Shame and Stigma: Investigating Teacher Awareness, Understanding and Response

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Abstract

This research has taken an interdisciplinary approach to exploring teachers' awareness, understanding and response to shame and stigma occurring in the classroom. Shame is an affective experience of failure by comparison, where the research suggests stigma causes shame (Lewis, 1998). A review of the research literature showed that teacher perspectives of students' shame and stigma was an under researched phenomenon. Situated within Social Constructivism, and making use of qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews, this research has made four contributions to knowledge on shame and stigma in schools. First, that teacher understanding of shame can be narrow, and that sometimes teachers unknowingly use language that can minimise their students' experience of shame and stigma. Second, while possessing limitations, the Compass of Shame could be used as a tool to ameliorate this issue by helping teachers to identify and name their students' affective experience through their behaviour. Third, the data showed that teachers were blocked from acting in support of their students due to performativity pressures related to neoliberal education. Finally, drawing on the Positioning Theory framework, this study revealed that students' experience can be analysed to understand how shame and stigma were circulated and reproduced to the detriment of equity of access to the classroom environment.

Declaration of Originality

This is to certify that:

1. this thesis comprises only my original work;

2. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all material used; and

3. the thesis is less than 30,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, bibliographies, and appendices.

Signature:

Alanna Maguire

Preface

This thesis forms partial fulfillment of my Master of Education (Research), with a coursework component that involved written assessment for the subjects; Education Research Methodology and Education Research Design. These subjects required the writing of a 13,500-word research proposal in preparation for the research component of this degree. As such, parts of the literature review and methodology sections of this thesis have been submitted for assessment in these subjects. This work comprises my own original ideas, analysis and writing and has been acknowledged by the University of Melbourne as acceptable to resubmit for this thesis.

List of Acronyms

ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting
CoSS	Compass of Shame
DE	Department of Education (Victoria, Australia)
LBOTE	Language Background other than English
NAPLAN	National Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy
NVIVO	Data Analysis Software
OFSTED	UK's Office for Standards in Education
PISA	Performance for International Student Assessment
RRRR	Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships
UoMEC	University of Melbourne Ethics Committee

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To my colleagues and friends at Newport Lakes Primary School, I had no idea of the magnitude of taking on the task of researching and teaching alongside one another, especially during COVID-19. Thanks for listening to my thoughts, watching my practice presentations, asking questions and for all the little things that have helped reduce the stress. I hope I can one day play some role in ameliorating the structural burdens that constrain the passionate and caring people like you.

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Chapter 1: Locating the Problem

1.1 Introduction - Situating the Research and the Researcher

The seed for this research was firmly planted several years ago when I began volunteering for a not-for-profit organisation that ran leadership camps for teenagers aged fifteen and sixteen who had been nominated to participate by various schools across Victoria, Australia. Acting as a youth mentor, I facilitated and supported young people to discuss their goals and values and challenge themselves to get out of their comfort zone physically, socially, and emotionally. It was throughout these dialogic interactions I first considered shame and the ways it impacted students in their educational journey. Many of the attending young people spoke of experiences where they felt they were not good enough or that they were vastly different from their peers, which in turn held them back from achieving in ways that were important to them, whether academically, socially, physically, or relationally. Preliminary research into shame suggested to me that it was an experience of comparison, where one felt less than, or incompatible with, an expected benchmark of achievement.

Bringing these experiences back to my professional life as an upper primary teacher, I began to see the way my naïve understanding of shame impacted my students. I regularly encountered students who had fixed their idea of what they were capable of, who found school a place fraught with anxiety about their appearance, their achievement, background, or their place within the social sphere. It seemed that vulnerable students, whether economically, socially, emotionally, physically, cognitively, or due to their minority status were unequally affected. It also appeared that the caring support of a teacher showing genuine interest and making time to support these students made a difference.

Having taught in a Victorian school for about six years, it is my experience that students' shame is not often considered explicitly in relation to inclusion and achievement, despite teachers demonstrating deep care and empathy for their students. Teachers seem likely to talk about a student's engagement or inclusion, or their emotional experience, but the word 'shame' seemed to be avoided. If shame has the isolating effect I saw amongst young people, should it not be considered more

explicitly, and the conditions for its development in classrooms be unpacked? Thus began my interest in shame, affect and inclusion which left me asking the question; *How do teachers recognise, understand, and respond to shame in the classroom?*

1.2 Rationale for Research Project

Educational opportunity in Australia is a complex issue. Whilst equitable access to education is considered a fundamental human right according to the UN, the reality is that a large achievement disparity exists in Australian schooling, where those fortunate enough to exist in both socio-economically and socio-educationally advantaged settings are statistically more likely to score higher in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results (Angelico, 2020). This problem is also identified in political debate regarding the equitable allocation of school funding, brought about by the Gonski Review of Funding to Schools (Gonski, 2012). Scholars have identified that those students who lack social capital, such as those significantly disadvantaged by their geographic location (Dadvand & Cuervo, 2019) or as members of vulnerable minority groups such as Indigenous Australians (Gunawan et al., 2021) face significant barriers to their educational experience. While this is obviously a multifaceted and complicated issue that has many causal factors (Cassells et al., 2017), it is important to recognise that the *felt* experiences (Dernikos et al., 2020) of all students may provide greater insight into what does or does not impact equitable access to the classroom in any educational context. This extends to the ways in which students access and experience the school environment, their sense of belonging and social inclusion and their personal sense of identity. The common thread amongst these issues is the emotional experience of the student, where this research is specifically interested in students' relationship with *shame*.

This study aims to contribute new knowledge on the attitudes and beliefs about shame and stigma (in the classroom and school) from the teacher's perspective. It is expected that such knowledge will provide informative data about shame in Australian educational contexts and potentially inform possible strategies and approaches to dealing with shame in the classroom.

1.3 Shame in the Australian Educational Context

While the consequences of shame are known to impact some youth in the form of depression (Lewis, 1987), anxiety (Gilbert, 2000), eating disorders (Goss & Allan, 2009) and suicide (Lester, 1997), shame has also been linked to poorer educational outcomes. Specifically, shame is identified as eliciting withdrawal and avoidance which have been found that it can negatively affect outcomes in mathematics (Amidon et al., 2020), special education (Ryökkynen et al., 2021), and writing (Juzwik & Antonucci, 2020) in contexts outside Australia. Beyond this, research into stigma suggests that the socio-cultural environment and the beliefs and attitudes of a group can cause shame for those who fail to meet socially defined expectations (Goffman, 2009; Lewis, 1998; Tyler, 2020).

While shame and stigma have clear detrimental effects on the individual, their impact in education has the flow on effect of maintaining inequality in society (Cuervo, 2012, 2014, 2020). Imogen Tyler's (2020) work suggests that stigma and shame are socio-political actions serving to maintain a hierarchy of power for those who benefit from it. When examining how Australian schools experience a concerning achievement disparity related to socio-economic status, the question of what is maintaining this gap is a common one for those seeking reform. While there are different factors that contribute to this disparity, Dernikos et al. (2020), suggest that affective relationships to school contexts deserve significant consideration. Shame, as a particularly isolating and disenfranchising experience (Lynd, 2013), warrants foregrounding in the pressing debate of equitable achievement outcomes.

1.4 The Teacher's Perspective

Teachers have significant influence over the culture of classrooms and schools and within their day-to-day affective relationships (Paterson, 2022). They are in the unique position of being able to understand the ways affect, such as shame, impact learning. Moreover, teachers are expected to provide social and emotional learning in many educational settings; in fact it forms part of the curriculum in Australia (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, n.d.). Unfortunately, teachers are increasingly being burdened with the pressures of high stakes testing and regulations seeking to

control their work (Ball, 2003; Barnes, 2021; Cuervo, 2012; Mockler & Stacey, 2021), which may hinder teachers from acting in cases where they do believe shame is present.

1.5 The Research Questions and Key Assumptions

Just as the social sciences and humanities have taken a turn towards the affective, education is following suit (Zembylas, 2021). After conducting a literature review, to the best of my knowledge, shame identified in the Australian school setting emerges as an under researched phenomenon. While shame is an inevitable experience as part of the human condition (Tomkins, 1984), with detrimental effects in wellbeing, education, and broader societal impacts on equality, the extent to which teachers recognise and understand the construct, or take action when they detect shame in their students is not widely known.

This research is interested in the ways shame is felt and experienced by students in Australian schools by proxy of their teachers, specifically the ways that teachers recognise, understand, and respond to student shame. This will be examined by accepting a psycho-social model of shame and stigma, where shame is understood as both a psychological and sociological phenomenon. This accepts that students' experience of shame and stigma, as observed by teachers, can be both an internal or external evaluation, relating to a student's experiences and cognitions and the environments within which they exist (Nathanson, 1996).

To examine shame in the classroom, the following research question was devised:

How do teachers recognise, understand, and respond to students' shame in the classroom?

Sub-questions:

- How do teachers describe their students' experience of shame?
- What factors contribute to or inhibit teacher understanding and response to shame?
- How does the affective environment of a school contribute to or inhibit students' sense of shame?

1.6 Limitations of the Study

This research was conducted during a unique time in history, where COVID-19 presented many challenges in the recruitment of participants (Pressley, 2021). Participants were recruited through a research snowball, where the resulting participants were likely to have an interest in the topic, or already consider it worthwhile. Given the exploratory nature of the research, this could point to a broader understanding of shame and stigma than is perhaps generalisable to the whole teaching profession. Beyond this, examining students' experiences through their teachers presents the limitation that everything discussed is merely an interpretation and we cannot be certain that the students experienced these things at all.

The debate about the generalisability of qualitative research remains, particularly when looking at small sample sizes. This limitation will be examined in the results and discussion and data will be acknowledged as highly contextualised. Finally, the limitation of scope is acknowledged, where time and analysis are limited by the constraints of a master's research degree.

1.7 Methodology

This research has been conducted within a Social Constructivist paradigm, recognising that the world is constructed by individuals through their interactions, experiences, and interpretations of the world within context (Vygotsky, 1980). I have chosen to use semi-structured interviews with teachers and analyse the data using thematic analysis (Neuendorf, 2018) and guided by psychological and sociological conceptual tools. The literature review identified The Compass of Shame (Vagos et al., 2019) as a tool for understanding behavioural responses to shame and this will be examined for its utility and application within school contexts. Further, an adapted Positioning Theory framework drawing on the work of Anderson (2009) will be used to understand how shame and stigma are circulated and reproduced within particular school settings. These analyses will provide data to answer the research questions and build a baseline understanding of shame and stigma in Australian school contexts, specifically through the lens of teachers.

1.8 Thesis Structure

This thesis has begun with an orientation to the researcher and the impetus and rationale for beginning this research. The following sections will examine contemporary literature to understand the key ideas and complete a review of relevant literature, then it will examine the methodological underpinnings of the study. Chapter Four will present the research findings, followed by a link to literature in the Chapter Five discussion. Conclusions will be drawn and the implications and areas for future research will be discussed in the final chapter.

