(No) Shame in Speaking:
A Toolkit for Navigating Emotions on Campus

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Funded by the University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement

A toolkit for college and university educators and administrators to understand and approach the complex intersection of emotion and speech/dialogue on campuses.

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1. Overview

In the USA and in other countries, emotions on campus are running high. This time is marked by what is called growing 'affective polarization,' or strong feelings of difference from those who think differently or hold different political beliefs. But there are always many feelings on campus, of loneliness, fear, anxiety, sadness, engagement, joy and hope. This toolkit thinks about the impact of shame on free speech on college campuses. Shame is a self-conscious and painful emotion that arises when social norms are breached, or in response to negative judgment—in the cases considered here, norms and judgments around what is or is not said, and how we say it. Open expression is key to the intellectual purpose of the university, and its emotional dimensions can materially impact how that purpose is upheld: engagement in discussion and debate is not merely intellectual but deeply felt. This toolkit addresses the many faces of shame and its impact on speech: shame can prevent speech when individuals fear ostracization or lose self-esteem, but along with related self-conscious and social emotions it is part of the way individuals respect group norms and recognize others' perspectives and voices.

While it is always timely to attend to emotions and to the rich currents of affective life, which so profoundly shape our learning experiences and our ability to connect with others, it is especially crucial right now. People on campuses need the support and we require more and better strategies to maintain relationships, strengthen learning, and bolster open expression.

1.1 The objectives of this project are to:

1. promote conversation about the role of shame in expression, including both its prosocial dimensions and its relationship to inequity on campuses (Part I);
2. provide guidelines for shame-sensitive discussion facilitation in the classroom (Part II);
3. provide guidelines for shame-sensitive expression at the university level (Part III).

1.2 How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is directed towards faculty, staff, students, and leadership at higher education institutions. It was written for and within the United States context but may be relevant or transferrable for other contexts as well. Some sections are more narrowly directed at one campus population, but all are intended to stimulate discussion and consideration of how shame and speech interact on campus.

This toolkit contains the following sections and materials:

1. Overview (Current Section). The introduction serves to provide a brief overview of the theory and practice motivating this toolkit. For some users, the introduction may be sufficient to contextualize Parts I, II and III, others may prefer to read the extended Theoretical Framework which is included separately.
2. Process. This section briefly describes the process of developing and creating the toolkit and includes notes on the researcher's perspective.
3. Part I distills a brief definition of the relationship between shame and speech and outlines some areas in which shame relates to freedom of expression. This section is available for faculty development or student conversations about shame and emotions on campus.
4. Part II provides a set of basic principles and some practices for faculty and educators working with students in the classroom, including illustrative vignettes and a handout for faculty. The illustrative vignettes include discussion questions.
5. Part III provides a set of basic principles and some practices for conceptualizing and responding to shame at an institutional level, including illustrative vignettes for administrators or campus leaders, which include discussion questions.

This toolkit does not aim to be comprehensive in that shame is a phenomenally complex emotion. I encourage all who read it to take into consideration their own contexts: the specific needs and identities of individuals, power dynamics in the classroom or on campus, and the degree to which shame is considered a taboo or itself is a shameful emotion in each setting.

1.3 Introduction

Shame is a common human emotion, and yet one that often languishes in the shadows. I define shame as a 'self-conscious' emotion: the feeling of being seen and negatively judged for some action, behavior, or element of self by a real or imagined other. It can be taboo to talk about and acknowledge shame, because feeling shame can indicate a breach in norms or social custom, or indicate a person as in some way deficient. As educators, researchers, and community members, questions about shame and its role in learning communities arise: how can we navigate shame, as a nearly universal emotion that represents social taboos, personal anguish, silence, and secrecy? In this toolkit, I consider three primary dimensions of expression on campus—the legal, the intellectual, and the interpersonal—and their relationship to shame. How can we account for shame while supporting community members' expression across difference? How can we have open discussion in a classroom or on campus when the specter of shame keeps some voices silent, and others speak with great difficulty through fear? Does shame cause harm, and should claims of harm caused by shame be a justification for restricting speech?

