

# Stigma, shame and the experience of poverty in Japan and the United Kingdom

Sutton, Eileen; Pemberton, Simon; Fahmy, Eldin; Tamiya, Yuko

DOI:

[10.1017/S1474746413000419](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746413000419)

License:

None: All rights reserved

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Sutton, E, Pemberton, S, Fahmy, E & Tamiya, Y 2014, 'Stigma, shame and the experience of poverty in Japan and the United Kingdom', *Social Policy and Society*, vol. 13, no. 01, pp. 143-154.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746413000419>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

© Cambridge University Press 2013  
Checked for repository 13/10/2014

**General rights**

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

**Take down policy**

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact [UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk) providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

# Social Policy and Society

<http://journals.cambridge.org/SPS>

Additional services for *Social Policy and Society*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



---

## Stigma, Shame and the Experience of Poverty in Japan and the United Kingdom

Eileen Sutton, Simon Pemberton, Eldin Fahmy and Yuko Tamiya

Social Policy and Society / Volume 13 / Issue 01 / January 2014, pp 143 - 154

DOI: 10.1017/S1474746413000419, Published online: 25 September 2013

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S1474746413000419](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S1474746413000419)

### How to cite this article:

Eileen Sutton, Simon Pemberton, Eldin Fahmy and Yuko Tamiya (2014). Stigma, Shame and the Experience of Poverty in Japan and the United Kingdom. *Social Policy and Society*, 13, pp 143-154 doi:10.1017/S1474746413000419

**Request Permissions :** [Click here](#)

# Stigma, Shame and the Experience of Poverty in Japan and the United Kingdom

Eileen Sutton\*, Simon Pemberton\*\*, Eldin Fahmy\*\*\* and Yuko Tamiya†

\*School of Oral and Dental Sciences, University of Bristol

E-mail: e.sutton@bristol.ac.uk

\*\*School of Social Policy, University of Birmingham

E-mail: s.pemberton.1@bham.ac.uk

\*\*\*School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol

E-mail: eldin.fahmy@bristol.ac.uk

†Department of Economics, Kobe Gakuin University

E-mail: tamiya@eb.kobegakuin.ac.jp

---

*Whilst stigma and shame are central features of the experience of poverty in capitalist societies, we know relatively little about crucial aspects of these phenomena, particularly how these experiences differ according to variety of capitalist formation. This article draws on the available empirical literature to examine these relational aspects of poverty in two very different societies, the UK and Japan. Through comparing these literatures, we are able to comment on the ways in which stigma is manifest in differing social, personal and institutional contexts and, therefore, is internalised as shame in similar and divergent forms in these respective societies. We note the very different social values and forms of welfare that constitute these societies which are at times responsible for contrasting experiences of shame, yet conclude that stigma and shame perform important functions within capitalist societies as a means to legitimate the continued existence of poverty within these social systems, and are therefore universal phenomena.*

**Keywords:** Stigma, shame, poverty, social exclusion.

## Introduction

This article focuses on the interrelationship between two central features of the experience of poverty: stigma and shame. The centrality of shame and stigma to understandings of poverty is an enduring theme both in historical accounts of poverty and in contemporary poverty research. As far back as Adam Smith's early observations, poverty has been associated with an inability to observe customary norms relating to dress, tastes and styles of living and has been explicitly framed in terms of avoiding social disgrace and opprobrium (Smith, 1776: 351–2). Similarly, an enforced inability to avoid public shaming plays a central role in Amartya Sen's understanding of the 'absolutist core' of poverty (Sen, 1983, 1993). Whilst the commodities required to avoid the stigma of poverty vary across time and place, direct experiences of indignity, shame and humiliation have always featured strongly in accounts of the experience of poverty in both rich and poor countries (e.g. Beresford *et al.*, 1999; Narayan *et al.*, 2000; Narayan and Patel, 2000; Ridge, 2007).

However, whilst this understanding of poverty as a social relationship is deeply embedded (and contributes substantially to the moral case for tackling poverty), poverty research has for the most part focused more narrowly on the experience of poverty as a material condition. Nevertheless, as Lister (2003) powerfully argues, poverty also needs to be understood as a potentially damaging social relationship characterised by processes of othering in which the 'poor' are discursively marginalised from 'mainstream' society. In the process, the problem of poverty is reconfigured as a problem of the 'poor' themselves, rather than arising as a product of social relations characterised by inequalities of wealth and power. Experiences of stigma and shame are central to this process of othering and as such serve to regulate relationships between 'the poor' and the wider society, including daily social interactions, wider social representations of poverty and 'the poor' in everyday social exchanges, and public and media discourses on poverty.