1.8.1 Conceptualisation and Key Definitions

Shame in this research will be defined as a psychosocial phenomenon stemming from psychology, and socio-cultural factors. Within this research, shame will be defined within the disciplines of psychology and sociology, where affect theory literature describes the human experience of shame as built from innate **affect**, schematically built, and situationally saturated **feeling**, and socio-culturally constructed **emotion**. These aspects are not isolated from one another, they are intricately linked and layered concepts that can be used to describe the complexity of the human experience of shame. Shame is a self-conscious emotion, a failure to achieve in line with expectations on a personal level, but these expectations are also highly dependent on the norms and expectations of the socio-cultural context where a person exists. These norms and expectations can cause shame because of stigmatisation, experienced by those who are already disenfranchised by sociological factors which are maintained by hierarchies of power.

To my knowledge teacher ***response*** to shame is a field of inquiry that is under-researched. For this reason, a response will be indicated by any action taken by the teacher in reaction to their perception of shame, whether through dialogue, physical action, or resulting pedagogical decision(s).

Teachers' ***understanding*** of shame will refer to when they have a developed awareness of shame on a conceptual level. However, the complexity of the concept indicates this may be partial or incomplete. For this reason, teacher understanding will encompass

any communication regarding the psychological, or socio-cultural nature of the concept.

Teachers' ***recognition*** of shame will refer to the indicators they use to discern whether a student is experiencing shame. This may include any of the four shame responses conceptualised by Compass of Shame by Nathanson (1994), including *attack self, attack other, withdraw or avoid.* It will also include where teachers identify aspects of stigma, including physical difference, deviation in personal characteristics or tribal stigma, due to the causal link between stigma and shame.

In this research, ***teachers*** will include those employed in schools who are in-service and working directly with students at least one full day per week. ***Schools*** refer to learning establishments for students aged between 5 and 17 years, whose principal purpose is to provide fundamental and foundational skills for life. Finally, ***neoliberalism*** – refers to the political and economic ideology that advocates for privatisation, free markets, and deregulation. In Australian education, this refers to the privatisation of schools, the rise of accountability and standardisation; evidenced by the implementation of NAPLAN standardised testing, and an increased focus on competition and individualism (Sellars & Imig, 2023).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will first examine the boundaries of the literature review, acknowledging key scholarly work in the field and the rationale for their inclusion. Next, I will discuss relevant literature to define shame as an interdisciplinary interaction between psychology and sociology; the experience of the individual and the contexts within which they exist. I will explore literature from psychology and bridge the gap to sociology through understanding Affect Theory – which will lead to examining stigma as a cause of shame. I will acknowledge how I will be researching shame in education through the lens of teachers and discuss the work that teachers are engaged in and how they are affected by the socio-political climates that constrain them. Finally, I will examine how shame can be detected through discourse and link to the methodological choices made to answer the research question.

2.1.1 Boundaries of the Literature Review

This research proposal was developed by review of literature spanning from 1963 through to 2023, with a focus on work conducted in the last 10 years. Seminal work from the authors Goffman (1963), Tomkins (1984) and Nathanson (1994) forms the theoretical basis for understanding the keystone concepts of this research; affect, shame and stigma. More recent literature cited builds on the foundations of this work to discuss shame and education in the contemporary context. A focus remains on work conducted in Australia, where possible, to ensure that the context of the literature matches the socio-political conditions within which this research has taken place.

2.2 A Construct of Shame

Shame has a complex history in academic literature. Many disciplines consider the felt experience of human beings, yet shame continues to remain uncategorised (Scheff et al., 2015), a combination of psychology, sociology, and philosophy. Given this tension, this review will seek to build a research-driven working definition of the construct, where shame will be examined through the interdisciplinary lens of psychology and sociology. A psycho-social framing of shame examines the affective experience of

students, as observed by their teachers, by understanding that this experience may be an internal experience of comparison made by the student, or a social and structural experience related to the environment in which they exist (Nathanson, 1996). As stated, other empirical fields also interrogate shame however to be clear, this thesis aims to investigate shame through a psychological and sociological perspective. Shame will be defined and understood as an interaction between a person's psychological experience and their personal interactions with their world; mediated by their relationships and their personal evaluations. Once this conceptualisation is established, shame will be investigated for the purposes of this research and understood within education, with a particular focus on a range of Victorian socio-demographics contexts. This will allow some comparison of students' experience of shame by proxy of their teachers' interviews. Finally, the role of teachers will be examined to understand the socio-cultural conditions in which they work and how this may impact their understanding of shame and their responses within the classroom.

2.3 Defining Shame: An interdisciplinary approach

The concept of shame has a long and important tradition in both Eastern and Western thought. Shame was first considered within the discipline of philosophy by Confucius, who believed it was an essential moral boundary for the unification of society where those bereft of shame could be considered inhuman (Geaney, 2004). Later, Aristotle described the term 'aischyne' in Ancient Greek to label the pain that accompanies actions that may bring one into disrepute (Fussi, 2015). These two early scholars' definitions are representative of the ongoing debate in the literature that endeavours to situate shame somewhere between an individual, or psychological, and a socio-cultural experience. Many researchers since have attempted to define shame (Katz, 1999), yet they only tend to agree on two points; shame is complex and painful and it is dependent on the context within which it exists (Stearns, 2017).

Sociologist Jack Katz affirms;

> the experience of shame refracts in so many shades of feeling and takes such diverse metaphoric shapes that the literature is filled with contrasting definitions of the phenomena, each definition stressing elements that assist the author's

> objectives for shaping therapy, developing sociological or psychological theory, or making a philosophical argument (Katz, 1999, p. 147).

Thus, this research also takes a disciplinary position that is relevant for context and honours the shades of meaning that do exist. Consequently, defining shame through psychological and sociological theory becomes necessary to more fully understand the emotion and its impacts in the educational context. As both a researcher and a teacher, this approach feels most appropriate as it honours the complexity of the day-to-day experience in education. All interactions in a classroom or school environment offer a complex interplay between the needs of the individual student and the needs of the socio-cultural environment; student psychology, school context, parental expectations, systemic and structural burdens all compete for attention in the mind of a teacher, in addition to a multitude of other variables and considerations. Due to its unique ability to bridge both psychological and sociological theory, to understand both the individual and the external experience of shame, Silvan Tomkins' Affect Theory (Tomkins, 1984) and the contributions of scholars who built on it will provide the foundation for defining shame in this research.

2.4 Affect Theory as a Lens to Understand Shame

Affect theory has evolved over the last few decades. When Silvan Tomkins first wrote about Affect Theory (Tomkins, 1984) he theorised that affects, at their most basic, are predictable patterns of neurological firing that pre-empt physiological expression (Tomkins, 1984). They are pre-personal; suggesting they are experienced in the body before conscious thought, and an experience of intensity; not necessarily what you feel, but how you are affected or changed by an experience (Dernikos et al., 2020). These patterns can become the primary motive for behaviour because human action (learning, thinking, remembering, craving, or attaching) is perceived through our experience of fear, surprise, enjoyment, or shame (Frank & Wilson, 2020). Among these affects, Tomkins (1984) refers to shame as an interruption to the experience of excitement/joy, which is considered the social affect. He suggests that shame can be a signal to protect oneself and hide; which may manifest in body language such as averted eyes, a downcast face, and slumping of the neck and shoulders (Tomkins, 1984). As a negative

affect, shame/humiliation is considered punitive and unacceptable, a force intended to pull one's actions back in line with expectations and thus, feels deeply troubling to humans (Kelly & Lamia, 2018).

In the mid 90s, Brian Massumi (1995) and Eve Sedgwick (2003), scholars in the social sciences, began to explore the idea of affect as a mediator of political, economic and cultural power (Zembylas, 2021) through analysing the work of French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (Colebrook, 2005). This change, or "the affect turn", moved Affect Theory from Biological and Psychological Sciences into the Social Sciences, allowing critical analysis of the ways bodies are penetrable and permeable rather than purely self-contained and rational (Dernikos et al., 2020). This philosophical move suggests that our bodies and our reality are constructed, not merely by language, but are defined by forces outside of ourselves.

In her critique of this affect turn, Leys (2011) criticizes the duality implied by Massumi (1995) and Sedgwick's (2003) conceptualisation, where affects and their causes are entirely separate from each other, and cognition serves to interpret these non-intentional bodily reactions. Leys (2011) questions this concept of unintentionality and mind-body disconnection, where affect is the direct result of a causal trigger and inherently free from meaning (Altieri, 2012). Leys (2011) instead argues that affect is preceded by cognition, where an event is first prescribed meaning, which becomes the causal factor for triggering an innate bodily response. However, this suggestion also espouses the dualism Leys herself takes issue with (Cromby & Willis, 2016). Instead, as is the view taken by this research, affect cannot be reduced to cognition or innate reaction but instead represents an interaction between both (Seyfert, 2012). This approach allows for understanding how affect can be triggered by a memory or an anticipated future (Cromby & Willis, 2016) and is suggestive of affect as *experience*; it cannot be reduced to a sociolinguistic analysis (or cognitive appraisal) but runs in parallel with feeling. Affect is continually present and acts to imbue experience with a tone or mood, often even going unnoticed by the person experiencing it (Seyfert, 2012).

As an example, a student may find themselves in a classroom where they are considered 'other' in some way; perhaps as racially or socio-economically distinct from their peers. Their experiences of that classroom are inculcated with the felt experiences of difference; speaking another language at home, having different foods at lunchtimes or

being unable to afford the same experiences as their peers instils a feeling, whether conscious to the student or not. They may come to consciously associate their feeling as one of shame or they may not. They may find anxiety in a potential future where their 'otherness' is foregrounded, or they may hope for a potential future of inclusion or change, both of which can influence and be experienced in the present. Feeling becomes experience, it is not distinct from it.

2.5 Affect, Shame and Psychology

In his extensive work *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self,* Nathanson (1994) discusses the interaction between the affective or pre-personal experience of shame and what he considers the psychological components of *feeling*; learning, social conditioning and experience of failure by comparison (Muris, 2015; Nathanson, 1994; Tangney & Tracy, 2012). Shame becomes an *emotion* when a person has accumulated experiences of that affect (Tomkins, 1984) which occur within a socio-cultural context. It is this context that forms internal and external evaluations that profoundly influence the ways an individual comes to experience shame (Tangney & Tracy, 2012).

2.6 The Development of Shame as an Emotion

As students age, their experiences in a classroom, or in the world more broadly, lead to the development of unique frameworks (otherwise called schemas or scripts), that assist in interpreting information more quickly and precisely (Nathanson, 1994). For example, a student may have the framework that pairs feelings of shame and worthlessness with failure to achieve tasks, learnt from previous attempts, other people's reactions, and societal expectations of the self. These scripts develop when a student makes a comparison between themselves and a standard they wish to achieve, where their success or failure is felt on a continuum between pride and shame (Nathanson, 1994). Common themes of these comparisons include body size and shape, dexterity and skills, independence, cognitive ability, communication, sense of self, gender identity and sexuality, and interpersonal skills (Nathanson, 1994). Considering school aged students, these themes of comparison are not only common experiences for a human being, but particularly for those who are developing self-awareness and identity through their interactions with the world (Lewis, 2019).

This distinction between affect, feeling and emotion is an important one in this study. If affect exists before conscious thought, sometimes discernible by behavioural reactions, this can explain how it is possible students may experience shame without being aware of the experience themselves. When layering learning, social conditioning and situational mood, (or feeling), over that affective experience to form schema, it explains how students can come to associate their experiences with shame, which may also affect their behaviour and identity. Finally, when considering shame as an emotion, the socio-cultural context becomes incredibly important, such as the schools in which this research is taking place (Scambler, 2019). By understanding that the psychological experience of shame as an emotion cannot exist without context, sociological theory becomes essential.

