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## School-Induced Shame: A Qualitative Analysis of College Freshmen's K-12 Shame Experiences

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**Abstract**

This qualitative inquiry investigates shame theory and how societal shaming practices manifest themselves in our schools, examining specifically the negative effects of shame on human development. The researcher sought to understand the school-induced shaming experiences of recent high school graduates attending a four-year state university in the southern United States. Sixty-one college freshmen participated in the study. Written accounts of these individuals' shame experiences were collected with 9 participants interviewed individually and in a focus group setting. By analyzing the school-induced shaming experiences of these individuals, the researcher was able to identify school practices, teacher actions, and peer-interactions that induce feelings of shame in children.

**Introduction**

One could argue that no other social institution plays a greater role in influencing the course of a child's life than our school system. Today's schools are responsible for the intellectual, emotional, and physical development of the children they service. This enormous task brings with it enormous responsibility. Every tool, resource, strategy, practice, and word used with children has an impact on their development. Due to the amount of influence a single educator can have, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of school practices and teacher actions.

The social and emotional development of children begins at home and is continued in the school setting. As many researchers have noted, school is often the first non-familial experience; it is our initiation into society. In school we are expected to learn and grow both intellectually and emotionally. Teachers and administrators are to guide us through this journey and support our efforts of self-discovery. Our experiences in school are meant to be positive and rewarding, but far too often, the very nature and structure of our schools creates a negative and unwelcoming environment. Underlying many of these negative

experiences in the schoolhouse is the emotion of shame.

Shame is as natural an emotion as anger or fear. In fact, psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1963) listed shame as one of the nine primary affects innate to all humans. Shame is felt when a weakness or personal flaw is exposed. Shame is characterized by a need to hide the exposed weakness and by a diminished sense of self. When a child sees himself as deficient or having failed in some way he experiences a sense of shame.

The study of shame and shame theory is an area of psychology that is often neglected. It was not until the early 1970s that psychologists began to uncover the mystery behind shame experiences. Since the 1970s inquiries into shame have given us a broad and in-depth look at an emotional experience that is universally shared. While most of us experience shame at one time or another, those who are repeatedly exposed to shame tend to suffer the most negative consequences (Lewis, 1971; Nathanson, 1992; Kaufman, 1992).

While many psychologists and researchers argue over the age at which humans first experience shame, all agree that by age two children have the capacity to be shamed (Broucek, 1997). These shame experiences can

have negative effects on an individual's physical and mental development. Shame has been associated with states of anger and aggression, depression, anxiety, and diminished self-worth (Andrews, Qian, & Valentine, 2002; Shelton, 2001; Tangney, Wagner, Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996).

Because shame can be so destructive, it is important to understand what experiences elicit feelings of shame. Nathanson (2000) listed ability, skill levels, competition, sexuality, gender, personal attractiveness, and a sense of self as possible triggers of shame. Perceived failure or weakness in any of these areas can trigger a shame experience. We encounter these triggers in various settings and at different times in our lives. Interactions with parents, caregivers, siblings, teachers, peers, and even strangers color the way we see ourselves and have an impact on our emotional development.

Much of the empirical research on shame has focused on parent/child relationships and the dynamic of shame experiences in families (Mills, 2005). These studies have shown a connection between negative parenting styles and shame in young children as well as a connection between household conflict and shame (Mills, 2003; Grych, 1998). Research has also shown that insensitive parenting can foster shame feelings in children. Parents who call their children names, intentionally use negative language, or embarrass their children, can produce feelings of shame (Gilbert et al., 1996).

While these studies are important in understanding early shame experiences, they only focus on one area of a child's life. By the time a child reaches eighth grade, she has spent more than 9,000 hours in a classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Children spend much of this time interacting with teachers and peers. Because these interactions play an important role in the cognitive and emotional development of school-aged children it is

important to understand the dynamics of these interactions and the effect they can have on developing psyches.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the school-induced shaming experiences of recent high school graduates attending a four-year state university in the southern United States. Written accounts of individuals' shame experiences were collected from English Composition 101 classes. A select number of participants were interviewed in order to gain insight into their shame experiences and the effect these experiences have had on their lives. By analyzing the school-induced shaming experiences of these individuals, this researcher was able to identify school practices, teacher actions, and peer-interactions that induce feelings of shame in children.