In this article, we seek to explore the social-psychological impacts of poverty in two very different societies: the United Kingdom, as an individualist society, compared to Japan's collectivist form. By drawing on a review of the qualitative evidence on poverty in these countries, we seek to provide a comparative account of the experiences of stigma and shame and how these relate to wider cultural differences, and social settings. We begin from a *prima facie* position that the contrasting features of these societies serve to mediate the relationship between poverty, stigma and shame, thus resulting in divergent 'national' experiences. In Japan, welfare policy places considerable emphasis on Confucian ideals of 'familial piety and loyalty', stressing the importance of reciprocal kinship obligations that foreground the family, alongside corporations, as the principal agents of welfare, restricting state provision to strictly means tested benefits and services (Esping-Andersen, 1999). In the UK, poverty is very much viewed as the failure of the individual, therefore policy tends to emphasise personal rather than collective forms of responsibility. As Walker *et al.* (2013) note, distinctions between more collectivist cultures (such as Japan) which promote interdependent concepts of self may differ in key respects from more individualistic cultures (such as the UK) where the self is viewed as radically independent. One might expect the internalisation of stigma to be more pronounced in collectivist societies than in more individualistic ones. Whilst we accept that these are somewhat stylised descriptors, hypothecated societal characteristics provide a useful lens to explore the literature presented in the article, from which we may develop more concrete analysis of the points of divergence and commonality in the experiences of stigma and shame.

### **Understanding stigma and shame**

Before discussing the findings of our review it is important to frame the parameters of our analysis. We begin by outlining what we mean by stigma and shame. For Goffman, the term stigma refers to 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting' in which the subject is 'reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one' (1963: 12–13). Stigma is therefore a central feature of the experience of poverty (Beresford *et al.*, 1999) which reflects the wider ideological construction of poverty and its causes in which 'the poor' are constructed as a passive 'burden' on society and as undeserving of state assistance (Reutter *et al.*, 2009). Thus, stigma reflects an 'external' process through which the social 'contribution' or 'value' of those on low incomes is actively denigrated by the pejorative labels that are attached to specific aspects of life on a low income. Shame, then,

refers to the internalisation of stigmatising social labels that force an individual to view themselves 'negatively through the eyes of others' (Scheff, 2011). In the context of poverty, those living on low incomes evaluate their own situations through an aetiological lens of personal failure constructed by dominant political and social discourses. We view shame as a broad notion encompassing a host of negative emotions, such as embarrassment, guilt, humiliation, low self-esteem, disgrace (Scheff, 2011), resulting from this process of self-critique. Given the range of emotions captured by the notion of shame, it is necessary to understand shame as a continuum, whereby feelings vary in both intensity and duration, from transient weaker forms, such as embarrassment, to durable stronger forms, such as humiliation and disgrace (Scheff, 2011). Whilst there is a tendency within the literature to conflate and merge the notions of stigma and shame, we endeavour to uphold these distinctions in the presentation of research findings.

Reaching a comprehensive understanding of these emotions within the context of two very different societies is a complex task, which requires a measure of reflexivity to temper the claims that result from our analysis. We wish then to add the following caveats. First, we have attempted, as far as is possible, to capture the nuance of language in both societies. However, direct comparison of such culturally laden terms is fraught with difficulties, which means that reaching definitive conclusions are beyond the scope of this review. We are restricted then to identifying similarities and divergence in the experience of shame and stigma and to suggest tentative reasons for these findings. Second, we present findings supportive of the hypothesis that stigma and shame are central features of poverty in these societies, which reflects the empirical studies reviewed. The counterfactual, instances where stigma or shame are not evident, feature rarely in the literature; where it is reported it is reflected in our discussion, particularly where shame is either successfully deflected or replaced by more positive emotions, such as pride. A more significant limitation, particularly in relation to shame, is that the literature is largely based on semi-structured 'one-off' interviews that provide a snapshot of peoples' lives, and this means that it is difficult to capture the 'ebb and flow' of human emotions and the events that influence such emotional peaks and troughs, which could be better captured through longitudinal design. Thus, there may well be points in participant's lives where shame may not be a significant factor, and then those times when these feelings intensify, yet these dynamics remain largely unreported, lending a rather static quality to our understanding. Third, on the basis of our review it is apparent that the qualitative literature relating to the lived experience of poverty is more extensively developed in the UK than Japan, therefore our findings must be couched within a greater degree of uncertainty than normal to reflect the gaps in the Japanese literature that do not allow stronger comparisons and conclusions to be drawn. We may speculate that this could be because stigma and shame play a greater role within this society, making the topic a greater taboo to research.

Before detailing the findings of the review, it is necessary to briefly outline our study design. The findings of this article are based on a semi-systematic review of qualitative research with low income households in Japan and the UK, published in the period 1990 to 2013. Initially, searches were conducted of the social science databases<sup>1</sup> and e-searches of relevant journal databases before more targeted search strategies were developed to supplement the studies initially identified (citation tracking, expert review). Studies were then assessed according to their quality and relevance, a process guided by principles adapted from the UK Cabinet Office Rapid Evidence Assessment framework (Spencer

*et al.*, 2003). Aside from studies failing to address stigma or shame, most commonly studies were omitted due to insufficient methodological detail provided. A thematic narrative analysis was then conducted of the fifty-one empirical studies included in the review.