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This toolkit tackles the meaning of shame in open expression and provides guidance for campus community members in attending to the emotional elements of free expression and democratic participation. Free expression on campus is itself a complicated topic with a rich discourse in scholarship and practice. This toolkit recognizes the legal dimensions of speech—in the US, the First Amendment, and related laws and policies regulating speech on campus including the premise of academic freedom—but largely focuses on the more relational aspects of speech on campus. For an account of speech on campus, the toolkit draws from the work of Sigal Ben-Porath, whose concept of 'inclusive freedom' and subsequent work considering speech on campuses emphasizes that speech on campus must be balanced by a commitment to inclusion of voices and identities, for all to participate and not be marginalized.[1]

Part I of this toolkit outlines the relationship between shame and expression; Part II provides guidelines for educators to increase shame-sensitive practice in the classroom; and Part III offers context-sensitive recommendations to acknowledge shame and expression on campus. I focus on shame related specifically to expression on college campuses, not to other forms of shame and contexts in which it may be relevant, like K-12 education.

Shame is associated with social stigma, exclusion, and forms of systemic marginalization and discrimination. However, one's capacity to feel shame can be part of learning prosocial and moral behavior.[2] Shame can also function as social control, teaching individuals what is and is not acceptable to say or do in a certain setting, reflecting social power dynamics.[3] It is nearly ubiquitous in schooling. Yet, shame itself is often seen as taboo.[4] In increasingly polarized times, and as affective polarization continues to grow on campuses, directly attending to emotion helps to acknowledge differences and the hard emotions underlying the anxiety and fear building on campus.[5] These phenomena relate to the state of open expression on campuses, which faces both legal and cultural challenges. As attention to emotional harms grows alongside legislative fights in the US over shame-related harms in curricula (e.g. book bans), I argue for a community and campus context-grounded approach to shame, its relative harms, and the promotion of open expression across difference.

Many scholars consider the role of shame in schooling, but it is still contested, and more complex when considered alongside a commitment to free expression. Shame manifests as judgment upon one's whole self—for example, if a person regrets a statement in class, shame might whisper 'you are too stupid to speak in class again.' Shame is culturally specific and overlaps with forms of structural discrimination that put some individuals at more risk of shames than others.[6] Shame is not itself

1 Ben-Porath, *Free Speech on Campus*; Ben-Porath, *Cancel Wars*.
2 Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity*. I borrow the phrase 'capacity for shame' from Thomason, *Naked*.
3 Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*; Scheff, "Shame and the Social Bond: A Sociological Theory."
4 Scheff, "The Ubiquity of Hidden Shame in Modernity."
5 Ben-Porath, *Free Speech on Campus*; Ben-Porath, *Cancel Wars*; Levendusky, *Our Common Bonds*.
6 For a clear case to understand shame's social and cultural dimensions, see Dolezal, *The Body and Shame: Phenomenology, Feminism, and the Socially Shaped Body*; for philosophical considerations of the gendered and racialized injustice of shame see Manion, "Girls Blush, Sometimes: Gender, Moral Agency, and the Problem of Shame"; Bartky, "The Pedagogy Of Shame"; Mun, "Rationality through the Eyes of Shame."

shameful—it is okay to talk about and share feelings of shame. Communities can come together both in conversation and in action to address the roots or causes of shame.

This toolkit builds in part on a theoretical framework developed for 'shame sensitive practice' across service-oriented fields.[7] Stemming from work in healthcare, 'shame sensitive practice' calls for tools to *acknowledge shame*, *avoid shaming*, and *address shame*.[8] Shame-sensitive practice threads these tenets across both the individual and the organizational levels. In the healthcare context and on the individual level, a shame-sensitive physician, nurse, or other caregiver would seek to create a space in which that person feels comfortable talking about shame, reduces active shaming, e.g. not scolding patients who are late, supports individuals in coping with traumatizing or harmful shame. At the organizational level, a clinic might give clinicians strategies to acknowledge their own shame, reduce shaming in their own organizational practice, e.g. not publicly comparing clinicians, and address organizational culture that relies on shame and blame. This approach acknowledges the important social value of shame and seeks to support individuals in reparative social experiences, and the toolkit invites faculty, administrators, students, staff, and other organizational community members to reflect on how they can acknowledge, avoid, and address shame on campus.