#### *Research Questions*

This study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What shame-based pedagogies, purposeful or not, are used in schools?
2. What teacher actions and attitudes, purposeful or not, induce shame in school-aged children?
3. What peer interactions at school elicit shame experiences in children?
4. What shame-triggering categories emerge from the reported school-induced shame experiences?

#### *Method*

Through this qualitative study, the researcher hoped to shed light on an often overlooked phenomenon. The hidden nature of shame is one reason for the lack of empirical research in the area of shame and shaming and the almost nonexistent research concerning school-induced shame (Shelton, 2001).

### *Phenomenological Approach*

This research study involved a phenomenological examination of school-induced shame. By focusing on the singular phenomenon of shame, the researcher hoped to gain a better understanding of children's experiences in schools, to describe the practices, teacher actions, and peer-interactions that elicit shame in children, and to eventually set forth suggestions for improved educational practice.

Phenomenological research is focused on "exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning" (Patton, 2002, p.104). The study of an emotion, such as shame, must be looked at individually and in the context of "shared meaning." Emotions are individually constructed. The human experience is subjective and reliant on the social context in which one lives. Shame is a reality only if a person feels he has experienced shame. On the other hand, all humans have the capacity to feel shame (Tomkins, 1963). By collecting individual stories of school-induced shame and then comparing these with other experiences, themes and patterns emerge. These themes and patterns define the essence of the shared phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

### *Participants*

The research participants were college students taking an English Composition 101 course during the Fall of 2006. These students completed a class assignment requiring them to write a personal account of a school-induced shame experience encountered in grades K-12. A select number of participants were also interviewed during the Fall of 2006 in order to gain insight into their shame experiences and the effect these experiences have had on their lives.

English Composition 101 students were used for this study because most have just completed their K-12 school experience. Since every student at the university is required to take English Composition 101, the population from which the participants came reflects the diversity that exists at the institution. It was important to collect data from individuals with diverse cultural, social, and economic backgrounds.

It was also important that participants be old enough to reflect on and articulate prior school experience. Kaufman (1992) reminded us that the capacity to verbalize our shame experiences does not come until adolescence or adulthood. We have the capacity to feel shame at an early age, but not to articulate what we are feeling until much later. Because phenomenology is the study of lived experience, one cannot reflect on the phenomenon until he has experienced it. In other words, a person must be removed from the phenomenon in order to fully articulate what happened, how it felt, and who was involved (Patton, 2002).

### *Data Types*

Written accounts of individuals' shame experiences were collected from English Composition 101 classes. Participants completed a class assignment requiring them to write a personal account of a school-induced shame experience encountered in grades K-12. Participants completed the narratives as a homework assignment and turned them in during the next class meeting. This allowed time for thoughtful reflection on the part of the participants. The written narratives were also convenient forms of data because they were typed, easy to read, and in the language of the participant.

Demographic data were collected from participants when they turned in their written narratives. A demographic questionnaire was

completed by each participant and attached to the written narrative. Information such as gender, race, age, and K-12 schools attended was collected. This demographic information sheds light on the background and historical context of each individual’s shame narrative. The background and context of the experiences are essential to any phenomenological study with a constructivist framework.

Nine participants were also voluntarily interviewed in order to gain insight into their shame experiences. The interviews focused on the shame experiences participants wrote about in their English Composition 101 class and also involved conversations on other school-induced shame experiences. Through the interview process, the researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the shame experienced by the participants.

Once the individual interviews were completed, the interviewees were asked to participate in a focus group interview with other participants. Eight of the 9 agreed to participate in the focus group interview. During the focus group interview, participants were asked a series of focused questions relating to school experiences that elicit shame. The questions focused on the participants’ perceptions of possible effects of these negative school experiences.

#### Data Analysis and Interpretation

By collecting individual stories of school-induced shame and then comparing these with others’ experiences, themes and patterns emerged. These themes and patterns define the essence of the shared phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The 61 written narratives were used as a basis for the study. Themes and patterns emerged as similarities in the data became apparent. Individual interviews along with a focus group interview helped confirm and

solidify the themes and categories that were developed.

One of the more interesting aspects of the data was the consistency of themes across all genders, races, and school settings. As seen in table 1, the study participants varied greatly in terms of gender and school affiliation. There was not as much diversity in terms of race, but even in the experiences of the few minorities that participated, there was still a consistency of theme with the majority of the participants. In other words, the shame experiences of all participants centered on a few common themes.