2.7 Shame and other emotions

Taking a purely psychological perspective, shame as an emotional experience has been debated for so long that many research bodies have attempted to define the shape and form of the experience, where differentiating from other emotions has become critical to understanding the different shades of the self-conscious emotions (Tangney & Tracy, 2012). Guilt, embarrassment, humiliation, disappointment, and pride are all often discussed in relation to shame and will be touched on throughout this section. The research does house these emotions within a group of affective experiences considered to be the self-conscious emotions.

Shame and guilt are both considered in the literature to be self-conscious emotions; guilt referring to a negative evaluation of one's actions, while shame refers to an evaluation of the self (Tangney & Dearing, 2003). Within the literature, guilt is thought to evoke an approach response, a tendency to want to repair the harm, whereas shame is associated with avoidance entirely (Tangney & Tracy, 2012). Differentiating between these is important because the ongoing effect of shame on identity is far stronger and more harmful than guilt (Lewis, 2008), specifically related to the feeling of exposure inherent to the comparative evaluation of shame. Humiliation is often considered alongside guilt and shame, where its distinction is thought to be related to an external rather than internal attribution for the responsibility of the failed comparison (Pulham, 2009). This suggests that humiliation is more focused on others making a

judgement and, oftentimes, that the humiliated person does not deserve the blame – often resulting in anger.

The difference between shame and embarrassment are debated by scholars who argue that the two are different intensities of the same emotion (Crozier, 2014), or that they differ entirely, related to a violation of social convention (embarrassment) versus a moral failing (shame) (Sabini et al., 2001). What is accepted, is that these two emotions remain unclearly defined in the research evidence. However, the persistence of the emotional experience is accepted as distinct; where shame is more pervasive than embarrassment (Crozier, 2014). Shame's ability to stick around and saturate a student's evaluations of themselves seems to be presented in the literature as more harmful than the fleeting quality of embarrassment.

The final emotion that warrants discussion is that of pride. Key affect researcher Nathanson (1994) discusses these as opposing experiences, that have similarities in the way they are highly linked to the social and contextual milieu in which they exist. Pride is the positive opposite of shame. It is the positive evaluation of the self, especially when compared to real or imagine others and one is found to be seen favourably (Salice & Montes Sánchez, 2016).

2.8 Affect, Shame and Sociology

Shame and its subsequent feelings of failure can be the result of deeply ingrained expectations that are a byproduct of the prevailing norms of the cultural, economic, and political conditions of the zeitgeist (Vanderheiden & Mayer, 2017). Affects have the potential to attune us to the relational, and enable other social bodies, spaces and things to extend into us and register in multiple ways (Dernikos et al., 2020). In particular, Affect Theory can enrich our understanding of the ways teachers and students are moved and inspired, and how their feeling and memory play a significant role in teaching and learning (Zembylas, 2021). This potential makes this study important in the educational field. The results of this study aim to provide pragmatic advice to teachers and researchers about potential threats to student shame, and resultantly their self-identity, and how they can be minimised.

Empirical research has repeatedly demonstrated that the presence of norms and standards in different cultures impact the ways in which people experience shame, particularly for minority groups or those who are already consisdered vulnerable. Unfortuntely, cultural norms within any of these contexts can become cyclic, affect acting to reinforce the norms that cause shame for certain individuals (Hemmings, 2005). The work of Goffman (1963) and Lewis (1998) on stigma is an important lens for understanding how these dynamics of society and culture may demand a set of norms that cause shame through stigmatisation (Lewis, 1998; Tyler, 2020). Shame and stigma have become intricately linked in the research evidence, where they share key definitional characteristics in regards to a “spoiled identity” (Lewis, 1998, p. 126). However, they differ predominantly in their realm of experience; stigma experienced in the public realm, and shame experienced both publicly and privately (Lewis, 1998). Lewis (1998) suggests that the link between shame and stigma is causal; that is, stigma causes shame (Corrigan & Miller, 2004; Lewis, 1992, 1998).

2.9 Stigma

Stigma is used to describe when an individual is rejected by their society for an attribute that deviates from the normative expectations of that group (Goffman, 2009). This theory, postulated by Goffman (2009), suggests that stigma is a social phenomenon, where an individual can be categorised as someone who is 'stigmatised,' 'normal,' or 'wise' to the condition of the stigmatised (Goffman, 2009, p. 5). He suggested that stigma can be characterised by three types; physical deformity, deviation in personal characteristics, such as personality traits, dishonesty, weakness, mental disorder or poverty, or by tribal stigma, which is related to a person's nationality, religion, or race (Flowerdew, 2008; Goffman, 2009). Those who are considered to be amongst one of these groups suffer a loss of status and discrimination from those who are considered normal (Goffman, 2009).

Tyler and Slater (2018) later came to critique Goffman (2009) and subsequent stigma research for sidelining the critical issue of where stigma is produced and for what benefit. They believe that stigma acts as a weapon, employed by those in power to maintain social hierarchies and seeks to further disenfranchise those who are already marginalised. Stigma circulates around inequality, marking bodies with power, or lack

thereof, and is produced in social settings rather than fixed to attributes of individuals (Tyler, 2020). Much like shame is both psychological and sociological, a student's experience of stigma may be the result of psychological, socio-cultural or sociological influences (Clair, 2018). Clair (2018), establishes how the micro (psychological), meso (social) and macro (sociological) layers of society influence how stigma circulates around an individual and how it is maintained.

Psychological factors allow stigma to be experienced through schema and cognition (Goffman, 2009), socio-cultural factors influence stigma through interpersonal relationships and stereotypes, and sociological factors such as policy, law and environment can develop in-group and out-group membership and contribute to social inequality such as that seen in the Australian school context, in particular disparities between achievement, funding and inclusion. In this way, stigma is understood as a socio-political action that exposes the hierarchical relationships that seek to uphold social inequality maintained by those in power (Tyler, 2020). Typically, these include oppressive or restrictive norms that have historically been resisted only by those lower in the hierarchy (Tyler, 2020).

Research has showed that stigma relating to race and ethnicity can impede academic performance, shape the normative expectations of the classroom climate, and powerfully influence students' developing identity (Zirkel, 2005). As such, stigma and the related shame experienced by people of minority groups becomes not just an issue of teacher pedagogy but also of social justice. It is worth quoting Dernikos et al. (2020),

> "We are living in uncertain times – moments where bodies, spaces and things are continually disciplined, managed, marginalised, and even violently erased; where disorientation opens im/possibilities; and when confidence in conventional actions falters".

However, we are not affected equally. When considering the ways that issues of shame and stigma affect those who are already vulnerable, or those who face considerable additional barriers as members of minority groups, shame and stigma awareness is all the more important. This is particularly important to understand in the school context

where not only are students developing their identity, but where participation and inclusion are imperative to success. Teachers are uniquely positioned to regulate the narrative and support students to interrogate the norms that do exist (Wang et al., 2020).

Tyler (2020) suggests that any attempts to react to or change stigma can only succeed through understanding the ways stigma is endorsed by the political and cultural atmosphere in which it originates and by recognising stigma as the site of intense social struggle. The media, advertising, television, politics, and digital platforms and technologies are all sites of this social struggle, as well as everyday interactions that include racist, disablist, or misogynistic hate speech, which can occur both online or face-to-face (Tyler, 2020).

Teachers in Australian schools must be aware of these socio-political conditions that affect their classrooms and that can deeply influence their students' experience of shame and stigma. When examining the issue of educational equity in Australia, understanding the issue is paramount if their effects are to be mitigated. By undertaking this exploratory research on shame in schools and analysing the contexts in which stigma is circulating to cause shame, the political and cultural factors contributing to stigma can be questioned, and hopefully, disrupted.

2.10 Investigating Shame

Due to the nature of shame as described above the ways it manifests may differ from person to person. Additionally, many consider shame to be "isolating", "incommunicable" (Lynd, 2013, p. 67), and "profoundly taboo" (Scheff, 1988, p. 396). Many people when experiencing shame seek to hide and avoid any reminder of the damaged and defective self they perceive themselves to be (Thaggard & Montayre, 2019; Welz, 2011). As a result, those feeling shame are hesitant, or even unable, to recognise their shame, as it forces them to confront the incongruity of their identity (Eterović, 2020; Luoma et al., 2012; Putnam & Lake, 2020). Moreover, within interactions, shame can feed an interpersonal shame loop, where individuals may feel shame because another is feeling shame, cycling the feeling back and forth in an interpersonal shame loop (Lewis, 1971). Often, perception of shame in others induces such discomfort that those involved in the interaction may unintentionally ignore or dismiss the emotion itself (Putnam & Lake, 2020; Taylor, 2015). Recognising this, it

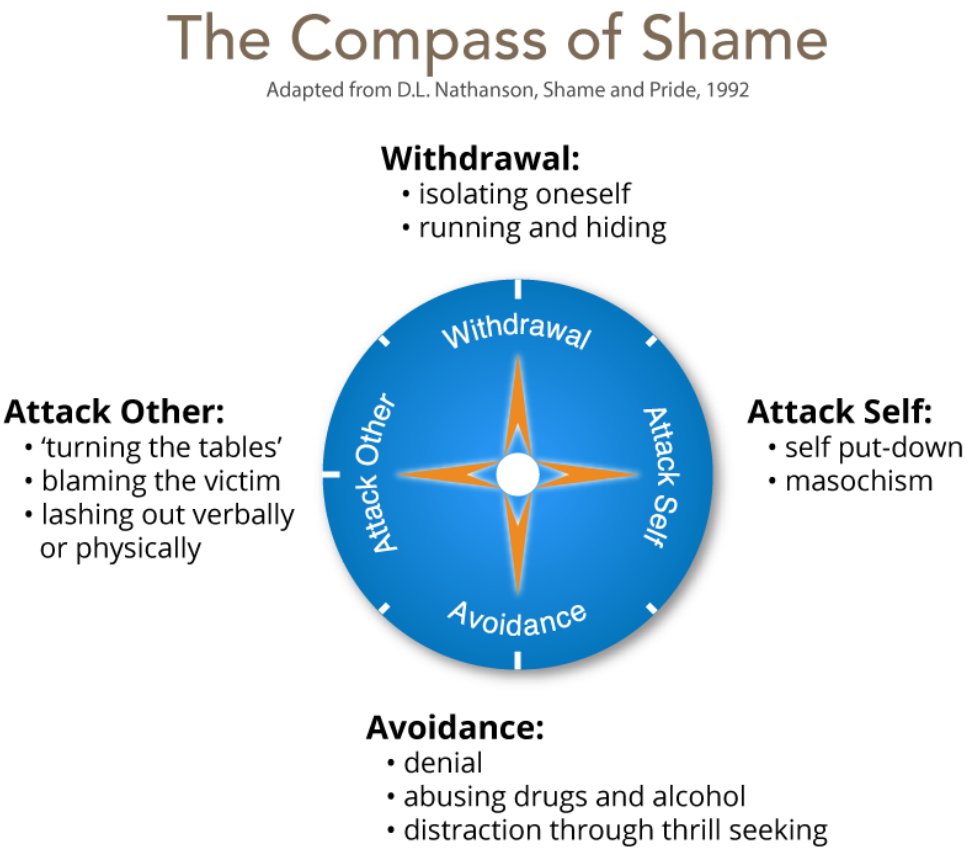
becomes important to illuminate markers of student behaviour that may indicate their affective shame disposition whilst also examining the socio-cultural context surrounding them, especially given that the students themselves are not the intended focus for data collection.