### **The stigma of poverty**

As a result of the pervasive 'povertyism' (Killeen, 2008) evident in dominant discursive constructions of 'the poor', there are many aspects of the experience of poverty in the UK that can be deeply stigmatising. Drawing upon Baumberg *et al.*'s (2012) distinction between social, personal and institutional level stigmas, these might include the social hostility associated with benefit receipt, individual level stigma arising from an enforced inability to buy things taken for granted by others or being unable to effectively perform roles or to participate in the 'normal' activities as dictated by the societies in which we live, and the institutionalised stigma attached to the receipt of particular benefits or services. For example, Cohen *et al.* (1992) observe that participants reported feelings of stigma as a result of their daily interactions, as well as the experience of accessing benefits and services, due to the suspicion they felt surrounded them. Moreover, Hooper *et al.* (2007) identify several sources of stigma in the accounts of low income households, although these do not always solely relate to low income, and some participants faced multiple forms of stigma relating to personal histories of institutional care, mental health problems or alcohol/drug dependency (see also Conolly, 2008; Reutter *et al.*, 2009; Ridge and Millar, 2000).

In Japan also, Nishio (1994) suggests that stigma is also associated with the receipt of public assistance (*Seikatsu Hogo*). Means testing under the *Seikatsu Hogo* system differs crucially to UK means testing, insofar as it asserts the legal responsibility of the family through assessing whether relatives have the capacity to support members in need. Thus, benefit receipt becomes not just the shame of the individual recipient but the family that failed to support them. It is also clear that receipt of public assistance more specifically is stigmatised as disreputable, and associated with approbations of laziness, with such views stemming from a traditional work ethic that regards poverty to be the result of a lack of personal effort (for example, Kudomi, 1993; Nishio, 1994). Similarly, in Japan service users report feelings of stigma related to receipt of social care services, including community psychiatric care, or from experiencing welfare assessment processes that can serve to reaffirm feelings of personal worthlessness and low esteem (for example, Okabe, 1990; Tanuma, 1993; Omatsu, 2008; Iwata, 2008). More broadly, a good deal of the Japanese literature explores deep exclusion by focusing on issues such as homelessness (Miyashita, 2001; Nishizawa, 2005; Ikuta, 2007) and severe multiple disadvantage (Yuasa and Nihei, 2007; Omatsu, 2008) and this needs to be recognised when attempting to draw comparisons.

A recurring theme within the UK literature documents the centrality of public acceptance and the perceived need to conform to social norms in shaping self-perception and self-esteem, and, in turn, the assault on personal dignity which arises when command over resources is insufficient to meet these social needs. The stigma experienced by children who are not able to 'fit in' with peers as a result of low income is well documented, for example when their families cannot afford the kinds of clothing, footwear or other personal effects enjoyed by their peers (Daly and Leonard, 2002;

Ridge, 2002; Elliott and Leonard, 2004; Green, 2007; Walker *et al.*, 2008). Hooper *et al.* (2007) demonstrate parents' acute awareness of the social pressures on their children to 'fit in', and how these pressures appear to be especially pronounced for low income families living in affluent areas.

On the whole, less emphasis seems to be placed on the material aspects of social acceptance and inter-personal exclusion within the Japanese literature. Nevertheless, Konishi (2003) documents the stigma reported by young people living in single parent households arising from an inability to afford items widely available to their peers. Similarly, Tanaka (2004) and Nishida (2011) document experiences of discrimination and exclusion, including peer bullying and unfavourable treatment by professionals experienced by children and young people living in care facilities (*JidoYogoShisetsu*). Indeed, traditional Japanese societal values, including negative attitudes to divorce and lone motherhood, appear to intensify these experiences with especially detrimental impacts on personal well-being (Uzuhashi, 1999; Tanaka, 2004; Nishida, 2011; Uchida, 2011).

Stigma may also be attached to the community or neighbourhood where you live or originate from. A consequence of living in deeply disadvantaged areas is the negative perceptions of such communities by outsiders, which further marginalises and excludes (Lupton, 2003: 210; Hooper *et al.*, 2007). Research by The Young Foundation documents the effects of area stigma and their consequences for residents' self-perceptions which were likened to being 'told you are rubbish' (Watts *et al.*, 2009: 171). Participants in Lupton's (2003) study discussed the harmful impact of these processes on access to opportunities, as well as their corrosive effects on people's self-perceptions and confidence, particularly when moving beyond the security of their own communities. In Japan, Kudomi's (1993) study of public housing highlights how similar processes of stigma can result in the exclusion and isolation of vulnerable groups in certain areas. Likewise, the divorced, disabled people, and people in receipt of public welfare may be subjected to prejudices and isolated by hostile feelings in their community (Ozawa, 1993). Similarly, in highly stigmatised 'outcast' communities (*Buraku*) where state assistance is limited, the informal economy and networks within these communities provide important low-skilled jobs for young people. However, as Uchida (2008) suggests, these community-based networks appear to limit their educational and occupational aspirations.

