



Poverty and Shame: Global Experiences

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Poverty and Shame: Global Experiences explores Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's contention that shame lies at the absolutist core of poverty. It draws on a wealth of empirical evidence to demonstrate how paying greater attention to the psychological and social consequences of poverty provides new insights into how poverty is perpetuated. Based on research in seven very different global contexts, it reveals how, irrespective of whether people live above or below a designated poverty line, in cultures as diverse as rural India, Uganda and Pakistan, urban/suburban UK, China, Norway and South Korea, the ability to participate in society as a full and recognised citizen is largely contingent on having the material resources deemed normal for that society. When such means are not available, the common response is to feel inadequate and to save face by withdrawing to varying degrees from society. Such a response further limits opportunities to exit poverty and arguably results in perpetuating its cycle. Yet society in turn plays a fundamental role in what we term the poverty-shame nexus, by persistently evaluating others against dominant norms and expectations and prioritising certain explanations of poverty over others. Hence shame in relation to poverty is co-constructed, a dynamic interaction of internally felt inadequacies and externally inflicted judgements.

This book, together with the companion volume *The Shame of Poverty* by Robert Walker invites readers to question conventional understandings about poverty and its impact. In so doing, the volumes provide a foundation for a more satisfactory global conversation about the phenomenon of poverty than that which has hitherto been frustrated by disagreement about whether poverty is best conceptualised in absolute or relative terms.

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