2.11 The Compass of Shame

The Compass of Shame (Nathanson, 1994) is a tool that the has been used extensively (Capinha et al., 2021; Elison et al., 2006; Schalkwijk et al., 2016; Vagos et al., 2019) in psychological research with the aim of detecting shame and its causes through observable behaviour. It suggests that the defensive behaviours that people develop in response to shame could generally be described by patterns of withdrawal, avoidance, attack other, or attack self (Nathanson, 1994). This conceptualisation was labelled The Compass of Shame (see Figure 1: The Compass of Shame below) and is related to the different patterns of shame coping people draw upon to avoid confronting their shame.

Figure 1

The Compass of Shame



Note: Adapted from (Nathanson, 1994)

The very nature of these coping styles suggests emotional dysregulation and have consequently been linked to increased vulnerability to maladaptive psychopathology (Muris, 2015) and deficits in interpersonal relationships (Wei et al., 2005). While the avoidance and withdrawal reactions speak to the hide and conceal nature of shame, the attack-other response is used to externalise and distance oneself from a shameful experience. This has been called "humiliated fury" (Thomaes et al., 2011) in the research and has been identified as a motivator for domestic violence (Brown, 2004) or specifically within schools; for externalised anger and aggression (Thomaes et al., 2011). Finally, the attack-self response can lead to the internalisation that the personality, behaviours, or emotions of an individual are flawed (Cunha et al., 2012). This response is closely linked to mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety (Cunha et al., 2012), youth suicide (Fullagar, 2003) and eating disorders (Mustapic et al., 2015). However, this regulatory behaviour may be harder to see within a school-aged population due to its concealed and internalised nature.

It is important to note that these patterns are unique to the individual and the situation in which shame is triggered, where the individual is enacting a response that most reduces their painful experience (Nathanson, 1994). While shame is the likely cause for withdrawal, avoidance, or attack, these poles of defence are often accompanied by auxiliary emotions such as anger, fear or self-disgust (Nathanson, 1994). Although The Compass of Shame was first conceptualised in 1992, it continues to be used in psychology to understand shame coping responses and has since formed the basis of a valid and reliable instrument for measuring shame reactions called the Compass of Shame Scale (Capinha et al., 2021; Elison et al., 2006; Martin et al., 2021; Schalkwijk et al., 2016; Vagos et al., 2019). It is important to note that this tool is not considered a categorical explanation of behaviour in this research, but rather a dynamic and ever-evolving compass that might support teachers in interpreting an elusive and often hidden affective experience.

It is also useful to acknowledge that teachers are not psychologists, and further, that the relevance of this tool is yet to be established in an educational context. Consequently, analysis of teacher interviews and resultant discourse aims to determine if students' shame can be adequately described using the Compass of Shame (CoSS) by comparing teacher interview responses to this tool. The CoSS may become an informative instrument for helping teachers to understand their students' behaviour and prompt them to act. It is acknowledged this tool may be reductionist in its descriptor of human behaviour and as such, consideration will also be made in data analysis for alternative expressions or indicators of shame identified by teachers.

2.12 Shame and Stigma's Impact on Student Identity and Belonging

Schools are fundamentally social places teeming with norms, rules and standards surrounding students with messages of who they should be, how they should act and what they should do. These socio-cultural environments are recognised as places that have the potential to become flooded with negative affect (Tomkins, 1984), particularly the self-conscious emotion of shame (Dehgani, 2021; Mills et al., 2010). How to cope with the punitive nature of shame is a significant issue for students who experience it but also for the institutions where individuals spend large amounts of time (Tomkins, 1984) particularly due to its effect on identity and belonging. Shame and Stigma

introduce a cyclic, self-fulfilling dynamic to students' beliefs about their capacity to access and contribute to the classroom and the social spaces they inhabit (Dolezal, 2022). When considering the impact a student's sense of identity and belonging has on their ability to self-regulate, their engagement and intrinsic motivation and their positive attitude toward both the school and the self (Osterman, 2000), shame plays a fundamental role in maintaining student connection and access to their learning environment. This was especially so for students of racial and ethnic minorities, where educational institutions are seen to be raced in favour of White students (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015). As a result, stigmatised students of colour are subsequently deeply affected by their felt sense of belonging (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015).

2.13 Shame's relationship to motivation and failure in the classroom

Recognised as an affective experience of interest, shame specifically an inhibitor (Nathanson, 1994), Wolfe (2017) discusses how shame should be of great concern to educators due to its impact on agentic behaviour and motivation. Students, specifically girls in this study, are suggested to be impacted by their experience of shame such that their motivation and engagement suffers (Wolfe, 2017). In this research it was seen to impact girls' life trajectories through limiting what is made available to girls as they take up the position of schoolgirl, one that assumes girls are bound by the expectations of performativity of their gender (Wolfe, 2017).

Beyond this, shame is considered to be the key affective experience that motivates fear of failure (McGregor & Elliot, 2005). Being seen enmeshed within failure is damaging to identity and contributes to the cyclic nature of failure. In this way, students with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia in this research, experience shame when seeking intervention or support as do not want to be seen as cognitively lesser than their peers (Claessen et al., 2020). This was also recognised by Monroe (2008), who discusses how teachers can sometimes be the cause of shame, resulting in their students coming to know themselves as failures. When every activity or lesson brings challenges that breed the possibility for success or failure, and resultantly shame, the classroom can become a daunting environment (Monroe, 2008).

2.14 Shame and Teacher Pedagogy

Further research examines the role of teacher pedagogy on the development of shame. Amidon et al. (2020) discussed the role of shame in the mathematics classroom and its impact on mathematical identity. When students experience shame in their mathematics learning, they are likely to avoid mathematics entirely to avoid any public displays of incompetence. This has the flow-on effect of decreasing their exposure to higher-level mathematics, maintaining their lower achievement, and eventually, resulting in the student no longer identifying themselves as someone who can do mathematics at all (Amidon et al., 2020). In classrooms where teachers encouraged students to focus on positive motivation and the learning process, rather than whether they were right or wrong, students showed less shame and were less likely to avoid mathematics as a coping mechanism (Amidon et al., 2020). These researchers suggest that fostering productive struggle in mathematics can mediate the development of shame and this subsequent withdrawal.

Similar results were found when researching writing classrooms. Whitney (2018) suggested that the act of writing is the act of sharing oneself, leaving oneself open to the criticisms and critiques of others. When students felt that their writing was tied to their identity, they connected any struggle they experienced as a sign of their own inadequacy, provoking shame (Whitney, 2018). In these examples, students would stick to safe or inhibited writing styles or avoid revising to avoid the task. She advised that shame in writing sessions could be reduced by teaching students to recognise when they find themselves feeling shame, to practise self-compassion, and to honour and embrace the struggle. In response to Whitney's (2018) essay, Juzwik and Antonucci (2020) also examined pedagogical strategies that would contribute to more shame resilient writers and found a practice of dialogic collaging built shame resilient writers. This approach required students to represent themselves through collage and engage in dialogic discussion with peers to share and connect with other writers.

Shame has also been identified as deeply affecting a student's ongoing engagement with learning or educational institutions when Ryökkynen et al. (2021) studied students with learning difficulties in Finnish vocational education. They found that shame was a significant barrier when students found it challenging to meet the standards placed

upon them by teachers or by themselves. Their shame prevented them from accepting and trusting their peers and teachers when they required additional support or seeing themselves as belonging socially (Ryökkynen et al., 2021).

The research into shame in educational environments speaks to the ways it can manifest as the result of misbehaviour, stigma, social norms, or pedagogical practises. What is apparent is that contemporary research has focused largely on shame and its relationship to ability or its impact on students' interpersonal relationships. What the research evidence lacks is a focus on shame in education from the perspective of the teacher. While Culp and Jones (2020) also reference this gap in their discussion of music education and shame resilience, the literature review conducted for this research found this claim to extend to research about all educators, regardless of discipline.

2.15 Why Teachers?

As those at the coalface of education, teachers possess incredible power over the culture of classrooms and schools, where they are also in the unique position of being directly involved in affective relationships with students. The affective turn in education suggests that attending to humans as relational beings, who are open, interconnected and vulnerable allows for the understanding of the way affects, such as shame, have the potential to prevent or encourage progress (Dernikos et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, in Victoria, Australia, teachers are also expected to attend to the teaching of the Personal and Social Curriculum Capability, where content descriptors such as, ‘Explore the links between emotions and their behaviour (VCPSCSE025)’ (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, n.d.), are required learning for students. Given their pivotal role in both teaching about affect and attending to affect, teachers’ recognition, understanding and response to shame should be considered a key area for future research in education. It is important to acknowledge that teachers can also cause shame, as they are not bystanders in school interactions (Cuervo, 2020; Uitto, 2011). While this is an important aspect of research in schooling, it is not the focus of this thesis.

2.16 Teacher's Work

While it is clear that teachers play a significant role in promulgating norms within the classroom environment and embodying pedagogical practice that promotes learning in a shame and stigma aware environment, teachers themselves face a number of pressures that contribute to their ability to recognise, understand, and react to shame and stigma in their contexts. The current socio-political context provides insight into the norms and expectations that serve to stifle the work of teachers and generate affective environments that prevent them from acting. Operating within neoliberal structures, schools and teachers are increasingly at the whim of education reform that seeks to regulate, control, and measure the outcomes of students and teachers (Ball, 2003; Barnes, 2021; Cuervo, 2012; Mockler & Stacey, 2021). In implementing reform, teacher professionalism and their autonomy, knowledge, and responsibility become compromised by what is known as the terror of performativity (Appel, 2020; Ball, 2003; Thrupp, 1999; Thrupp & Lupton, 2006), which requires the setting aside of personal beliefs and commitments to ensure performance outcomes are met (Appel, 2020).

First coined by researcher Martin Thrupp (1999), the term performativity is used to describe the social policy that serves to treat teachers and schools as a commodity, where marketisation strategies see student and teacher outcomes as predefined and static (Lyotard, 1994). The impact of such policy is a focus on accountability and measurable outcomes which can stifle creativity, critical thinking, innovation, intrinsic motivation and increase the pressure on both teachers and students, resulting in surface level compliance rather than deeper and more genuine learning outcomes (Thrupp, 1999; Thrupp & Lupton, 2006). This focus on outcomes deeply affects students and their developing identities (Wilkins, 2012), where competition and comparison become the guiding forces for success (Thompson, 2010). Knowing that shame and stigma are largely comparative experiences (Nathanson, 1994), it is easy to see how this outcomes driven culture can cause shame and stigmatisation particularly in academic outcomes. Beyond this, it is acknowledged that performativity causes a narrowing of the curriculum (Thrupp, 1999) that could result in teachers being unable to act due to the external pressures and reduced autonomy of outcomes driven culture. In Australia in particular, NAPLAN results drive the goals and priorities of schools' Strategic and

Annual Improvement Plans that also guide internal funding and professional development (Gorur, 2015). NAPLAN, the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, is a nationwide assessment completed by students of grade 3, 5, 7 and 9 in Australia that determines whether students are developing foundational literacy and numeracy skills. This type of testing narrows the focus of school leadership to the things examined by these standardised tests – Literacy, Numeracy and Student Attitudes to School.