### **Shame and the Internalisation of stigma**

Whilst an under-researched field, recent evidence (for example, Chase and Walker, 2012; Walker *et al.*, 2013) suggests that the internalisation of stigma as shame by people experiencing poverty is a universal response to impoverishment, although the specific forms that this takes may reflect differences of national culture. From the UK studies reviewed here, it would appear that the nature and intensity of shame is also influenced by a range of social factors, including age, ethnicity and gender. Studies that have explored ethnic identities demonstrate how cultural values can intensify feelings of shame when individuals are either unable to discharge expectations as dictated by their beliefs (for example charitable giving, remittances), or when individuals are made to feel 'like a beggar' due to a complex interaction of religious doctrine and treatment by social security staff (Cohen *et al.*, 1992; Chouhan *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, some participants experienced feelings of guilt or embarrassment rather than describing themselves as feeling shamed

(Mckendrick *et al.*, 2003). Several UK studies also highlight the ways in which people experiencing poverty sometimes perceive themselves to be a burden on family and friends, thus evoking feelings of guilt (Hill *et al.*, 2007; Fahmy and Pemberton, 2008). For example, older people interviewed in Hill *et al.*'s study (2007: 14) took care not to become a burden on family members 'who had their own lives to lead', and as a result were reluctant to ask for help and were eager to be seen to reciprocate through provision of, for example, childcare. Few Japanese studies have focused explicitly on this issue, but the limited evidence suggests the experience of poverty is associated with feeling belittled, losing social respectability and with personal resignation and disappointment (Nishio, 1994; Yamada, 2010).

Feelings of guilt and shame often arise when people are unable to perform socially prescribed roles, such as gendered or parenting roles. Thus, in Hooper *et al.*'s (2007: 21) UK study, unemployed men demonstrated a greater sense of 'failure, guilt and weakness for not fulfilling a provider role than women'. Amongst the worst aspects of poverty for parents is their perceived inability to provide their children with the opportunities and living standards that their peers enjoy, which causes considerable feelings of guilt (Ridge, 2002; Athwal *et al.*, 2011). Similarly in Japan, Uzuhashi (1999) documents lone mothers' concerns regarding anticipated future discrimination for their children as a result of the persistence of traditional societal family values, and Yuki's (2011) male respondents also report anxieties arising from the experience of unemployment and the concomitant loss of gendered identities as worker and provider.

Shame also arises as a consequence of the operation of welfare systems which reinforce the wider social stigma attached to poverty. As a result, many older people refuse to claim the benefits and support to which they are entitled as citizens, deterred by application processes widely viewed as degrading and intrusive, and by administrative systems perceived to be judgemental and oppressive (Hill *et al.*, 2007: 19). However, when such assistance is requested and refused by agencies this can have especially damaging social psychological consequences, with people reporting feeling humiliated by these decisions (Power, 2005). In Japan also, prior experiences of institutional care perceived to be degrading contribute to reluctance in seeking the public support to which citizens are entitled (Miyashita, 2001), and Okabe (1990) reports that caseworkers' negative attitudes to benefit claimants compound feelings of degradation and infringed welfare rights.

It should be noted that some studies have demonstrated that pejorative discourses surrounding welfare receipt are often deployed to deflect feelings of shame and to resist the internalisation process. For some, these discourses can provide a way to distinguish oneself from other claimants deemed to be less 'deserving' (Flaherty, 2008), or as a means of denigrating the perceived 'dependency' and 'laziness' of the unemployed by people in low paid work (Crisp *et al.*, 2009: 17). People experiencing poverty sometimes therefore seek to create distance between themselves and the situations of others perceived to be less 'deserving' (Reutter *et al.*, 2009) by differentiating their circumstances (Okabe, 1990; Iwata, 2007) and, in doing so, seemingly avoiding stronger forms of shame.

### **Responses to shame**

As Goffman (1963) argues, individuals often seek to manage their identities in order to minimise the negative emotions that result from processes of 'othering'. To this extent, people experiencing poverty are active subjects in mitigating feelings of shame associated



with poverty. The literature identifies a variety of responses to manage shame. Firstly, UK research evidence demonstrates how people experiencing poverty may seek to conceal aspects of their circumstances from others (Davidson, 2009). Secondly, withdrawing from social relationships and forms of social participation is one strategy adopted by people experiencing poverty to avoid potentially embarrassing social situations which highlight people's inability to afford to participate in common social rituals (for example, meals out and social drinking). In Japan, several studies document public welfare recipients reluctance to 'show their face in public' (*seken*) due to intense feelings of shame, or because they were afraid of 'welfare-bashing' and consequently they kept a low profile in their daily lives (Okabe, 1990; Nishio, 1994; Iwata, 2000, 2007; Yuki, 2011).

