FG Soweto)

Poverty can pose a choice between isolation and shame’ (Narayan et al. 2000b, p. 258),
Gonzalez (2007:62-3) points out, ‘social isolation [is a] a critical but often neglected outcome of poverty’.

Robert Walker and others (2013), has found that withdrawal from social relations and subsequent isolation and ostracism are common responses to shame across diverse contexts, within both developing and developed settings.
Social isolation is a deprivation of social connectedness. It is the inadequate quality and quantity of social relations with other people at the different levels where human interaction takes place (individual, group, community and the larger social environment).
Isolation is a deprivation of connectedness. It is the quality and quantity of interactions with other people at levels where humans...
Social communication
inadequate
social relationship
Social relations within different levels of interaction takes place...
a) **External social isolation**

- Frequency of social contact
- Social network support
- Presence of a discussion partner
- Reciprocity and volunteering

b) **Internal social isolation**

- Satisfaction with social relations
- Need for relatedness
- Feeling of belonging to own neighbourhood/village/community
- Loneliness
- Trust
Social Connectedness: why it matters

The importance for a poor person to have relationships with others is that it allows him/her to learn, it helps him/her to see how to overcome problems. (Male, Mozambique)

‘for me they’re [family and neighbours] equal people, they’ve known me since I was young, they maybe carry me, lift up me in so many ways, and I learn so much from them’. (Female FG Soweto)

‘Whenever people are around you, whatever is eating inside you will become better because you are surrounded by people, as you are talking you will be able to talk out whatever is bothering you inside, because when you’re with people you are talking, talking, talking’ (Female, Soweto).
Ubuntu
'a person is a person through other people'
‘The most important thing is being able to live with others because if one is poor by relating with others can reduce one’s poverty. (Female, Mozambique)

‘Relationships are very important, especially for people that feel lonely, and for poor people as well...because many of them don’t have hope because of their circumstances’ (Male, Grabouw)

‘if I didn’t have relationships I wouldn’t be the same person, I could end up in jail, end up dead' (Male, Grabouw).
‘Poor people have the right to have relationships’ (Female, Soweto).

‘I like money and nice things, but it’s not money that makes me happy. It's people that make me happy’ (cited in Narayan and Petesch 2002, p.258).
‘Poverty means being lonely...and not being able to get other things because you are lonely’ (Female, Grabouw)

‘Being poor means not having anyone to care for you, for example an orphan child ends up becoming poor because of lacking those relationships that would result into a support to him/her’ (Female 39, Mozambique)
“if you’re poor then I can’t mingle with you, you can’t be my friend. You’re not gonna be my friend if you stay in a shack.” I think our communities are creating poverty...Most of the kids that comes here are underprivileged poor kids and when the other kids come who have more money and wear branded shoes – they won’t say “okay you’re my friend” – you will always see that they play one side and those kids the other side’...branded kids isolate them [poor kids] from them’ (Female, Grabouw)

’If I get successful if I get a house, I won’t allow her children...especially my parents are dead. I will have a good relationship and my own are better. And when I have a shack...’
‘it happens a lot, even amongst us...we compare...if T has expensive shoes and C doesn’t then that means C is poor, and she can’t be friends with him. And it happens in the community, if they don’t have food – the neighbour won’t be close to them because they are poor, because they always have to give them something to eat, so they always judge them, and you end up finding out its even affecting the children at school. Because the children of the poor neighbour, they won’t be able to play with the others because they have lunchboxes and mine don’t have lunchboxes, and so it’s like that’ (Female FG Soweto)
'If I get successful and my neighbour lives in a shack, I won’t allow my children to play with her children...even after I’m dead and their parents are dead, these children will not have a good relationship, because mine will know they are better. And those that are living in the shack, when they grow up, they will make sure they destroy everything that I have...just to make me feel the pain they are feeling’ (female FG Soweto).
Dehumanisation and Social death

in our community, most of the people who get HIV are the most poor people, so we tend to say they were using their bodies to get food and money...so the stigma is there...that’s why some people are not able to tell anyone they have HIV, and they end up dying because they can’t ask for help because they are ashamed.’ (Female, SA)

‘they are always undermining and oppressing you even when you want to be better’ (FG Soweto), and ‘they don’t see you as a person, they don’t take your opinion’ (FG Soweto).

‘it’s hurting a lot, especially to we blacks, once you start to prosper you start to label, you start to judge, you start to say “they’re not human and I’m better than everybody else”’ (FG Soweto).

‘they also use you when you are poor...they make you do things for a plate of food...“clean for me”...so you must do each and everything, wash their panties, “go to the shop”...you become their slaves’ (FG Soweto).
‘Isolation is living alone, not wanting to socialise with anyone else. Poverty influences isolation in that the poor isolates him/her because of finding him/herself in that situation. Poverty doesn’t isolate a person; the person is the one who isolates herself by thinking that since she is poor is not ought to mix with others’. (Female, Mozambique)
people are ‘able to participate less and less in the social ceremonies and traditions that once brought people together and helped to create and maintain the social bonds between people’ (Narayan et al. 2000: 70).

‘Our desires and pleasure-taking abilities adjust to circumstances, especially to make life bearable in adverse situations’ (Sen, 1999:62).
Connectedness - not to be taken for granted

‘For many of the poor, the main coping strategy is to establish or maintain relations with others who they believe are in a position to support them both in their daily lives and in times of particular needs’ (Reality Check Mozambique, 2011: 38).

‘... currently available results suggest that those interested in maximizing society’s welfare should shift their attention from an emphasis on increasing consumption opportunities to an emphasis on increasing social contacts’ (2006 p. 22).

Falling incomes and rising poverty are also eroding the capacity of poor people to be part of social networks of support, leaving them unable to engage in and maintain social exchange. By cutting people off from vital sources of support, social isolation - a critical but often neglected outcome of poverty - makes them even more vulnerable to adverse shocks and crises (Gonzalez, 2007: 62-63).
it is necessary to create conditions in which people living in poverty can freely express themselves, building on factors that strengthen and mobilize them, rather than what humiliates or shames them. It is the strength they gain that empowers them with a sense of agency to speak out, act in solidarity with one another, avoid humiliating each other, and ultimately feel in a position of equality from which they can freely enter into dialogue with society and its institutions.
Thanks so much for listening. Your feedback would be enormously appreciated.
My email is china.mills@qeh.ox.ac.uk
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Disconnectedness - not to be taken for granted

For many of the poor, the main coping strategy is to exist, if only in economic terms. For others, this means managing within a limited means. Often, it is a situation of poverty. For the poor, poverty is not just economic. Poor people are forced to exist in an environment of violence, where their basic needs are not met. This leads to a situation of poverty that is not just economic, but also social and psychological. For many, poverty is not just a lack of resources, but also a lack of opportunities. The poor are forced to work in precarious conditions, often in the informal sector, where they are not protected by labor laws. This leads to a situation of poverty that is not just economic, but also social and psychological. For many, poverty is not just a lack of resources, but also a lack of opportunities. The poor are forced to work in precarious conditions, often in the informal sector, where they are not protected by labor laws. 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