The problem with these large-scale reforms is that schools and teachers become wedded to practices that may not serve the best interests of the child across diverse contexts or which could suppress their ability to act (Dadvand & Cuervo, 2020) in the face of shame or stigma. Those that lose are often individuals that exist in the disadvantaged fringes of society, where issues of social capital and funding contribute additional pressures for teachers who are already stretched thin (Gewirtz, 2006). While schools that serve students of comparatively higher socio-economic privilege were more likely to have efficient classroom routines, more compliant students that are capable of more difficult work, and that have access to more demanding texts and resources (Thrupp, 1999), the flip side of this is that those without this privilege are battling these conditions that allow the former to thrive. Just as Tyler (2020) suggests, stigma is functioning to disenfranchise those who lack social capital and preserve the hierarchies that exist to maintain power, where schools are yet another vehicle for circulating inequality in society. When considering the ways that issues of shame and stigma affect those who are already vulnerable, or those who face considerable additional barriers as members of minority groups, shame and stigma awareness in educational settings is all the more important.

It is clear that shame and stigma are impactful on the individual and their ability to progress, however understanding what prevents teachers from recognising, understanding, and responding to shame has positive implications in society. This is particularly important given issues of performativity and social justice which may only continue to reinforce problems with inequality in society.

2.17 Can shame be detected through discourse?

Taking an affective approach to researching shame and stigma in education through the lens of teachers' accounts does lend itself to the relevant question of whether shame and stigma can be detected through discourse. Affect is often presented as contrasting to discourse and cognition where it is considered '*beyond*, *below* and *past* discourse' (Wetherell, 2013, p. 350). The reciprocal approach to affect/ discourse accepted by this research addresses this dichotomy in part, acknowledging that affect is an interaction between both language and affective experience. Beyond this, situating this research within Social Constructivism and making use of social theory ensures Affect theory can be researched effectively by understanding the contextual factors and norms that exist within the environments being described (Howie & Peters, 1996; Kim, 2001; Zembylas, 2021). Consequently, I will make use of an adapted Positioning Theory framework (Anderson, 2009) for analysis of teacher responses, which will be discussed further in the following chapter. This will ensure that these critical contextual factors are considered.

2.18 Conclusion

This chapter has examined relevant literature about the concepts of shame and stigma to reach a research driven definition. It has examined how shame is the result of comparisons made between standards an individual wishes to achieve, and failure, where those standards are the embodiment of the norms of the contexts in which they exist. I have examined how shame can be understood through both psychology and sociology, and that stigma serves as a catalyst for shame. By acknowledging the way stigma is used as a tool for maintaining inequality in society, I have provided evidence for the importance of this research and how stigma may be a causal factor in the educational inequity debate that exists in Australian school contexts. Finally, I have examined contemporary research about the impacts of shame and stigma in schools, the role of teachers, and the socio-political climate in which teachers' work is affected. The following chapter will examine the methodological rationale for the research and the methods taken to answer the research question.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the methodological and theoretical rationale for my study of shame and stigma in the classroom within Social Constructivism. Using a qualitative approach, specifically semi-structured interviews, I explore my research question; How do teachers recognise, understand, and respond to shame in the classroom? I aim to contribute to the literature on shame in the classroom, specifically through the eyes of teachers, thus, my research methods are designed to explore participants' ideas, beliefs and perspectives, and practices about the topic to build a broad knowledge base within context.

In the following section, I discuss the research design and argue for the interdisciplinary approach alongside the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews within a Social Constructivist paradigm.

3.2 Research Design

I have chosen to situate my research within the Social Constructivist Paradigm that suggests that reality is constructed through the use of language and interactions within a socio-cultural context (Vygotsky, 1962; Vygotsky, 1980). It suggests that affective experiences are context driven and experienced by actors of a situation, who are dynamically building understanding through participation (Vygotsky, 1980). Affect Theory research is generally housed within Social Constructivism, due to the mutual acknowledgement of emotion/ affect as being situationally, and contextually constructed. When considering the most appropriate paradigm for this research, a positivist approach was considered an insufficient means to describe the dynamic and contextual nature of shame and stigma in this research, due to its focus on observable and measurable outcomes guided by logic-driven conclusions (Comte, 1880). Furthermore, a phenomenological approach was also considered, but was deemed not suitable given its focus on the lived experiences of the participants' internal worlds and not so much the external content that may trigger internal processes (Gelo et al., 2008). To be clear, Social Constructivism was chosen as it allows me to access the construction

of shame and stigma within individual contexts and to draw conclusions about the affective experience of students.

Within this paradigm, I have chosen to take an interdisciplinary approach to studying shame and stigma. First and foremost, the literature review about shame and stigma recognised a disciplinary tension that has extended philosophically since their foundation (Geaney, 2004). Rather than taking a rigid disciplinary stance between sociology and psychology, I recognised that interdisciplinary research would acknowledge the complexity of the experience of shame at the individual and cognitive level, and as a function of the social and affective environment within which an individual exists. Many scholars have argued that education is a field or context of study, often researched or examined by a variety of disciplines such as history, sociology, psychology, economics (Aboelela et al., 2007; McCulloch, 2012). Looking at both psychological and sociological perspectives is both necessary for understanding the concepts of shame and stigma, but it also allows me to understand the micro, meso and macro forces at play when a student experiences shame.

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, qualitative research methodology is a suitable choice for investigating teacher recognition, understanding of, and responses to shame in the school context. Qualitative methods allow me to access the participants' worlds to determine how they describe complex phenomena through their perspective (Walter, 2019) and to generate data from individual observation and contextual information that speaks to the socio-cultural context of individual contexts. Qualitative methods are widely used for understanding complex systems in society and for analysis using social theory (Mohajan, 2018) however have been criticised for their generalisability problems. I intend to deal with this limitation by acknowledging my reflexivity (Leung, 2015) and ensuring transferability; by making contextual factors known to the reader through analysis, where appropriate. Beyond this, I will incorporate social theory, specifically Affect Theory (Zembylas, 2021) and a Positioning Theory framework (Anderson, 2009; Harré et al., 2009), to understand the generated data, where the perceptions and knowledge of the teacher in context will be compared to research literature and an analytic framework.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen specifically because they allow for the flexibility to delve deeply into participants' variety of perspectives, values and

experiences (Kakilla, 2021; Kallio et al., 2016) which would not be available through other means of data collection, such as surveys. Most importantly, interviews allow access to contextual information where participants may use language to describe their settings and the interactions that coalesce to circulate shame and stigma. Further, the structure of interviews allows for themes to emerge, which will permit me to follow unexpected ideas or to delve deeper into participants' perspectives (Kallio et al., 2016). Interviews will focus on how teachers describe their students' shame, the factors that influence teachers' understanding and response to shame and stigma, and how the affective environment may contribute to a student's experience.

3.2.1 Research Questions

This thesis has a main research question and a subset of secondary questions that guide the exploration on teachers' perceptions and values of shame in schools and their experiences and practices aiming to redress it. The overarching research question is:

How do teachers recognise, understand, and respond to students' shame in the classroom?

The following secondary questions also guide the data collection and analysis in this thesis:

- How do teachers describe their students' experience of shame?
- What factors contribute to or inhibit teacher understanding and response to shame?
- How does the affective environment of a school contribute to or inhibit students' sense of shame?

3.3 Researching Affect within Social Constructivism

My research is situated within the Social Constructivism paradigm, where Affect Theory has been used to define shame. Both theories recognise people's subjective experience and emphasise how individuals make meaning out of their experiences (Kim, 2001; Stewart, 2020) and how emotions mediate personal relationships and social interactions (Stewart, 2020). Most importantly, Social Constructivism and Affect Theory recognise the importance of social context being the key to shaping meaning in

individuals' experiences (Seyfert, 2012). When building a research base about the influence of shame and stigma on students and the way teachers engage with their students' experience, meaning and understanding will be built through dialogue in semi-structured interviews, where the subjective experiences, social interactions and the social context can be explored.

To the best of my knowledge, the teachers' perspective has yet to be explored concerning shame and stigma in classrooms, and my thesis intends to explore the ideas, thoughts, and perspectives of teachers to address this research gap.

A key tenet of the Social Constructivist paradigm suggests multiple realities can be understood through examining language and communication (Vygotsky, 1962). During the conversation, individuals perform discursive acts through speech (sometimes known as 'speech acts' or 'utterances'), which can give rise to the reality of the individual. The data collected in semi-structured interviews will provide access to discursive acts of teachers, and their students by proxy, and resultantly students' affective experience. When discussing the classroom environment with its myriad of variables, analysis of how teachers discuss shame should develop an understanding of how they construct their views of the topic, their students and themselves within that environment (Johnstone, 2017).

3.4 The Role of the Teacher in Students' Affective Experience

The research question, 'How do teachers recognise, understand and respond to students' shame in the classroom?' points to the fundamental role of the teacher. Although constructivist pedagogy tends to shift the focus away from the view that students are passive, empty vessels to be filled with knowledge towards the idea that learners construct knowledge through personal experience (Piaget, 1977), teachers are still considered facilitators, and co-creators of knowledge, within the classroom context. As Vygotsky (1980) suggested, actors already entrenched within a culture; in this case, teachers, serve as the guide for new actors, students, where language is the vehicle for learning. Considering Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1980), teachers are generally also considered the more knowledgeable other and can play a significant role in facilitating student understanding of their emotional experience. This centring of the teacher within the cultural context of the classroom and

their role as a more knowledgeable other suggests the way they recognise, understand, and respond to shame is central to conceptualising shame within Social Constructivism.

Vygotsky (1962) views self-regulation as an essential component of Social Constructivism and an innate desire of the individual, developed through the internalisation of actions and language that occur in a social context (Paris & Byrnes, 1989). Classrooms, family and peer groups are contexts where self-regulation may be taught formally or informally with the goal of adaptive self-talk or private speech (Leong & Bodrova, 2006). This self-talk mirrors the language the more knowledgeable other uses to regulate behaviour in the contexts where the child is experiencing any emotion (Leong & Bodrova, 2006; Orvell & Kross, 2019). Thus, it is through action and dialogue within the classroom that teachers may impact their students' affective experience of shame.

Acknowledging this social construction of self-talk, regulation and emotion, teachers will also have their relationships with shame and stigma constructed across their life spans. They do not approach their classrooms void of social context. Instead, they will have varying levels of cognitive and intellectual understanding of their own affective relationships with shame and stigma due to lived experience.

3.5 Context of the Research Project

As I was interested in the way shame and stigma were understood by teachers, I aimed to understand the experience of teachers from a variety of primary and secondary settings. Given this, the context of the research is primarily ‘schools in Victoria' and the places where this is enacted. This section will explore the contextual factors surrounding a student in a classroom, including the current socio-political climate in which teachers work. It is also important to state that this research was completed during a unique time in history, with COVID-19 impacting the world in a way that had not been seen for over a century, and specifically how this translated into education in the state of Victoria, Australia.

Vygotsky (1980), a key theorist in Social Constructivism emphasises the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of the classroom as a shared social community. He recognised that individuals draw upon culture and context to shape their reality, which shapes them.

The cultural construction of the classroom and school environment may provide insight into shame and stigma.