In the context of campuses, shame-sensitivity may take as many forms as there are unique students. Students experience shame in countless ways. Shame at being 'wrong' or seen as 'different' in class can lead to students' voices being stifled. Shame can bury painful or negative experiences on campus, leading to the continuation of harmful campus culture. It can prevent students from asking for help, or it can support positive growth or more pro-social behaviors—for example, mild shame could be part of an especially eager student learning to modulate their participation such that others have the chance to speak. This project aims to open an honest conversation about shame on campuses, and to give educators, students, and community members a starting place to look shame in the face and to recognize those whose expression may be stifled because of this complicated emotion. 'Shame sensitive practice' has an important role to play in increasing freedom of expression and strengthening campus communities.

Shame can restrict speech (for better or for worse) and it can impel curricular or normative boundaries. I consider shame's affordance and burdens on learning and the implications for the protection of inclusion and expression in class. Since shame thrives in the shadows, open expression is a key means to limit the impacts of harmful shame in schooling—by making sure you can talk about it. Shame and open expression might be understood as two sides of a coin: where shame limits open expression, the limitation of open expression can increase shame. Promoting one releases the other: shame is an important part of human life, and when addressed in community, people can unite to include more voices in conversation, instead of standing apart in silence.

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7 Dolezal and Gibson, "Beyond a Trauma-Informed Approach and towards Shame-Sensitive Practice."

8 Dolezal and Gibson build on the principles of trauma-informed practice, arguing that shame can be an "aftereffect" of trauma and interact with traumatic experiences in general, while shame sensitivity can support better practice in all human services. The trauma-informed approach acknowledges that trauma can shape one's whole frame of interaction with human services. Dolezal and Gibson introduce shame-sensitivity as another lens through which to view human services; I am applying this work to the educational context and specifically to dialogic practice.

1.4 Process

The process of creating this toolkit was iterative and collaborative. This project is based in philosophical methods through which I developed materials and arguments and then workshopped them with university community members (graduate students, faculty, postdocs, and staff). The cases presented are amalgamations of multiple conversations rather than a single person's story. The feedback sessions served to both provide illustration and depth to my theoretical arguments and to hone the materials for use in the classroom and on campus.

I am a doctoral candidate studying philosophy of education, theorizing the impact of shame on personal and group identity development in schooling. I begin this toolkit with several assumptions based on my larger course of research. I assume that most persons will experience shame in learning: it is a core human emotion and helps us navigate confusing social interactions, personal growth, and failures natural to learning. But I also assume that in some cases, shame can be devastating, especially when it indicates that one's whole identity is bad or unacceptable. As such, the proposed recommendations in this project explain shame as a general phenomenon that impacts open expression in learning communities and attend to identity-harm related forms of shame on campus.

I benefited from extensive and deep feedback at seven community meetings held in October, November, March, April, and May (two meetings). These meetings were all organized on Zoom. Participants in the final May meetings reviewed the full draft of the toolkit and received gift cards as recognition of their time given to the project. These community meetings were in addition to the group meetings hosted by the Center, through which I was grateful to receive feedback from current and past fellows as well as UC faculty who contribute to the Center as academic mentors.

Students, faculty, and staff from multiple institutions (University of Pennsylvania, University of Houston, Providence College, University of Oxford, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, University of Exeter, University of Chicago, Parsons School of Design, Fordham University, the Heterodox Academy, and Stanford University) provided their perspectives and responses to the toolkit. Many individuals at the University of California and the entire 2024-2025 class of Center Fellows also contributed and supported the development of the arguments and these materials.

I consider this to be a 'living' document which should grow and change in response to different contexts, cases, and needs of individuals using it.[9] I encourage adaptation of the materials with credit given to the original project and to the University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement for supporting the work.