Table 1  
Demographic Data Collected from Participants

Gender		Race				School Type			
Male	Female	White	Black	Hisp.	Asian	Other Private or Pacific Islander	Public Parochial		
22	39	51	3	2	3	2	38	14	9

#### Shame Triggers

Nathanson (1992) defined shame triggers as those experiences that one encounters through the normal process of development. Every aspect of human development elicits either a sense of pride in accomplishment or a sense of shame in perceived failure. Nathanson listed changes in size and strength, dexterity and skill, dependence vs. independence, and gender identity and sexuality as possible triggers of shame. When we reach each stage of development and feel we have succeeded, we feel pride. If we perceive a weakness or failure in any of these areas of development, we feel shame.

Nathanson’s description of shame triggers holds true for the participants in this study. As seen in Table 2, the shame triggers

that were seen over and over again in the written accounts of the participants were academic struggles, physical or somatic differences, peer teasing and bullying, teacher apathy, and insensitive or hostile teachers and administrators.

Table 2

Number of Participants Reporting Each Shame Trigger

Shame Trigger	Number of Participants
Academic Struggles	19
Physical or Somatic Differences	12
Peer Teasing and Bullying	17
Teacher Apathy	8
Insensitive or Hostile Teachers and Administrators	21

Each of these triggers has been examined separately even though many are inter-related. The connections between the triggers will be discussed as they become apparent in the accounts of participants. Each specific shame trigger that emerged will be presented with supporting quotations from participants' written narratives, interview transcripts, and the existing literature on shame. The 9 participants who were interviewed have been identified by pseudonym while the remaining 52 participants have not been identified by name, but each will be referred to only as a participant.

*Academic Struggles*

Schools are institutions of learning and skill acquisition. School children are faced with challenges on a daily basis. With every new challenge comes the possibility of success or failure, and consequently pride or shame (Nathanson, 1992; Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

Broucek (1997) reminded us that the opposite of shame is pride. Broucek stated that in the school setting “Pride and shame are closely connected with issues of competence, efficacy, the successful meeting of standards and rules, and achievement of goals” (p.58). The concept of a shame/pride axis is essential to a study examining shame and education. For some children, the educational experience is enveloped by a sense of pride in one’s achievements. For others, the educational experience elicits feelings of shame and self-doubt. All children enter a learning environment with a slight sense of shame in not knowing. When everyone is in the same boat, so to speak, the effect of shame is limited or completely diminished. It is when some learners advance and others do not that comparisons are made and shame is perpetuated.

For those learners who struggle to meet the challenges of classroom life, shame is inevitable. This sense of shame due to academic struggles was articulated by 19 study participants. Almost one third of the shame stories collected focused on academic struggle and failure. While this was not surprising due to the academic nature of school, what was surprising was the connection between academic struggles and perceived teacher insensitivity. Thirteen of the 19 participants who related an experience of shame due to academic struggles stated that an insensitive teacher made the situation worse and perpetuated the cycle of shame. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Rachel:

Researcher- You talk about your physical characteristics that made you stand out and a reading problem. What was the reading problem? When did this reading problem start?

Rachel- I guess the reading problem started before third grade because my parents realized I wasn't reading as well as everyone else. I kind

of have a degree of dyslexia. It took me longer to sound out words and I guess it went on to about the fourth grade when I started reading a lot.

Researcher- Do you think you became aware of your reading problem because adults told you or something that would happen in class?

Rachel- My teachers would get frustrated with me. I would have to go for tutoring. It was better when I had a special ed tutor. When I went to my own teacher after class they would get really frustrated because it was on their own time and they really didn't want to spend it with someone who can't sound out simple words. They would get really frustrated.

Researcher- What made you think they were frustrated?

Rachel- I remember one was like, "Look at this word. Can't you get this?" I had one that would have to get up and walk around.

While Rachel's academic problems made her feel ashamed and different from the other students, her teachers' frustrations and lack of sensitivity perpetuated her negative feelings and created in her a sense of despair.