From the level of the classroom, there are many factors that contribute to a classroom culture (Konstantinos & Stavros, 2022). Classroom culture is defined as the unique set of beliefs, norms and practices that make up the fabric of life in a particular school or classroom context (Paterson, 2022). In Victoria, where this research is situated, Social Constructivism forms the basis for the Department of Education's (DE) pedagogical framework (Victorian Department of Education and Training, 2021a). As such, it is assumed that the classrooms of the teachers who were interviewed will facilitate an approach to teaching and learning that draws on the social capital within the space and challenges students to communicate their thinking with their classmates. Accordingly, discussion provides a foundation for learning. In addition, Social Constructivist classrooms value collaboration and peer interaction, where problem-solving, reflection and active participation within the community are paramount (Piaget, 1977). As such, the diversity of the members of the community (Johnson & Johnson, 2005), the values surrounding the inclusion of students with disability or learning difficulties (Norwich, 2002), and how praise and feedback are integrated (Conroy et al., 2009) and teacher pedagogy is implemented (Adams, 2006) are recognised as critical contributors to classroom culture.

More specifically, some examples of the way classroom culture has influenced the development of shame include the attitude and beliefs co-constructed by the group about the inclusion or stigmatisation (Goffman, 2009; Lewis, 1998) of students with communication disorders such as stuttering (Woods, 1978), students who present with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (Toye et al., 2019) or Autism (Xuereb & Lawson, 2019), students whose socio-economic status is comparatively less than their peers (Gubrium & Lødemel; Walker, 2019) or those who are of a different ethnic identity (Karrebæk, 2012).

Schools, particularly school leadership, play a significant role in promulgating social and contextual norms and values (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Vang, 2006) and significantly impact how teachers and students co-construct social classroom culture. In some cases, the needs and requirements of the institution deeply affect how teachers can foreground issues of well-being (Dadvand & Cuervo, 2020), such as shame and stigma. For

example, a teacher's desire to react to shame or stigma in the classroom environment may be constrained by requirements for accountability and compliance associated with, for example, the need to deliver high-stakes tests, like National Assessment Program of Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in Australia or the measures the UK's Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) use specifically to enforce their agenda of compliance and control. Beyond this, teachers are the product of an extensive array of cultural customs themselves. For example, does the teacher come from an advantaged or less-advantaged background? Does the teacher belong to and practise a religion? Is the teacher from a marginalised ethnic community, or have they largely felt the benefit of privilege throughout their years of development? As such, their actions, understanding and responses to shame should be considered through the lens of their knowledge, background, and experiences.

3.5.1 The Impact of COVID-19 on Education Research

When I began this research journey in the middle of 2021, education in Victoria was experiencing a considerable upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Victoria specifically experienced six lockdowns, totalling 262 days across 2020 and 2021, where students were placed in and out of remote learning for 186 days across the two years (Judd Boaz, 2021). In many ways, education in Victoria looked entirely different from anything that had ever occurred. Teachers' work pivoted to engaging learners remotely, changing their mode of instruction and focus towards well-being, with Department directives citing 'Maslow before Bloom' (AITSL, 2021b, p. 6).

Australia's leading education consultancy, PIVOT, suggested in April of 2020 that teachers were reporting 'an "exponential" workload increase', with one teacher writing: "We are exhausted" (Flack et al., 2020, p. 4) and another stating: "It is like being a beginner teacher all over again, as you don't know what works or doesn't work well. You have to transition into a new teaching format very quickly, which is stressful" (Flack et al., 2020, p. 4). Not only were teachers forced to adapt quickly in an environment that was rapidly changing and hold space for their students' and families' emotional, physical and educational well-being, but they were also managing their challenges due to life lived in a pandemic (Flack et al., 2020). I look back on this time as a teacher with disbelief and anxiety about the many priorities and needs that were thrust upon the profession in an already difficult time.

As lockdowns ended and the world returned to ‘COVID normal’, the teaching workforce continued to suffer the effects of the pandemic with teacher shortages (Department of Education, 2022). These issues, although exacerbated by the pandemic, were caused by several factors related to workload pressures, expectations on teacher performance, pay, and societal attitudes towards teacher's work (Longmuir, 2023). Schools are in crisis, and their focus is firmly turned towards retaining their workforce and supporting their students, with research taking a backseat. This experience would also profoundly influence the factors that teachers discuss within interviews as they acknowledge their affective relationship to their profession.

3.6 Subjectivity, Objectivity and Bias in Educational Research

Debates in qualitative research acknowledge that complete objectivity is impossible to achieve, and in many cases, subjectivity can be a powerful asset to the research aims (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Scholars who debate the balance between subjectivity and objectivity recognise the practice of reflexivity as a tool for evaluating the subjective contribution of the researcher (Finlay, 2002). As a teacher, I have lived experience of the affective environments of classrooms, the many priorities that compete for attention and how my students are affected by educational and social contexts. I have made an effort to acknowledge my reflexivity specifically in the following section and ongoingly throughout the analysis to remain self-aware of my implicit biases (Borraz et al., 2021). Where necessary, I have discussed my ideas and analysis with critical others and have been quick to re-examine my analysis when my supervisors have questioned whether my own bias has contributed to a particular idea or when my analysis needs to be more critical.

3.7 Reflexivity in Qualitative Research

In this section I acknowledge my biography and the unique contribution I bring to studying shame and stigma in education. My affective relationship with working in education changed across the two years it took to complete this research, which will also be acknowledged and discussed. It was through continuous and ongoing reflection (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023) I was able to confront the impact of my personal bias and my interaction with the research and ensure that my analysis was rigorous.

Growing up in a blue-collar family, teaching as a career choice was a visible and accessible option for my younger self to contemplate; it was always my answer to 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' Upon completion of an undergraduate psychology degree at the University of Queensland, I accepted a position at Melbourne Graduate School of Education's Master of Teaching, which included a move from the relatively quiet suburbs of Brisbane to Melbourne city. Prior to my tertiary education, I was educated within government schools and have always fiercely advocated for the equitable access to opportunity and resources within, and to, these institutions.

Throughout my tertiary education, I worked multiple jobs at a time, including as a Learn to Swim Teacher, Lifeguard, Customer Service Officer and within my parents' landscape design business as a labourer. My experience of my economic background became obvious when navigating the very little time I had available to complete my assignments or collaborate with my peers around my work commitments. Work was necessary for me, while many of my peers appeared to have financial support or the benefit of living at home rent-free. While I accepted this at the time without question, retrospectively, I can see the impact this had on my levels of stress and my ability to complete my assessment to the best of my ability. I can acknowledge that accessing high-quality tertiary education is not a privilege afforded to all, but even within these environments, all kinds of disparities exist. As a result of these life experiences, I am passionate about government education and educational equity, and believe in the power of educational opportunity. I was able to navigate one layer of disparity from my peers but can only imagine how others with multiple layers navigate education when it seems the odds are stacked against them.

Throughout this research, I remained employed within an inner-city government primary school, working with grade five and six students as a generalist teacher. My decision to engage in further study through research was brought about by an intellectual curiosity and a desire to contribute to something bigger and farther-reaching than the classroom. I began my research in the middle of 2021, my fifth-year teaching in the classroom, with a relatively optimistic view of the education system and the role of teachers within it. However, as I have continued to study and teach, my affective relationship with my job has changed considerably. Particularly in the year prior to the submission of this thesis, I have found myself asking many questions about the system

of education, the unsustainable pressure and workload placed upon teachers, the public opinion and trust in the profession and my confidence in the types of people who work in leadership in schools. I have increasingly felt that the system is broken and that teachers, the people directly engaged in the work of educating, are the ones whose opinions are considered last when it comes to supporting outcomes for students. I have also developed a healthy amount of scepticism that I can enact or elicit any meaningful change from within.

With this life experience and viewpoint, I have written this thesis, including a need to examine my personal biases continually and, with intention, ensure that my analysis maintains integrity and is rigorous and transferable.

3.8 Agency, Power, and Ethics in Qualitative Research

When beginning the process of recruiting participants and engaging directly with teachers, I acknowledged that taking on the researcher role did not come without a change in the power dynamic. As a teacher myself, having conversations with teachers generally felt like an even playing field; however, when approaching them as a researcher where their work and ideas became something to be examined and recorded, I needed to acknowledge that research is not neutral (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010). There are innate power dynamics that must be recognised for the benefit of the research, and participants should not be disempowered by their participation (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010). However, as acknowledged by Foucault, ‘power is crucial in the construction of reality’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 109) and must be managed appropriately.

Where possible, I used my status as a teacher to even the playing field with my participants; I used my Department of Education (DE) email address and signatures when communicating with participants, and I acknowledged my interactions with being a teacher – validating teachers' expressions of workload pressures or struggles with student learning and expressing my feelings when they aligned with teachers in support of their experiences. I also acknowledged my power as a researcher by reminding participants of their rights as participants, to remove their data and to end the interview at any stage.

Further, I made sure to acknowledge to participants that the nature of the research was exploratory and that they were creating a baseline understanding of the field. This demonstrated the importance of individual contributions. This included acknowledging that I had made no value-based judgement about shame – it was not inherently positive or negative; I was just interested in how it was present. This was so that participants did not feel I was judging their responses or that specific responses were right or wrong.

Research on being an insider-researcher suggests that there are inherent risks and benefits to this dynamic (Wolcott, 2008). As suggested above, being both a teacher and researcher, I was able to build trust with my participants that may not have existed had I held only the researcher role. It also means that I am able to add nuance and interpretation that a non-teacher may have missed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, these benefits are not without risks, where it is important to consider how to remain bias-free and objective, and to ensure that power dynamics meet ethical requirements (Wolcott, 2008). These have been mitigated through transparency and acknowledgement of reflexivity, the seeking of balanced critical review of my analysis and ensuring adherence to ethical requirements.

3.9 Selection of Participants

The initial plan for participant selection required reaching out to schools selected to represent different economic and social contexts as indicated by demographic information provided by the DE's MySchool website (ACARA, 2023). The MySchool website houses contextual information about schools across Australia, their socio-economic and socio-educational makeup, their NAPLAN results, and their strategic and financial paperwork. The aim was to explore schools of different socioeconomic and sociocultural contextual types to determine how teachers and students conceptualised and experienced shame and stigma. However, selecting participants in the current educational landscape posed several problems. In my initial research plan, I selected eight participant schools, where an invitation email was sent to the principal requesting permission to communicate with their teaching staff to request their participation. Reaching out in this way elicited responses from three principals, one who said it was not something she could entertain in the current climate, and two who could forward

the invitation to their staff. Two participants were recruited in this way from different schools.

After recognising that this recruitment method was insufficient in the current climate, where principals are also measured on their ability to shield their teachers from external variables affecting their ability to teach, it became necessary to modify and diversify my approach to recruitment. I implemented a research snowball process (Dusek et al., 2015) using social media (Leighton et al., 2021) and my professional networks with the aim of providing better results. Through posting on teaching forums on Facebook, sharing my research invitation on LinkedIn and Twitter, and reaching out to my professional networks, I procured a further eight participants for my research study.

3.10 Collecting the Data

This research was conducted online, using Zoom videoconferencing, where semi-structured interview questions were used to guide the conversation. Each interview lasted between 30 and 50 minutes, depending on how much each participant was willing or could say to my questions. Interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed using a professional transcription service.