[9] In developing the toolkit itself, I worked to incorporate some universal design principles in mind. One is providing different entry points into the material; for this reason, I have opted to include a lengthier theoretical background alongside more bite-size overviews of different components of the material. I have also tried to follow some recommendations for universal design in documents, like using descriptive links. Many universities have resources for universal design, for example Boston College and Cornell University.

2. Part I: Working framework of shame and speech

How do we understand the relationship between shame, as a core human emotion, and free expression on college campuses? This section of this toolkit outlines a definition of shame vis-à-vis open expression, and three primary ways that shame can impact dialogue and speech and which require institutional and instructional attention. The conception of campus speech used here acknowledges three primary dimensions: the legal (laws, policies regulating speech), the intellectual (the academic aims of campus speech, commitments to truth and knowledge) and the interpersonal (social norms including e.g. inclusion, respect, and debate). This toolkit builds on Sigal Ben-Porath's concept of 'inclusive freedom' for campus speech: without inclusion and accessibility, speech is not truly free for all.

2.1 Definition of Shame

Shame is a 'self-conscious' emotion: the feeling of being seen and negatively judged for some action, behavior, or element of self by a real or imagined other. Shame is a part of human social life and can be a meaningful moral or interpersonal compass. However, shame can be *all-encompassing* and turn one's total attention to the 'wrongness' of the self.

When we experience shame in the classroom, it reflects on our relationships, our place in social life, our (perceived) *identities*, and our epistemic capacities. It acts on our relationships to the people around us, to how and what they say, and to the content of our discussions. By simultaneously acting upon our sense of self, our sense of community/belonging, and our understanding of *what is said* (as either shameful or not shameful), shame intersects with speech, self-silencing, and equal access to learning.

2.2 Impact on Speech

Shame Can Be Pro-social: Shame is part of human relationships, one's 'capacity' to feel shame can help one recognize and respond to mistakes, and to respect the norms and values that organize classroom and university discourse and behavior.

Shame Overlaps With Inequity: Shame—especially identity-based shaming—can intersect with inequity and bias and reduce inclusivity in expression; in these cases, shame should be recognized and there should be space to discuss it, but bias and discrimination are likely to require formal responses beyond attention to shame.

Shame Relates To Harm: Shame can be experienced as a form of harm—a wound to self-concept or well-being. However, shame will not always harm (as in fundamentally preclude or obstruct) a person's reasonable ability to express themselves. It is possible to acknowledge harmful experiences of shame without positioning all speech-related shame as harmful, or all instances of challenging shame in discussion as restrictive of free expression.

Open Expression Can Ameliorate Shame: A culture of speech that allows for mistakes, working through ideas, and encourages dialogue may help to reduce fear of ostracization and resultant shame.

3. Part II: Shame and Speech on Campus – For Instructors

This one-page document works to identify a set of principles for thinking about shame and dialogue in the classroom and outline some basic practices which are meant to be altered for different contexts. Principles are linked to nuanced Vignettes.

3.1 Guiding principles for shame-sensitive dialogue in the classroom[10]

- We recognize that shame is often a part of learning because learning requires grappling with mistakes or perceived failures (Example: Vignette 1)
- We reduce active shaming in the classroom/community (Example: Vignette 3)
- We recognize that shame can arise from active shaming and/or from past experiences and/or from an individual proneness to feeling shame (Example: Vignette 2)
- We acknowledge that shame often intersects with bias, prejudice, or experiences of marginalization (Example: Vignette 4)
- We recognize that shame is part of maintaining social relationships (Example: Vignette 5)
- We acknowledge that shame can be very taboo to discuss, and may be relevant even when not explicitly named

3.2 Basic practices for shame-sensitive dialogue in the classroom

- Educators can name shame in developing classroom norms for dialogue
  This may include:
  - A norm to refrain from shaming and blaming each other
  - A norm that it is acceptable and welcome to reflect on shame in speech
  - A norm that claiming 'shaming' is not equivalent to claiming harm
    - Shame can be recognized as painful without necessitating wrongdoing or punishment of others
  - A norm that students should try to work through differences of opinion with kindness and respect
    - This norm might include encouraging students to focus on debating ideas or concepts, not individuals or identities

[10] The idea of 'shame sensitive' practice in this space is developed from Dolezal and Gibson, "Beyond a Trauma-Informed Approach and towards Shame-Sensitive Practice."

