

OPHI RESEARCH ON THE ABILITY TO GO ABOUT WITHOUT SHAME *Prepared for the Humiliation Studies 13-14 Dec 2007 meeting in Columbia, NY*

OVERVIEW OF OPHI'S MISSING DIMENSIONS RESEARCH THEME

The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) is undertaking research into better understanding what we have labeled the 'missing dimensions' of poverty – aspects that appear to matter to poor people, according to participatory and normative accounts of poverty, but are not conventionally included in internationally-comparable survey instruments collected at the individual and household levels.

In particular we are focusing on the following dimensions:

- *Employment* – including both formal and informal employment, with a particular emphasis on poverty;
- *Empowerment*, or the expansion of agency – the ability to advance goals one values and has reason to value;
- *Physical safety* – focusing on security from violence to property and person, as well as perceived violence;
- *The ability to go about without shame* – to emphasize the importance of dignity, respect and freedom from humiliation.

We are also considering

- *Psychological and subjective wellbeing* – focusing on meaning, its determinants, and satisfaction.

A critical bottleneck to undertaking research on these dimensions – and their interconnections with income/consumption and the Millennium Development Goals indicators is a dearth of high-quality data. Accordingly, as an investment in our ability to undertake future research, our first goal is to foster and advocate the collection of data for a small set of indicators on these 'missing dimensions'.

As a key input into this project, researchers prepared papers on each of these dimensions setting out the logic for the focus, proposing a series of indicators and a short survey module to collect the required data, and discussing potential analyses of the resulting data. The indicators were selected according to several criteria: they needed to be *internationally comparable*; to assess not only the instrumental but also the *intrinsic* aspects of development; to identify *changes* in our dimensions over time; and to draw on *experience with particular indicators to date* (the extent to which they had been previously fielded and found to be valid and reliable measures).

MEASURES OF SHAME AND HUMILIATION

Zavaleta (2007) focused on indicators of shame and humiliation. Shame and humiliation are repeatedly cited by poor people as central to their experience of poverty, but are very difficult to measure. Drawing heavily on psychological literature, his paper recommends eight indicators to measure specific aspects of shame and humiliation in order to start an in depth debate around this topic. The indicators he proposes are the following:

1. Shame

Shame associated with poverty (whether the respondents would feel shame if they were poor);

Shame proneness

2. ***Humiliation***

External experience of humiliation

Respectful treatment (The extent to which respondents feel they are treated with respect)

Unfair treatment (The extent to which respondents feel they are treated unfairly)

Discrimination (Experiences of prejudiced treatment in past three months, the perpetrator of and grounds for discrimination)

Whether respondent's ethnic, racial or cultural background affects chance of getting jobs, services and education

Whether respondent's economic conditions affect the chances of getting jobs, services and education

Internal experience of humiliation

Accumulated humiliation (respondent's accumulated feelings of humiliation throughout their life)

Since proposing the indicators for this and the other 'missing dimensions', OPHI has been involved in seeking to validate the survey instruments (in particular, many perception-based indicators have been used mostly among small US samples; there is a need to further scrutinize their performance in the context of different cultures and poorer countries). Gallup International recently piloted a questionnaire containing an abridged version of our survey modules among small and non-representative samples in five countries: Bolivia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Kenya and Pakistan. The tentative evidence suggests that the questions on shame and humiliation worked well and that it may be possible to reduce the scales further and still obtain reliable results.

We have also convened focus groups and conducted interviews in Bolivia to obtain qualitative information regarding how respondents may interpret the surveys. The evidence there suggests that the questions appear to work well, though there is some concern over the ethics of administering the questionnaire in a non-clinical setting: some respondents found the questions to be too personal and discomforting. However the participants were also interested in talking about their humiliation at the work place and in other specific situations. Recently, we presented this work in Beijing and found that the concepts of shame and humiliation had deep cultural resonance there too; the same also appears to be true of Philippines, in Ghana and in S Africa, where interest has been expressed in testing this module. Our future efforts will focus on testing the questionnaires in other settings, both on a small scale (to gather further information regarding internal and external validity) and in nationally-representative surveys wherever possible.

We welcome your feedback and collaboration wherever possible as we pursue these efforts, and look forward to learning more about your work in this important area.