3.11 Data Management

The data generated included the audio files of the interviews, transcription documents in a word processing format and the coding kept within NVIVO. These data were stored on an external hard drive under password protection, with participant consent forms kept separately to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

3.12 Data Analysis

Analysis of discourse generated in semi-structured interviews was used to support the discussion of the key research questions. First, I examined the data thematically, using a priori and emergent themes (Neuendorf, 2018) guided by my literature review. This analysis of discourse aimed to test the rigour of the CoSS alongside testing the suitability of the instrument in an educational context. The second treatment was to apply an adapted Positioning Theory framework to understand how shame and stigma may circulate and be reproduced in school settings. Upon evaluating the data, I realised

that one teacher had recounted enough information about a particular student and context to examine a case study in more detail. This allowed the use of an adapted Positioning Theory framework to analyse how shame and stigma were circulated and maintained within this context for this student. The decision to use a case study was framed by research that suggests case studies can allow for a holistic view (Noor, 2008) that, in this research, will capture the complexity of shame and stigma within the context and provide an opportunity to look in depth at the socio-cultural context that confines students' identity and their teachers' actions.

In line with the paradigm of Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1980), shame and stigma are examined by understanding schools as microcosms of culture, how the role of teachers impacts students' experience of shame and, importantly, how shame manifests or diminishes depending on the acts of the teacher. The following will discuss and argue for the psychological and sociological tools used for data analysis and how they may best answer the research questions.

3.12.1 Psychological Analysis

The research question that speaks to the psychological discipline was the sub-question; How do teachers describe their students' experience of shame? Initially, the thematic analysis of interviews will provide a broad overview of how teachers define their students' experience and will be considered as they emerge, where language will be used to construct reality (Braun & Clarke, 2012). A priori themes were generated based on the CoSS to determine whether it was a valid descriptor of student behaviour. These included the four poles of the compass, including 'withdrawal', 'avoidance', 'attack other' and 'attack self' (Elison et al., 2006). To remain objective, 'other' responses were also considered. It is recognised that these behavioural responses exist within the context and do not provide a complete understanding of the experience; however, when considered alongside other themes, they may contribute another piece of the puzzle.

3.12.2 Sociological Analysis – Positioning Theory

The sociological contribution to data analysis is twofold. First, it looks for themes and contextual factors, as guided by thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012), discussed by teachers to understand the research sub-questions;

- What factors contribute to or inhibit teacher understanding and response to shame?
- How does the affective environment of a school contribute to or inhibit students' sense of shame?

Secondly, it will use an adapted Positioning Theory framework (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999), guided by the work of Anderson (2009), who examined the application of Positioning Theory to education and how lived experiences and ideological resources impact access to the classroom. Positioning Theory was chosen in this research due to its recognition that in a social interaction every individual does not have access to equal rights and duties to perform meaningful action (Harré & Moghaddam, 2015). It understands that human behaviour is normative rather than causal, where systems of meaning regulate behaviour and action rather than cause it (Harré & Moghaddam, 2015). This aligns with the affective experience of shame and stigma on many levels, where people who are shamed or stigmatised are afforded fewer rights and actions by those who are considered 'normal' (Goffman, 2009). It could also give rise to the specific 'micro', 'meso' and 'macro' factors that confine individuals and their actions.

Positioning Theory was first developed by researchers Van Langenhove and Harré (1999) to expand on the work of Vygotsky (1980). Yet, it also has its roots in the language-based philosophies of Wittgenstein (2013) and Bakhtin (2010) and the Speech-Act theory posited by Searle et al. (1980). Positioning Theory posits that all interactions comprise three fundamental and ultimately mutually determining integrated components; position, storyline and social or contextual forces (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). These three components speak to the local moral order of the context, which encompasses the norms and expectations of what behaviour is appropriate within the socio-cultural context. This local moral order is co-constructed by the participants of interactions and can exist on multiple levels, including personal, institutional or national norms (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999b).

Positioning Theory is highly appropriate in this analysis as it enables a deconstruction of power issues due to its focus on the rights and duties associated with the position (Lönngren et al., 2021). Moreover, all positions require the dynamic negotiation of power, which can include allowing or blocking access to 'certain aspects of claimed or preferred identity' (Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2015, p. 188). As such, Positioning Theory

is well suited to analysing power in the classroom and the ways that Tyler (2020) acknowledges that shame and stigma can be used as tools for the reproduction of inequality.

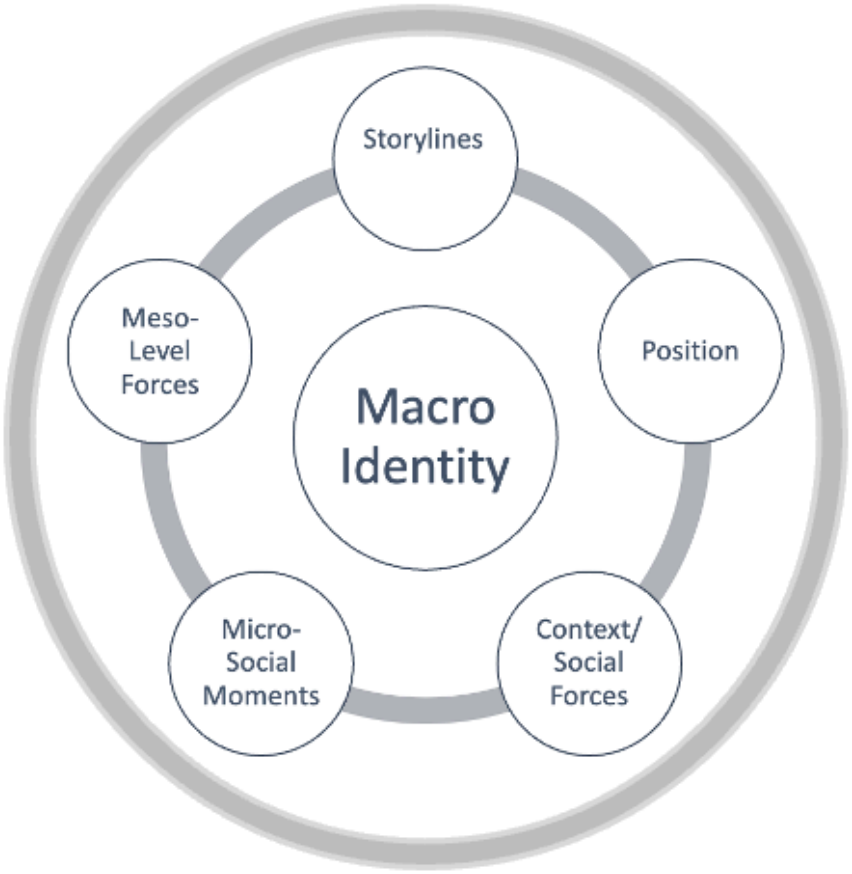
The work of Anderson (2009) is essential in the development of the analytic framework in this research as it acknowledges classroom interactions and how they may contribute to developing identity or *kinds* of people (Anderson, 2009) which can be facilitated through other individuals by positions, storylines and contexts (Howie & Peters, 1996). Anderson's (2009) research challenged the limitations of the immanentist ontology of Positioning Theory, looking beyond the immediate moment and considering how positioning occurs across time and interactions. More specifically, it is theorised that these *kinds* that Anderson refers to accumulated over time through many different micro-social (face-to-face) interactions, meso-level forces (institutional categories) and macro-scale ideological factors (structural and distal) that interact to create identity (Anderson, 2009). This conceptualisation by Anderson (2009) is particularly fitting for this analysis as students also access a historical and imagined comparison that may contribute to their identity formation and affective experience. Within this, identity is not static; it is actively and dynamically dependent on interactions and interpersonal relationships (Dennen, 2011) and even their interactions with the past and present.

Typically, Positioning Theory is applied by examining the positions taken up by individuals in interactional discourse which can speak to the local moral order and, potentially, truth not stated explicitly (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999a). However, in this research, Positioning Theory will be applied to the discourse of the teacher and be used to conceptualise the various micro, meso and macro factors that confine the student alongside their storylines (prior experiences) and positioning in moments acknowledged by teachers, to determine how their identity as someone 'shamed' or 'stigmatised' is constructed.

The mutually determining framework adapted for use in this research can be seen in Figure 2 below. Using this framework, adapted from Positioning Theory research and the contributions of Anderson (2009), interactions and experiences described by the teacher can be analysed to determine students' shame or stigma and what factors mediate them.

Figure 2

Positioning Theory Framework



Note: Adapted from (Anderson, 2009)

3.13 Research Methods

Underpinned by Social Constructivism, this research used qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews, to explore how teachers understand and respond to shame and stigma in educational contexts. These interviews took place within 'Zoom' online videoconferencing meetings with teachers who had elected to participate in the research. The following will discuss the participants of this research, the development of semi-structured interviews.

3.13.1 Sample

Ten teachers participated in this research. Two teachers were recruited through their principals sharing the invitation with them, and the remaining eight were recruited using a research snowball process. Two participants were recruited from posting in online Facebook groups for teachers, specifically 'Victorian Teachers Online Community' and a further four were from local community group pages, such as the ‘Good Karma Networks’ on Facebook. The specific suburbs of these groups have been withheld to protect the anonymity of participants. The final two participants were recruited through professional networks, whereby my research invitation was passed onto teachers through a third party, and participants acknowledged their interest in participating by emailing me directly.

Six of the participants were from Victorian government primary schools. In addition, one participant worked in a private, all-girls P-12 school, one at a government special education/ early intervention school, and two at a government high school. Their teaching experience spanned one year to 16 years, with the majority having over five years of experience.

Most interestingly, the participants’ schools represented higher than Australia’s average for their socio-economic advantage scores, with six contexts representing the 80-90th percentile, and a minimum overall percentile of 68. No schools had an enrolment of First Nations students above 1%; however, there was a variation in the percentage of students with a Language Background other than English (LBOTE), with the lowest percentage being 17% and the highest 72%. Table 1 that follows describes in more detail participant information of their school’s current setting, their own experience, the characteristics of the school and student population, framed as it was provided in interview.

Table 1

Participant Information as provided in interview.