- Educators can work with cognate terms like 'guilt,' 'humiliation' and 'embarrassment' to think about the impacts of self-conscious emotions and to open a deeper conversation about shame
- Educators and community members can respond to shame through
    - Acknowledging that shame exists, broadly and in specific contexts
    - Avoiding specific shaming practices in the classroom (e.g. public punishments)
    - Addressing both root causes and immediate instances of shame
    - Making space in dialogue practice for exploring emotions, especially those related to fear of failure or ostracization, which can especially stimulate shame
- Educators can model shame sensitivity and shame resilience to students by e.g. practicing appropriate disclosure of their own academic failures or struggles
- Educators can recognize that context and content matters and that there is not a 'one size fits all' response to shame, or to knowing what individuals will find shameful

3.2.1 Shame and Speech: Classroom-Based Vignettes

Why think about the relationship between shame and speech in developing strong dialogue practices and promoting civic engagement? These illustrative vignettes highlight some of the many ways that shame can interact with speech, dialogue, and the potential for citizenship development through classroom practice. Vignettes 1-5 reflects a different principle of shame-sensitive dialogue on campus (see above for a description of the principles and how they are linked to the vignettes).

These vignettes may be useful for faculty development discussions or for in-class conversations with students. They are organized with an opening question related to a principle of shame-sensitive dialogue, followed by a discussion question. The questions are designed to open discussion about the vignettes and their relevance to local contexts.

Note: these cases are largely focused on how to address and respond to difficult experiences of shame, even when shame may be perceived as justified.

1. How might we understand and respond to shame as part of learning?
Marina is a biology major hoping to complete the pre-medical curriculum at a large university. She studies for hours every day hoping to maintain a high average in her science classes. She is motivated partly by her fear of failure and of being publicly recognized as a failure—a fear of experiencing shame—if she were to answer a question wrong in class when her teacher 'cold calls' her. When she works in small groups with her lab, this fear melts away and she is eager to participate and share ideas with her classmates, not worrying what they and the professor think of her. However, when it comes

to her lectures, she is perpetually anxious. At the same time, she acknowledges that in times that she *has* made an error in class, she has since never forgotten the right answer—her moments of shame are stamped in her mind.

Further discussion: question: *How do we support students when shame and fear of shame intertwine with their motivation and processes of learning through discussion?*

2. How do we understand shame that arises without active shaming?
Dario started his graduate program in 2021, and students were masked in the classroom. He developed a profound fear that he would call someone by the wrong name in class. The potential shame of doing so—which stemmed from the possibility of exposing myself as a subpar classmate and community member—significantly impacted his capacity to participate in meaningful dialogue. It also negatively impacted his early relationships with my classmates. He has since reflected on this shame—which, despite its impact, was purely hypothetical—and how it grew not from practices in the classroom (although name cards could have helped!) but from prior experiences and his own anxiety joining a new school.

Further discussion question: *How can we recognize and make space for organic shame in dialogue that grows from factors external to the classroom context, such as a more general impostor syndrome or anxiety?*

3. How can we recognize and ameliorate active shaming in our classrooms and communities?
A first-year student comes to office hours in tears because when they were in a small group discussion in their Political Science class, a classmate shunned them for making an offhanded remark. The class was discussing state politics, and they mentioned that their parent is from Vermont and loves Bernie Sanders. The classmate laughed in response and said, "Wow, I guess we shouldn't listen to anything you have to say." The student expresses their shame both at saying the 'wrong thing' and at being from the 'wrong' sort of background to fit in at the class. They are afraid to participate in future discussions.