Recent UK evidence suggests that the process by which people experience shame as a result of poverty is closely related to the erosion of self-esteem (Batty and Flint, 2010; Flint, 2010; Bashir *et al.*, 2011). Low self-esteem often arises from the internalisation of negative personal self-critiques based on narratives of personal failure in ways which discount and obscure the structural constraints which shape individual responses to poverty (Flint, 2010; Bashir *et al.*, 2011). As Batty and Flint (2010) demonstrate, the social-psychological impacts of poverty to some extent therefore depend upon whether people adopt individualised or structuralist explanations of their circumstances, with those who managed to minimise the impact of poverty on their self-esteem understanding their situations within a narrative of structural constraint. Thus, Cohen *et al.* (1992: 60–2) find that many participants who had a low sense of self-worth, framed their self perception through the internalisation of social norms of self-reliance and economic independence. Research in Japan similarly finds that many benefit recipients report feelings of self-loathing (Yamada, 2010). Nevertheless, the impacts of impoverishment and straitened financial circumstances on personal self-esteem are complex and cannot always be assumed to be negative. For example, existing research in the UK and Japan highlights the sense of achievement or pride derived from gaining educational qualifications, or completing work-based training courses or in raising children in the face of financial difficulties and material hardship (Yuzawa, 2009; Bashir *et al.*, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

On the basis of a review of qualitative evidence on poverty in Japan and the UK we conclude that stigma is a central feature of the experience of poverty in diverse societies. There are observable similarities in the stigma attached to: the receipt of means tested benefits (for example, Cohen *et al.*, 1992; Nishio, 1994); complex personal histories of multiple disadvantage (see for example, Hooper *et al.*, 2007; Omatsu, 2008); and deprived neighbourhoods (see for example, Kudomi, 1993; Lupton, 2003). It has been proposed that the affective impacts of the internalisation of stigma are reflected in feelings of guilt, embarrassment, humiliation, disrespect, assault on self-esteem, and shame, and that the nature and intensity of these effects reflects the differing social roles, responsibilities and statuses attributed to different populations on the basis of their social and demographic characteristics (for example, age, ethnicity, gender, social class). Thus, the shame produced by an inability to discharge duties associated with gender and parental roles are acutely felt in both societies (see Hooper *et al.*, 2007; Yuki, 2011). This serves to warn against overstating the distinction between collectivist and individualist cultures which may over-simplify the cross-national dynamics of social stigma and its

psycho-social impacts. It might also suggest that shame and stigma are key disciplinary features of all capitalist societies which serve to legitimate the unequal distribution of resources and power by promoting discourses of fecklessness and individual failure in ways which serve to obscure the structural antecedents of poverty and exclusion.

Yet, there remain crucial points of divergence in relation to the nature and distribution of social roles and statuses that reflect wider national differences in culture and lifestyles. On this basis, Walker *et al.* (2013) hypothesise that heightened social pressures to conform and collaborate in collectivist cultures may exacerbate feelings of shame associated with poverty. Certainly, the material reviewed here appears to support the contention that the influence of the work ethic and traditional family values may serve to compound the intensity of experiences of shame in Japanese society. Thus, the stigma that surrounds 'non-traditional' family units, i.e. lone parents, appears to intensify the feelings of shame ordinarily experienced in relation to poverty (Uchida, 2011). Moreover, the social isolation experienced as a result of shame, appears to be more emphatically reported in the Japanese literature (see Iwata, 2000), which may be reflective of the harsh consequences of being excluded from social networks in a collectivist society. Nevertheless, it is also possible that the sense of social solidarity typically held to be characteristic of collectivist societies may serve to mitigate the most corrosive psycho-social impacts of poverty by promoting empathy and heightened social consciousness. The family means test provides an interesting example (Nishio, 1994), as it creates an obligation for families to look after members, and in doing so shame appears to be diffused or distributed through the familial network, rather than in the UK where means testing is very much targeted at individuals or the nuclear family unit, thus concentrating the impacts of shame on these individuals. There is also evidence to suggest that in collectivist society the stigma attached to being unable to afford consumerist items is less pronounced than in the UK, insofar as individuality is less important, whereas in the UK, individuality and the symbol motifs of personal success are premised on the ability to consume and display material wealth, a pressure seemingly acutely felt by parents (see Ridge, 2002).

We recognise the limitations of the evidence presented here in reaching any firm conclusions on these wider issues, not least as a result of the diversity of literatures reviewed in terms of focus and methodologies, and the nuances of social meaning attached to the process of internalisation of stigma in very different societies where direct translations for certain social phenomena often do not exist. Nevertheless, existing research evidence on poverty has to a large extent ignored the relational dimensions of poverty in favour of investigating deprivation of material living conditions. Whilst this is clearly vital, advancing understanding of poverty as a social relationship, including its social-psychological impacts, is also important in documenting the social harms caused by poverty and therefore in mobilising a public consensus to tackle this enduring problem. As the literature reviewed here shows, this is a pressing concern and, arguably, a universal feature of poverty in very diverse national contexts.

## Note

1 Searches were conducted in the following databases: GeNii; CiNii; NDL; Web of Knowledge (including Index of Theses, Zetoc, Copac); British Library; ASSIA, IBSS, Social Services Abstracts, OpenSIGLE; Google Scholar. The following search terms were used in a number of combinations: 'hinkon' (poverty), 'shitu-teki' (qualitative), 'raifu hisutori' (life history), 'keiken' (experience of), 'fubyoudo' (inequality), 'sutyguma' (stigma), 'tei-syotoku' (low income), 'haji' (shame).