The focus group interview brought up more issues with academic struggles and shame. The focus group participants felt that academic competitions brought shame to the forefront such as book reading contests, spelling bees, and poster contests. One focus group participant even stated that reading groups were seen as a form of competition to many children. Another issue that arose in the focus groups concerning academics and shame was that of round robin reading. Round robin reading is a term used to describe the age-old practice of going around the room and having each child read a section of the text aloud. Many in the focus group felt that this was a negative experience for them in

elementary school. Many reported physical reactions to round robin reading such as increased heart rate, stuttering, shaking, breathlessness, sweaty palms, and flushed faces.

#### *Physical or Somatic Differences*

Individuals who feel they have failed to develop properly or that their bodies are somehow inadequate compared to others can feel intense shame (Nathanson, 1992). These differences in physical appearance as well as physical functioning become apparent in the school setting. School is a place where children develop intellectually and physically. Compounding these feelings of shame is the teasing that many children suffer at the hands of their peers. All 12 participants who related a story of shame due to somatic differences discussed the impact that peer teasing had on their psyches. It was always the teasing that brought the differences to the forefront and made the situation ripe for shame.

We looked at Rachel's story in the previous section dealing with academic struggles. Not only did Rachel suffer shame because of her academic problems, but she also had to deal with her physical differences. In her written narrative Rachel wrote, "Shame was such a major part of my life because I didn't fit in with the other students because I was heavy, wore glasses, and had red hair; what a combination." In her one-on-one interview, Rachel discusses her physical differences.

Researcher- You mention that boys would say "You're fatter than Homer Simpson." How did that make you feel?

Rachel- The Homer Simpson comment, that one stood out to me. I remember that happened at lunch one day. I think a lot of kids in my class watched "The Simpsons." I didn't watch it very much but I knew who that was. It hurt just because I was in the third grade and I didn't see

myself as that fat. He did it really loud too. We were in the lunch line and everybody heard and laughed. I knew I was not perfectly thin but I didn't think I was hideous. I didn't think I was that big and when he said it, it was like, "Oh! I really am that big." I really wasn't that big I was just chubby. It really hurt.

A male study participant relates his issues with being overweight in the following quote from his written narrative.

"Most of my life I was a fat kid. This wasn't fun at all. I'm not just talking about being picked last for sports or on Valentine's Day or what not. It gets really hard when you start thinking about the girl situation in middle school. Almost every guy had a girl back in my middle school and I didn't. This can really hurt a man's confidence. Not just that but the fat jokes aren't cool either."

Big ears, cracking voices, and the wearing of glasses were all reported as somatic causes of shame for the participants. These participants spoke of not even being aware of their physical differences until these differences were pointed out by their peers. "I remember when my mom took me to get glasses. I thought that they might look pretty cool to the other kids. I remember the first day I wore them. I was walking to class and was made fun of because I was wearing glasses." Another participant wrote, "In elementary school around first grade it was brought to my attention that I have big ears. I didn't even realize it until I got made fun of for it."

### *Peer teasing and bullying*

Because school is a place for socialization, the peer group can be a potential source of shame. Kaufman (1992) listed the formation of cliques, teasing and ridicule, and physical bullying as sources of "considerable shame" from one's own peers (p. 200). This type

of shame can be continuous and long-lasting as it is perpetuated year after year. In addition to the 12 participants that experienced shame in connection to physical differences and peer teasing, five others also wrote about peer teasing and bullying although not necessarily connected to a physical difference. Therefore, a total of 17 study participants wrote of experiencing peer teasing and bullying in the school setting. Of these 17 individuals, the most egregious case came from Jeff, an individual that submitted a written narrative and was also interviewed. Segments of Jeff's interview are below.

Researcher- You say that the largest source of shame for adolescents is their classmates. Why do you think this way?

Jeff- They're your age. They're your peers and you have known them all your life. You really want to have their approval and stuff like that.

Researcher- You talk about the pressure to fit in. Did you feel that pressure and when did it begin?

Jeff- Pretty early. I was probably around the third or fourth grade. I felt like I wanted to be like everyone else. You wanted their approval and stuff like that.

Researcher- You say that as a child you were continuously harassed by your fellow classmates. What would happen? How did it make you feel?

Jeff- They would pick on me, make fun of me, basically bully me and just made you feel real bad. It was pretty much all the way up from kindergarten to seventh grade. They called me stuff like "cry baby", "mama's boy". I just tried to get away from them. They would follow me and do it anyway because they saw it bothered me. It was pretty much the same group all the time. They tried to bully everybody just about. It was probably about three or four boys. They did



it to other people but I was the main one they did it to. I was in school with them from kindergarten to my senior year in high school. They grew up a little after seventh, eighth grade.