Further discussion question: *How can teachers and classmates develop practices or community agreements that reduce active shaming in dialogue-based activities?*

4. How can we respond to and acknowledge the ways that bias influences shame experiences?
Students who are systemically marginalized or minoritized may find their ability to participate in dialogue is mediated by challenging emotional experiences like shame. bell hooks described her dedication, as a professor, to supporting Black students and minimizing harmful shame:

> "There are serious taboos against acknowledging shame. Individual black students and colleagues have broken down emotionally as we talk in my office about negative experiences in predominantly white settings. They voice shame about feeling shame. One dark-skinned male student confessed that every time he asked a question in a class where everyone else was white he felt inwardly terrified of failure and he always responded with anger. Even though he could see that this response alienated him from his peers he felt stuck." – bell hooks, *Moving Beyond Shame*

Further discussion question: *How can faculty, staff, and peers recognize the links between marginalization and shame and actively work to dismantle these inequities, to build stronger civic and dialogic bonds?*

5. How can we acknowledge and explore the ways that shame is part of maintaining social relationships?

Lua came to her university to study Education, and during a classroom discussion about the local public schools, she noted, "The streets in this city aren't safe, so why would parents send their kids to school alone?" One student gently suggested that Lua rethink some of her beliefs about the city. Another student who had grown up in the city said that they had always gone to school on their own. Lua apologized and expressed shame for speaking flippantly, especially because she came from a neighborhood that was often negatively stereotyped, but which she loved. After class, she confessed to the teacher that she felt paralyzed by her own misstep and was not sure how to move forward.

Further discussion question: *How can we support students in 'moving through' or recovering from shame when it arises in response to breaking social norms or commitments?*

3.2.2 Shame and Speech in Campus Discussions: Strategies for Instructors

This section is meant to define shame in relation *to speech on campus, describe how it can influence classroom discussion, and provide sample practices for instructors to think about bringing more shame-sensitivity into their classrooms.*

Shame is a '*self-conscious*' *emotion*: the feeling of being seen and negatively judged for some action, behavior, or element of self by a real or imagined other. Shame is considered 'pro-social' when it supports shared norms or moral commitments but can also be harmful to individual self-image and social bonds. Shame is culturally specific and overlaps with forms of bias that put some individuals at more risk of shaming than others.

In college and university communities, shame can influence discussion:

- Students might self-silence to avoid potential shame if they have controversial ideas
- "Cancelling" (deeming a person as useless/unacceptable/stigmatized) is a form of social shaming
- Reflecting on feelings of shame might lead students to approach discussions differently or to apologize to a classmate
- Some knowledge or ideas can themselves become shameful and taboo

Instructors can practice more 'shame sensitive' teaching by

- Acknowledging that shame exists and that high emotions might arise in discussion
- Avoiding targeting students through shaming practices like public punishment
- Developing community agreements that include acknowledgement of shame and of discussion taboos
- Contextualizing specific practices in the classroom that can be shaming (e.g. alerting students to pedagogical choices like "cold calling")
- Inviting students to reflect on the distinctions between accusing other students of wrongdoing ('calling out') and asking other students to clarify or reflect on their comments ('calling in')
- Asking students to share (anonymously or otherwise) information on 'who's in the room,' to reduce accidental shaming of less common experiences
- Alternatively, give students a list of who *could* be in the room[11]
- Providing low-stakes opportunities to practice dialogue and to explore failure without risk of ostracization (e.g. simulations, practice perspective taking)
- Recognizing that context and content matters and that there is not a 'one size fits all' response to shame, or to knowing what individuals will find shameful

[11] For a nice example of this practice on page 112 of Anthony Laden, *Networks of Trust*.

4. Part III: Shame and Speech on Campus – For Institutions

This section works to identify a set of principles for thinking about shame and dialogue on campus and outline some basic practices which are meant to be altered for different contexts. Principles are linked to nuanced Vignettes to illustrate and complicate.