## References

- Athwal, B., Brill, L., Chesters, G. and Quiggin, M. (2011) *Recession, Poverty and Sustainable Livelihoods in Bradford*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Bashir, N., Batty, E., Cole, I., Crisp, R., Flint, J., Green, S., Hickman, P. and Robinson, D. (2011) *Living through Change in Challenging Neighbourhoods: Thematic Analysis*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Batty, E. and Flint, J. (2010) *Self-Esteem, Comparative Poverty and Neighbourhoods*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Baumberg, B., Bell, K. and Gaffney, D. (2012) *Benefits Stigma in Britain*, London: Elizabeth Finn Trust.
- Beresford, P., Green, D., Lister, R. and Woodard, K. (1999) *Poverty First Hand: Poor People Speak for Themselves*, London: Child Poverty Action Group.
- Chase, E. and Walker, R. (2012) 'The co-construction of shame in the context of poverty: beyond a threat to the social bond', *Sociology*, OnlineFirst, doi:10.1177/0038038512453796.
- Chouhan, K., Speeden, S. and Qazi, U. (2011) *Experience of Poverty and Ethnicity in London*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Cohen, R., Coxall, J., Craig, G. and Sadiq-Sangster, A. (1992) *Hardship Britain: Being Poor in the 1990s*, London: CPAG.
- Conolly, A. (2008) "'Have you seen the people who just stand outside of Macdonalds? I am one of those people': "socially" excluded girls and their experiences of exclusion", Ph.D. thesis, University of Surrey, Guildford.
- Crisp, R., Batty, E., Cole, I. and Robinson, D. (2009) *Work and Worklessness in Deprived Neighbourhoods*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Daly, M. and Leonard, M. (2002) *Against All Odds: Family Life on a Low Income in Ireland*, Dublin: Institute of Public Administration/Combat Poverty Agency.
- Davidson, R. (2009) 'More than just coping?: the antecedents and dynamics of resilience in a qualitative longitudinal study', *Social Policy and Society*, 8, 1, 115–25.
- Elliott, R. and Leonard, C. (2004) 'Peer pressure and poverty: exploring fashion brands and consumption symbolism among children of the "British poor"', *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 3, 4, 347–59.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1999) *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fahmy, E. and Pemberton, S. (2008) *Show and Tell: Multi-Media Testimony on Rural Poverty and Exclusion*, Hereford: Rural Media Company.
- Flaherty, J. (2008) "'I mean we're not the richest but we're not poor": discourses of "poverty" and "social exclusion"', Ph.D. thesis, Loughborough University, Loughborough.
- Flint, J. (2010) *Coping Strategies? Agencies, Budgeting and Self-Esteem Amongst Low-Income Households*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Green, M. (2007) *Voices of People Experiencing Poverty in Scotland. Everyone Matters?*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Hill, K., Kellard, K., Middleton, S., Cox, L. and Pound, E. (2007) *Understanding Resources in Later Life: Views and Experiences of Older People*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Hooper, C., Gorin, S., Cabral, C. and Dyson, C. (2007) *Living with Hardship 24/7: The Diverse Experiences of Families in Poverty in England*, York: Frank Buttle Trust.
- Ikuta, T. (2007) *Rupo Saiteihen: Fuantei Shūrō to Nojuku [Reportage of the Lowest Bottom: Unstable Employment and Homelessness]*, Tokyo: Chikuma Syobō.
- Iwata, M. (2000) *Hōmuresu/ Gendai Syakai/ Fukushi Kokka: 'Kiteikku Basyo' Wo Megutte [Homeless, Modern Society, Welfare States: Over the 'Place of Living']*. Tokyo: Akashi Syoten.
- Iwata, M. (2007) 'Toujisyā Ishiki: Hinkon Toujisyā toha Dare ka? Boshi Setai heno Chosa kara [Who is the poor? Researching lone mother households]', in O. Aoki and H. Sugimura (eds.), *Gendai No Hinkon to Fubyoudou: Nihon, Amerika No Genjitsu to Han Hinkon Senryaku [Poverty and Inequality in Modern*