Researcher- How would you describe the type of bullying they would do?

Jeff- Usually they just made fun of me all day and the worst they would ever do is push me maybe.

Researcher- Where would this usually happen?

Jeff- Usually on the playground.

Researcher- You say you would have preferred to be physically bullied instead of mentally “tortured.” Why?

Jeff- If you are physically bullied it don’t last as long as mental. Like whenever you get hit it hurts for a while and then it goes away and you forget about it. But if you’re like made fun of you’ll remember that for a lifetime.

Jeff suffered the humiliation heaped on him for several years. In his written narrative he stated, “I was always made fun of and I always let the cruelty of my classmates get to me. I felt that shame every day and didn’t know why my classmates couldn’t accept me for who I was.” Jeff could not be expected to understand why his classmates made him suffer. A young child is developing his sense of self and relying on the relationships formed with others to help in this development. It was inevitable that Jeff would start to feel that there was something wrong with him even when there was not.

### *Teacher Apathy*

After reading accounts of peer teasing and bullying like that of Jeff, one might wonder how this type of behavior can go on without teacher intervention. It is hard to believe that teachers or school personnel could be so

oblivious to these ongoing encounters. While it is possible that some teasing and even some academic struggles could go unnoticed by teachers who would otherwise intervene, a few participants felt that their teachers knew what was going on and chose not to help. Whether or not these participants were right, it was their perception of teacher apathy that caused compounded feelings of shame.

While Rachel was bullied on a daily basis from third grade until middle school, her teachers and school administrators never intervened on her behalf. Rachel saw this as a message that she was not worthy of assistance and that there must be some truth in what her bullies were telling her. She felt even more frustrated, isolated, and alone. The following are excerpts from Rachel’s interview when she discussed her attempts at soliciting help from her teachers to stop the teasing and bullying she was suffering.

Researcher- Did the teachers know this was going on? Did they do anything about it?

Rachel- The teachers knew because he (the bully) did it pretty loud and he did it at the beginning of class. I guess she was just overwhelmed and she would say that it was just kid stuff. I know she heard it at least once. I guess she just thought it was kids. I don’t know. She never said anything to him about it. I would complain to her about other stuff and she would just say, “Boys will be boys.” That was a big thing a lot of teachers said whenever I would complain. She said, “It must be something you’re doing wrong so just fix it.”

It is important to note that teachers are not the only school personnel that have a responsibility to keep children safe. Cafeteria staff, bus drivers, support staff, and administrators must be aware of the school environment and must take action when they see

a child in need. One particular participant was in dire need of such assistance from her bus driver. A section of her written narrative is below.

“The everyday ridicule on the bus was something I couldn’t run from. Although I tried to sit in the front seat near the bus driver to avoid the scorn, it was no use because the shouts rained from the back of the bus. “You ugly little monster” some children would shout. I bowed my head as tears began to stream down my face. Everyday on the bus I felt worthless and lonely. The one particular incident I remember the most was in kindergarten. The children on the bus had been mocking me for weeks. With my head held low, I slid into the seat behind the bus driver. I kept my head held low praying that none of the bullies would see me. My hopes fell when I heard chuckles and saw the blood red backpack of my bully. His milky eyes pierced my heart as he pointed to the Barney on my shorts set. He continued to comment on my clothes as he went back to his seat. “Look at that ugly monkey with those coke bottles on her eyes” he shrieked. The bus roared with laughter as he shouted from the back of the bus. I know the bus driver heard every word but she said and did nothing.”

Why did the bus driver not help this five-year-old? This was not an isolated incident. It was obvious that she knew what was happening. This kind of apathy is very harmful. Not only did the kindergartener not get relief from the shameful bullying, but she was also sent the message that adults do not care. She was not good enough, not worthy of assistance.

#### *Insensitive or Hostile Teachers*

Perhaps the most disturbing trend to surface when reading the participants’ shame stories was that of insensitive or hostile teachers. Many participants experienced shame when teachers made hurtful comments about their intelligence, appearance, or character. These

types of negative comments can be sources of great shame. Teachers have tremendous emotional power in the classroom and this power is dangerous if it is used to control and demean children (Kaufman, 1992). Twenty-one of the 61 participants wrote about experiences with insensitive teachers or administrators. This number constitutes the largest percentage of participants that share a single shame trigger. Even more disturbing than the actual numbers are the hateful and destructive words uttered by supposed professional educators.