4.1 Guiding principles for shame-sensitive free expression on campus

- We acknowledge the shame that may arise in response to campus norms or regulations around free expression (Example: Vignette 5)
- We recognize how systemic prejudices, biases, or inequalities on campus can increase unfair and harmful shame (Example: Vignette 4)
- We avoid shaming of groups, which can create a culture of exclusion or unbelonging
- We (as a campus community) are responsible for taking shame seriously when thinking about organizational culture including in processes for disciplinary action
    - General policies can be 'shame aware' without making strict policy for how to respond to instances of shame (Example: Vignette 3)
- We acknowledge that not only students, but faculty, staff, and leadership can and do experience shame that influences their freedom of expression (Example: Vignette 1)
- We believe that policy is limited its capacity to respond to shame, which is a largely 'extralegal' dimension of free expression, and instead we commit to focusing on community relationships (Example: Vignette 2)

4.2 Basic practices for shame-sensitive free expression on campus

- Make clear norms for open expression, and their intended purposes
    - In so doing, avoid shaming for norm breaking and focus on communicating the norm and the reason behind it
- When harmful sham(ing) occurs, provide institutional support to the shamed individual
    - In instances where shaming cooccurs with other breaches of campus policy (e.g. hate speech, bias, bullying) recognize the harmful impacts of shaming while following policy
    - When shaming does not cooccur with other breaches of policy (e.g. a student consistently puts down another student's work), focus on norms and relationships instead of adjudication of a dispute

- If students, faculty, or staff identify a norm or value as itself shaming
    - Campuses can respond by considering the norm, its intended purpose, and demonstrate their openness to changing or clarifying norms to lessen shaming
- Recognize 'shame discourses' in laws and policies regulating open expression
    - Campuses can consider how these discourses are limited and how laws and policies indicating shame/shaming relate to organizational norms and guidelines on free expression
- Take a collaborative and 'bottom up' approach to integrating shame into free expression guidelines
    - Welcome student, staff, and faculty voices and highlight myriad ways that shame works on campus to shape social and institutional life
- Support 'shame resilience' among faculty, staff, students, and leadership by acknowledging shame, avoiding shaming, and addressing shame in institutional culture

4.2.1 Shame and Speech: Institution-Level Vignettes

Why think about the relationship between shame and speech in institutional practice and policies? These illustrative vignettes highlight some of the many ways that shame can interact with speech, dialogue, and campus culture . Vignettes 1-5 reflect a different principle of shame-sensitive dialogue on campus, as described in the section on Institutional Principles.

These vignettes may be useful for faculty development discussions, for use in trainings, or as samples for institutional leaders. They are organized with an opening question related to a principle of shame-sensitive speech and include a following discussion question. The questions are designed to open discussion about the vignettes and their relevance to local contexts.

Note: these cases are largely focused on how to address and respond to difficult experiences of shame, even when shame may be perceived as justified.

1. How can institutions support faculty grappling with shame experiences in response to policy or institutional norms?

Riley is a professor of American History at a large public university in a state where faculty were briefly restricted from discussing abortion on campus following the overturn of Roe vs. Wade and legislation to prevent academic work on the subject. Although the restrictions were lifted to protect the free expression of faculty, one of Riley's students objected to a reading discussing abortion activism in the 1970s in class and accused Riley of one-sideism. In the moment, Riley just said, "thank you for contributing" and moved the class on. But for weeks after Riley was consumed by shame at having

not stood up for faculty speech rights and for not upholding their academic values. Riley was doubly shamed that they were panicked that the student would report them, and they would be fired from the university—they felt ashamed that they were worried about losing their job and not just at having let down their profession. Riley brought the case to a faculty meeting to ask others how they are teaching through restrictions on certain subjects.

Further discussion question: *How can universities grapple with the complex effects of state and national policies on expression, and their impact on the affective dimensions of teaching?*

2. How can universities think about and respond to shame as a tool for protest or dissent on campus?
A tenured faculty member at a large university in the United States gives a public interview to a local news outlet suggesting that international students should be barred from US college campuses not because of immigration laws but because working with students who are English language learners slows down class and does a disservice to the rest of the students. The university is aware of the statement but declines to censure the faculty person, pointing to speech rights. A student coalition starts a poster campaign in which they print out portraits of the faculty person, the university president, and the university Provost for faculty affairs with SHAME printed across their faces. The coalition puts up hundreds of the posters around campus and in the surrounding town and posts them on social media, tagging the University and many members of leadership.