- Society: Realities and against-Poverty Strategies in Japan and the USA], Tokyo: Akashi Syoten. Iwata, M. (2008) 'Syakai Fukushi Enjyosya No "Hinkon Kan": Bosshi Seikatsu Shien Shisetsu Syokuin Heno Chosa Kekka [A report on "perceptions of poverty" among social workers: a case study of social workers in support facilities for mothers and children]', *Kyoiku Fukushi Kenkyu [Journal of Education and Social Work]*, 14, 69–80.
- Killeen, D. (2008) *Is Poverty in the Uk a Denial of People's Human Rights?*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Konishi, Y. (2003) 'Hinkon to Kodomo [Poverty and children]', in A. Aoki (ed.), *Gendai Nihon No 'Mienai' Hinkon: Seikatsu Hogo Jyukyuu Boshi Setai No Genjitsu ['Invisible' Poverty in Contemporary Japan: Realities of Lone Mother Households Receiving Public Assistance]*, Tokyo: Akashi Syoten.
- Kudomi, Y. (ed.) (1993) *Yutakasa no Teihen ni Ikiru: Gakō Sistemu to Jyakusya no Saiseisan [Living at the Bottom of Affluent Society: School System and Reproduction of Disadvantage]*, Tokyo: Aoki Shoten.
- Lister, R. (2003) *Poverty*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Lupton, R. (2003) *Poverty Street: The Dynamics of Neighbourhood Decline and Renewal*, Bristol: The Policy Press.
- McKendrick, J. H., Cunningham-Burley, S. and Backett-Milburn, K. (2003) *Life in Low Income Families in Scotland: Research Report*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Social Research.
- Miyashita, T. (2001) *Tokyo No Donzoko Kara: Oiyuku Rojō Seikatsusya No Koe Wo Kiku [From the Lowest Bottom in Tokyo: Listening to the Voices from the Homelessness People Who Are Growing Old]*, Tochigi: Zuisōsya.
- Narayan, D., Chambers, R., Shah, M. and Petesch, P. (2000) *Voices of the Poor: Crying out for Change*, New York: Oxford University Press/World Bank.
- Narayan, D. and Patel, R. (2000) *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nishida, Y. (2011) 'Shisetsu no Kodomo to Gakkou Kyouiku [Children in facilities and school education]', in Y. Nishida (ed.), *Jidou Yougo Shisetsu to Syakai Teki Haijyo: Kazoku Izon Syakai No Rinkai [Child Protection Facilities and Social Exclusion: Criticality of Family Dependent Society]*, Osaka: Kaihou Syuppansya, pp. 74–112.
- Nishio, Y. (1994) *Hinkon, Suthiguma, Kouteki Fujyo: Syakai Fukushi No Genten Wo Saguru [Poverty, Stigma, Public Assistance: Searching for the Origin of Social Welfare]*, Tokyo: Aikawa Syobou.
- Nishizawa, A. (2005) 'Ori no nai Rōgoku: Nojukusya no Syakaiteki sekai [Prison with no cage: a society of the homelessness people]', in M. Iwata and A. Nishizawa (eds.), *Hinkon to Syakaiteki Haijyo: Fukushi Syakai wo Mushibamu Mono [Poverty and Social Exclusion: Things Undermining Welfare Society]*, Kyoto: Minerva Shobō, pp. 263–84.
- Okabe, S. (1990) 'Kouteki Fujyo Ni Okeru Jyukyuu Sya Gawa No Ishiki Ni Kansuru Ichi Kousatsu: Seikatsu Hogo Jissi Katei Wo Toushite [Examining the attitude's of public assistance recipients: from operational perspective of public assistance]', *Sosyaru Waku Kenkyu [Social Work Studies]*, 16, 3, 179–88.
- Omatsu, S. (2008) "'Net Cafe Nanmin" wo Fukumu Hōmulesu Mondai wo Dono youni Torae naoshi, Shien shite iku beki ka: Nojyuku sya Shien wo Okonau Fukushi Sōdan Bumon Sutfaffu niyoru Jirei Syōkai [How to re-understand and support of homeless issue including "internet café refugee"]', in Kamagasaki Shien Kikō and Osaka Shiritsu Daigaku Daigakuin Sōzō Toshi Kenkyuka (eds.), *Jyakunen Fuantei Syūrō, Fuantei Jūkyosya Kikitori Chōsa Hōkokusyo: 'Jyakunen Hōmuresu Seikatsusya' heno Shien no Mosaku [Interview Study of the Youth with Unstable Employment and Housing: Finding a Way to Support 'Homeless Youth']*, Osaka: Kamagasaki Shien Kiko, pp. 91–104
- Ozawa, H. (1993) 'Chiiki Syakai deno "Kaisō ka Chitujyo" to Seikatsu Konnan so: "Uwasa no Kaisou Kōzō" to Koritsu, Tekitai no Mekanizumu ["Stratified order" in the communities and the living difficulties: "stratified rumor", and mechanism of social isolation and hostility]', in Y. Kudomi (ed.), *Yutakasa no Teihen ni Ikiru: Gakō Sistemu to Jyakusya no Saiseisan [Living at the Bottom of Affluent Society: School System and Reproduction of Disadvantage]*, Tokyo: Aoki Shoten.