“Oh my god, it’s a miracle you actually got something right.”

“You know that liars go to hell.”

“How could you not know the answer to this simple math problem. I have had three other brilliant students to complete this exact problem.”

“Children, don’t pay attention to Leigh because the stupid cooties will rub off on you and you will be like her.”

“Are you stupid or something?”

“You’ll never make anything of your life.”

“Don’t ask stupid questions.”

These are just a few of the comments the participants remember hearing from teachers. These comments perpetuate the shame cycle and create a rift in the relationship between teacher and student. The human condition is defined by our need for relationships with significant others. A relationship develops based on the premise that the other person wants to be in a relationship with us. Kaufman (1992) calls this “mutuality of response.” “Mutuality of response is indispensable to feeling that one is in a real relationship with another, in a word, to feeling

wanted for oneself” (p.13). When this type of relationship develops, the two parties form an interpersonal bridge between themselves. The bridge is based on understanding, respect, and openness.

The emotional connection and interpersonal bridge a child has with a caregiver is the basis for most of the learning and development that takes place in early childhood. The very open and trusting nature of the relationship, however, leaves both parties vulnerable. When the interpersonal bridge is severed by a disappointing glare, a hateful word, or a withdrawal of love, shame is induced. This inducement can shut down (temporarily or permanently) the exchange that promotes the development of one’s sense of self-worth. When one’s sense of self-worth is diminished, cognitive development is slowed or hindered (Broucek, 1997).

Whether or not teachers know that their words are causing damage to their students’ psyches is irrelevant. As educators, they should know. Teachers are responsible for the intellectual, physical, and emotional development of their students. It is their job to know how their actions impact their students.

One participant wrote of a teacher that made his second-grade experience a living hell. In his written narrative he recounts his experience as a child with a chronic illness struggling to stay current with his school work.

“I was always in and out of the hospital prior to the second grade and it aided me not in keeping up with the other children. Mrs. Barrow did not have the slightest sympathy for me and she did not want to put up with a struggling student. I remember many times when Mrs. Barrow would make comments about how dumb and far behind the other children I was. She would also contact my parents about taking me

out of school because I was not smart enough to keep up. This would make me feel even more insecure about my existence. I also remember balling in tears one afternoon because my teacher called me worthless and she detained me in class while all the other children went to play during recess. I remember this particularly because she called me a thorn in her side and insisted on making me try to read without even helping me. I have never felt a greater sense of shame than when I was in the second grade.”

These accounts are shocking and disturbing. It is hard to believe that those professionals to whom we entrust our most precious resource can be so cruel. Children enter the school setting with a natural tendency to trust teachers. It is especially hurtful and destructive when such a trusted individual turns against you. Negative and angry language coming from a caregiver or important person in an individual’s life can create a sense of insecurity and fear. The once reliable relationship becomes unreliable and even hostile. A break in the interpersonal bridge is created and feelings of shame result. The feeling of shame comes from the feeling that we were wrong, weak, or stupid for blindly trusting the other individual. Shame can also result if the individual on the receiving end of the negative or angry language blames himself for the ill treatment. After all, “I must have done something to deserve this.”

We have looked at the five shame triggers that surfaced during the analysis of data and in-depth reading of participants’ school-induced shame stories. Academic struggles, physical or somatic differences, peer teasing and bullying, teacher apathy, and insensitive or hostile teachers have caused many students to feel the most negative and destructive of human emotions: shame.

### Discussion/Conclusions

This study has helped shed light on the phenomenon of school-induced shame. The participants' stories have given us a greater insight into the triggers of school-induced shame. The patterns that emerged from the data were at times predictable and at times disturbing. While many individuals share positive school experiences, many others share negative experiences. Identifying school practices, teacher actions, and peer interactions that induce shame is the first step in making the schoolhouse a better place to learn and grow.

Social institutions, such as schools, have a responsibility to nurture and guide our youngest citizens. However, all too often, these very institutions instigate or perpetuate the cycle of shame. Acknowledging these failures and finding ways to stop the cycle are vital steps in the healing of shame. It is the fervent hope of this researcher that this study contributes to the literature on school-induced shame and offers real and needed solutions to eliminate shame in the school setting.

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