Further discussion question: *When it comes to cases regarding protest, how can universities balance the relational dimensions of speech and shame (the wellbeing of individuals on campus) with their institutional responsibilities (protecting speech and protest, ensuring teaching and learning continue)?*

3. How can institutions think about claims of harm related to shame and their relationship to balancing speech rights on campus?
A parent writes to the Deans of Student Life and Academic Life claiming that her student is being systemically shamed on campus for his political views. He is the president of the Students For Libertarianism Society and recently hosted a large event featuring political speakers on campus. The parent cites examples from his classes, his participation in the student newspaper, and his experience in Greek life. The parent claims that his ideas are consistently shut down by other students because of his high-profile role on campus and that he is experiencing increased anxiety due to perceived social shunning. When questioned, faculty and student leaders observe that the student shares his views consistently, and that others disagreeing with him have equal rights to share their own views. The parent insists that he is being shamed and follows up with the university Provost to request an inquest into bullying as part of the university response.

Further Discussion Question: *How can (or should) leaders at a university attend to experiences of shame while negotiating the complex needs of multiple stakeholders (including parents, students, faculty, and other campus community members)?*

4. How can institutions recognize and respond to the intersections between bias and discrimination cases and experiences of shame?

A group of students files an anonymous complaint to the Director of Greek Life about a Sorority on campus. According to the complaint, the Sorority has been systemically rejecting Asian and Asian American women from joining. The students received polite but pointed notices of rejection stating that they either did not meet the 'criteria' for entry because they had too many academic commitments, or that they had not been perceived as sufficiently excited and eager to join the Sorority. The complaint notes that these notices played on stereotypes of Asians and Asian Americans on campus as studious and unfriendly. The complaint describes shared feelings of unbelonging, shame, and embarrassment upon receiving the notices, and the confusion and humiliation that grew when the students realized they had all received similar notices. The Sorority claims that the notices were delivered to many different students based on their fair assessment of pledges interested in joining.

Further Discussion Questions: *In responding to or adjudicating bias-related incidents, in which ways might campus leaders be responsible for addressing fractured relationships or experiences of shame and unbelonging, and what strategies could they take?*

5. How can campuses make space for talking about shame, even in instances when the incident maintains other campus policies about speech?

A group of four students were required to take a semester off after they were found to be running a gossip website on campus and posting private information about other students to the public site. When the students returned to campus, they realized that 'everyone' had been talking about their case because there had been some reparative discussion groups to share about the negative impacts of the site. They had also been used as an admonitory tale for other students, with the university adding mandatory sessions on social media and digital privacy for student group leaders and first-years on campus. While the names of the suspended students had not been released, everyone knew it was them since they had been missing for the semester. In required meetings with their academic deans during the semester, two of the students described intense feelings of shame leading to an unwillingness to speak in class or participate in campus activities. One of the students said that it would be better if they were not on campus, and the other admitted they believed they did not deserve to graduate. Concerned, the deans brought the cases to their administrative leads.

Further Discussion Questions: *How can campus leaders foster a campus culture that encourages reparative and resilient responses to shame even in cases where discipline and sanctions for other violations of speech-related policies are required?*

5. Acknowledgements

I am endlessly grateful to many people for their support in the development of this project. Firstly, the University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement: Michelle Deutchman, Brenda Pitcher, Melanie Ziment, and Kristen Gonzalez. Thank you very much to all the current and former Center fellows, especially the 2024-2025 Senior Fellow Robert Cohen. Thank you to the University of Pennsylvania Education, Culture, and Society graduate students, to the Penn Paideia Center for Civic Dialogue, and to all the students, faculty, and staff who supported me. Thank you to Sigal Ben-Porath for her guidance in this and all my work.

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