- Power, E. M. (2005) 'The unfreedom of being other: Canadian lone mothers' experiences of poverty and "life on the cheque"', *Sociology*, 39, 4, 643–60.
- Reutter, L. I., Stewart, M. J., Veenstra, G., Love, R., Raphael, D. and Makwarimba, E. (2009) 'Who do they think we are, anyway?: perceptions of and responses to poverty stigma', *Qualitative Health Research*, 19, 3, 297–311.
- Ridge, T. (2002) *Childhood Poverty and Social Exclusion: From a Child's Perspective*, Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Ridge, T. (2007) 'It's a family affair: low-income children's perspectives on maternal work', *Journal of Social Policy*, 36, 3, 399–416.
- Ridge, T. and Millar, J. (2000) 'Excluding children: autonomy, friendship and the experience of the care system', *Social Policy and Administration*, 34, 2, 160–75.
- Scheff, T. (2011) 'Shame and self in society', *Symbolic Interaction*, 26, 2, 239–62.
- Sen, A. (1983) 'Poor, relatively speaking', *Economic Articles*, 35, 2, 153–69.
- Sen, A. (1993) *Capability and Well-being*, A. Sen and M. Nussbaum (eds.), Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Smith, A. (1776) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Oxford: Clarendon.
- Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., Lewis, J. and Dillon, L. (2003) *Quality in Qualitative Evaluation: A framework for assessing research evidence*, London: Cabinet Office.
- Tanaka, R. (2004) *Kazoku Houkai to Kodomo No Suthiguma: Kazoku Houkai Go No Kodomo No Syakai Ka Kenkyu [Family Breakdown and Children's Stigma: Study on Socialization of Children after Family Breakdown]*, Fukuoka: Kyusyu Daigaku Syuppankai.
- Tanuma, A. (1993) 'Koritsusuru seikatsu konnanso: sono rōdō to oyako kankei [Social isolation of the living difficulties: their employment and parent-child relationship]', in Y. Kudomi (ed.), *Yutakasa no Teihen ni Ikiru: Gakō Sistema to Jyakusya no Saiseisan [Living at the Bottom of Affluent Society: School System and Reproduction of Disadvantage]*, Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, pp. 21–62.
- Uchida, R. (2008) "'Syakaiteki Haijyo – Housetsu" to Syakaiteki Nettowaku: Douwa Taisaku Jigyō to Hisabetsu Buraku No Wakamono No Syuro Wo Megutte [Social "exclusion – inclusion" and social networks]', *Riron to Doutai [Social Theory and Dynamics]*, 1, 55–71.
- Uchida, R. (2011) 'Jido Yogo Shisetsu Seikatsusya/Keikensya no Aidenthithi Mondai [Issue of identity of the living in/the leaving from child protection facilities]', in Y. Nishida (ed.), *Jidou Yougo Shisetsu to Syakai Teki Haijyo: Kazoku Izon Syakai No Rinkai [Child Protection Facilities and Social Exclusion: Criticality of Family Dependent Society]*, Osaka: Kaihou Syuppansya, pp. 158–77.
- Uzuhashi, T. (1999) 'Seikatsu to Seikatsu Ishiki [Everyday life and the sense of life]', in K. K. Kenkyujyo (ed.), *Wanpearento Famili (Ribetsu Boshi Setai) ni Kansuru 6 kakoku Chosa [A Research Study on Divorced Single Mother Families in Six Countries]*, Tokyo: Okurasyo Insatsukyoku, pp. 69–95.
- Walker, J., Crawford, K. and Taylor, F. (2008) 'Listening to children: gaining a perspective of the experiences of poverty and social exclusion from children and young people of single-parent families', *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 16, 4, 429–36.
- Walker, R., Kyomuhendo, G., Chase, E., Choudhry, S., Gubrium, E., Nicola, J., Lødemel, I., Mathew, L., Mwiine, A., Pellissery, S. and Ming, Y. (2013) 'Poverty in global perspective: is shame a common denominator?', *Journal of Social Policy*, 42, 2, 215–33.
- Watts, B., Vale, D., Mulgan, G., Dale, M., Ali, R. and Norman, W. (2009) *Sinking and Swimming: Understanding Britain's Unmet Needs*, London: The Young Foundation.
- Yamada, T. (2010) *Daitoshi Koureisya Sou No Hinkon, Seikatsu Mondai No Sōsyutsu Katei: Syakaiteki Syūenka No Isō [Generating Process of Poverty and Livelihood Problems of the Elderly in Metropolitan: Phase of Social Marginalisation]*, Tokyo: Gakujyutsu Syuppan.
- Yuasa, M. and Nihei, N. (2007) 'Jyakunen hōmuresu: "iyoku no hinkon" ga teiki suru toi [The youth homeless: questions raised by "poverty of aspiration"]', in Y. Honda (ed.), *Wakamono no Roudou to Seikatsu Sekai: Karera ha Donna Genjitsu wo Ikite Iruka [Work and Living World of the Youth: What Kind of Reality Do They Live?]*, Tokyo: Otsuki Syoten, pp. 329–62.

- Yuki, T. (2011) 'Seikatsu Hogo No Jyukyu Ga Nousocchyu Sya No Jison Kanjyo, Oyobi Shintaiteki Jiko Gainen Ni Oyobosu Eikyo [Effect of receiving public assistance on self-esteem and physical self-perception of stroke survivors]', *Syakai Igaku Kenkyu [Bulletin of Social Medicine]*, 29, 1, 21–30.
- Yuzawa, N. (2009) 'Hinkon No Sedai Teki Sai Seisan to Kosodate: Aru Haha, Ko No Raifu Hisutori Kara No Kousatsu [Generational reproduction of poverty and childrearing: based on the life history of a mother and her child]', *Kazoku Syakaigaku Kenkyu [Japanese Journal of Family Sociology]*, 21, 1, 45–56.