Participant Pseudonym Gender Identity	Current Setting	Experience	Teacher Description of Context

1 Maria Female	Government Primary School in the Inner West ICSEA - 64th Percentile 52% LBOTE/ 1% First Nations	16 Years' Experience 11 years in current context Prior Career in International Development	Refugee Students Muslim Population
2 Sarah Female	Primary (P-12) Non-Government All Girls in the Inner North-Eastern Suburbs ICSEA – 98th Percentile 17% LBOTE/ 0% First Nations	4 Years' Experience 4 Years in current context Prior Training as Lawyer and Barrister	Focus on students' academic outcomes and pastoral care Small primary section of school A lot of wealth
3 Hannah Female	Government Special School in Western Suburbs (P-3) ICSEA – 68th Percentile 72% LBOTE/ 0% First Nations	9 Years' Experience 2 Years in current context Prior Training in Environmental Management	Early Intervention School Aim to get students to mainstream after grade 3, otherwise SDS Focus on communication, functional skills, and school readiness
4 Priscilla Female	Government Primary School in Outer Western Suburbs	10 Years' Experience Left the classroom full-time at the end of previous year and working as a CRT/Teacher Librarian	High Growth Area Very Multicultural Low SES Focused on Student Agency/Well-being
5 Max Male	Government Primary School in Inner Western Suburbs ICSEA - 89th Percentile 33% LBOTE/ 0% First Nations	1 Year Experience 9 Years Teaching Irish Dancing Prior Training in Music	High wealth Distribution Professional parents with double income Semi-diverse population changed significantly in last 10 years
6 Katrina Female	Government Primary School in	1 Year Experience	Large Neurodiverse Population

	Western Suburbs School known for supporting students with Neurodiversity	Prior Career in Management	Community Focused IB School
7 Alice Female	Government Secondary School in Inner Northern Suburbs ICSEA – 90th Percentile 63% LBOTE/1% First Nations	12 Years' Experience Secondary Teacher of EAL, English VCE, Music Prior Career in Travel	Economically and Culturally Diverse High-achieving Melting Pot 1600 Students
8 Jonathan Male	Government Secondary School in Inner Northern Suburbs ICSEA – 90th Percentile 63% LBOTE/1% First Nations	6 years' experience Secondary Teacher of Maths, Science and Physics 3 Years in Current Context Prior Training in Science	Affluent area, however nearby commission flats add socio-economic diversity Range of Socio-economic and cultural backgrounds
9 Emma Female	Government Primary School in Outer South Eastern Suburbs ICSEA – 92nd Percentile 27% LBOTE/ 0% First Nations	1 Year Experience Prior training in Arts (Latin American & Spanish Majors)	Wealthy pocket of Melbourne Community Feel Small school
10 Bree Female	Government Primary School in Inner Western Suburbs ICSEA - 82nd Percentile 25% LBOTE/ 1% First Nations	Five years' experience Prior Training Child Services and experience as an Education Support Aide and Outside School Care	Medium to High Socio-economic status generally Primarily Caucasian, with a Lebanese Muslim population next largest group Some Indigenous Students with sporadic/ low attendance

3.13.2 Data Collection - Semi-Structured Interviews

While semi-structured interviews are considered one of the best ways to elicit in-depth opinions and a person's reasons for them (Carruthers, 1990), they are also labour-intensive and require sophisticated interviewer techniques (Adams, 2015). This was managed by ensuring the interviews were conducted within the 50-minute timeframe and using research literature that guided the researcher to appropriate interviewing techniques. As the interviewer, I ensured I used both open and closed questions, accompanied by follow-up why or how questions (Adams, 2015). Further, I developed a Semi-Structured Interview questioning route (see Appendix A), that ensured the questions were research informed. I remained flexible and ready to follow the participant's lead while maintaining some structure to ensure the data collected answered the research question (Cohen et al., 2018). Given that the interview is a social interaction (Oplatka, 2018), much like shame, stigma and the contexts within which teachers work, it is more likely to be an interaction that will answer the research question than other methods of data collection.

Each semi-structured interview lasted between 30 and 50 minutes, allowing for a natural conversation to emerge between the researcher and the participant and adequate time to explore areas of interest deeply (Cohen et al., 2018).

3.13.3 Research process

This research had three distinct phases. Phase one involved the initial literature review, ethics applications and applications to the Victorian DE.

Phase Two involved the sample recruitment and data collection. In this phase, teachers were invited to participate and asked to complete consent forms. When I received this documentation from a participant via email, I asked them to offer a time that would most suit their schedule to participate in their interview. The majority of participants chose time during school holidays to participate. I set up Zoom videoconference meetings and emailed this information to participants. When participants logged in to the interview, I introduced myself and my research project and reminded them of their rights to not participate or withdraw at any time. Following this, I used the recording feature on the Zoom application to keep an audio record of the interview. Participants

were notified of this and required to agree to the recording. Following the end of the interview, I acknowledged the participant for giving up their time for the research and offered to send through a summary of findings once the data analysis was complete.

The final stage of the research involved the data analysis. This began by having the audio files transcribed by an online transcription service. The word processing transcription files were then uploaded to NVIVO, a data analysis software. The first approach to the data began with thematic analysis to look for themes in the data, which involved two separate reads of an individual transcription in examining what the data was suggesting. Once emergent themes were identified, a third read of the transcription data ensured that anything that might have been missed was also considered.

Considering how to apply my adapted Positioning Theory framework to the data, it became apparent that enough information had emerged for a case study of a student who represented a multitude of diverse communities. I decided that this use of case study would be the most contextually rich (Noor, 2008) and useful application of the framework and would allow for demonstrating how shame and stigma are reproduced and circulated in a school environment, including the impact of the teacher's actions. This decision in my analysis provided a rich analysis that answered the research question and spoke directly to my rationale for completing the research, which is that students who experience shame and stigma are blocked from accessing the classroom equally.

3.13.4 Ethical Considerations

To ensure this research met ethical requirements, applications to the University of Melbourne Ethics Committee (UoMEC) were submitted and approved before the research commenced. This included creating plain language statements and participant consent forms to inform participants of the research aims (Cohen et al., 2011). The UoMEC required a few modifications to the initial research design, including the addition of information for the university psychological services on the Plain Language Statement, should participants experience any impacts from the discussion of the sensitive topics of shame and stigma. In addition, when working within schools in Victoria, DE required ethics applications and approvals, which were sought and approved before commencement.

All participating teachers were required to complete consent forms before participating. The consent forms acknowledged and named participants' rights, including that their involvement was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any point (Cohen et al., 2018). In addition, information was provided regarding how their data would be managed to ensure their anonymity.

Any raw data that was collected was only shared with my supervisors at the University of Melbourne, and the authorised third party, transcribers, to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. All transcriptions of semi-structured interviews include pseudonyms, and any identifying information regarding participants or their schools was removed from any published documentation (Cohen et al., 2018).

3.13.5 Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research requires validity and reliability to be examined differently than quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that if validity exists, that is sufficient evidence to establish reliability, and this should be considered by examining the trustworthiness of the research. Trustworthiness can be established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Given the exploratory nature of this research, the external validity will be low; however, the exploratory nature of the research will allow the patterns and trends in the data to be cross-referenced with the research evidence. This critical analysis will demonstrate how shame and stigma occurs and is interpreted and responded to by teachers within these contexts.

Beyond this, credibility is concerned with confidence in the truth of the findings, while confirmability ensures the findings are shaped by the respondents rather than the researcher. These can be established through triangulation (Golafshani, 2003), where a variety of sources of data are considered. Within this study, triangulation will be achieved by comparing two schools of similar contexts and by examining school documents prior to focus groups and interviews to develop a baseline of what norms and values are expected within each school context. Finally, transferability and dependability are concerned with establishing that findings are consistent and can be repeated in other contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These aspects of trustworthiness

can be established through the clear and specific interview guides detailed in this research proposal.

3.13.6 Limitations

The world in 2022 and 2023 presents an interesting context for attempting education research. While teachers are considered time-poor at the best times (Cohen et al., 2018), the COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique set of challenges in accessing teachers for research or meeting face-to-face interactions (Pressley, 2021). Teachers who are likely to participate in this research will be those who find the topic interesting or worthwhile. This could be considered a limitation as the data generated will come from people who perhaps already recognise the value of understanding shame and stigma in education and already understand its impacts. Beyond this, the teachers who did participate represent school contexts of what could be considered a high or very high socio-economic advantage. This suggests that teachers in these contexts potentially have more time available to foreground issues of shame and stigma and that the resulting data represents a subset of the population's knowledge and experience.

Next, the way this research asks teachers to discuss their students' shame could be considered a limitation. Teachers will be required to interpret their students' actions, behaviours, or speech and apply a label to these. It cannot be confirmed if they have genuinely identified student shame without talking to the students themselves. It is also unlikely that teachers will intentionally identify themselves as the cause of shame, as typically, those involved in an interaction attempt to establish themselves in a favourable position based on the attributes socially constructed by the group as positive (Parrott, 2003). This may limit the way the available data can answer the research question.

As qualitative research generally requires smaller sample sizes, issues of generalisability are common (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, as this is an exploratory study, the aim is not to generalise but rather to collect contextual information from experts of lived experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The degree to which the data is generalisable will be examined in the analysis of the results, where the extent to which the data is comparable between participants and the degree to which it aligns with the research evidence will inform its generalisability.

The final limitation of this research recognises that this thesis is for a Master of Education, which has a two-year time limitation and a word count of 30,000 words. This narrows the time, space, and parameters, including reducing the participant group to a smaller sample to ensure the research is achievable and robust enough to be considered in the time and space available.

3.14 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the methodological underpinning of this research, where Social Constructivism has framed an interdisciplinary approach to answering the research question, 'How do teachers recognise, understand and respond to shame in the classroom?' The qualitative approach of semi-structured interviews with ten teachers in Victoria, Australia, was used to explore the ideas and opinions of participants and how they construct their reality through language. The resulting data were analysed using a thematic approach, with a priori and emergent themes, and additionally, a modified Positioning Theory framework drawing on the work of Anderson (2009) to analyse an emergent case study. The next chapter will discuss the results of the research.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore teachers' perceptions and experiences of stigma and shame in their schools and classrooms. This analysis has an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on psychological and sociological concepts to focus on teachers' understanding of shame and stigma and how school practices may generate or inhibit stigma and shame in students and other school members. I begin by presenting a detailed account of one student's experience of shame and stigma to provide a contextual frame for understanding the subsequent data. Shame and stigma do not occur outside of a social context, and I argue that a position driven analysis of a student and teacher in context frames the complexity and multitude of contributing factors to shame and stigma. This analysis will serve as a setting for the subsequent thematic data and to understand that focusing on students, teachers, and the socio-political conditions of education are inadequate when done alone, as they are all co-constitutive. This analysis will speak to my third research question, how does the affective environment of a school contribute to or inhibit students' sense of shame?

Following this framing of shame and stigma through contextualising a case study, the chapter will continue with a thematic analysis of the data structured around my three research questions. Research question one will take a psychological disciplinary lens, centring the student and their behaviour within the classroom. The second and third research questions take a sociological approach, analysing the teacher's role in their students' experience of shame and stigma and then evaluating contextual factors found within this data.

4.2 Positioning Theory: One Student, One Context

Drawing on adapted Positioning Theory Framework, I will analyse one student whose identity has been deeply entangled with shame and stigma in numerous ways. This analysis will demonstrate how shame and stigma are complex and have contributors on the micro, meso and macro level, alongside contextual factors, and the micro-social experiences of the student. This analysis will, in part, answer my third research

question, How does the affective environment of a school contribute to or inhibit students' sense of shame?

Positioning Theory allows for an understanding of how the identity of this student is socially constructed and negotiated in the socio-political conditions of this classroom and this school, and how it is affected by the teacher's actions. I acknowledge that this student and this example are somewhat atypical due to the multitude of diversity factors they represent, however their representation of multiple minority groups provides a unique insight into the many factors that could affect a student in negotiating their identity and their feelings of shame and stigma in a school environment. Some identifying information has been changed or omitted to protect the anonymity of students, teachers, and schools.

The student in this example is 12 years of age and identifies as transgender, where they have recently transitioned and are currently enacting their gender identity. As such, the pseudonym 'Alex' and they/them pronouns will be used. The following table presents the contributing factors to their developing identity and how the micro-social moments experienced may produce shame and stigma in this school environment. This information is drawn from the interview with Alex's teacher.

Table 2

Positioning Theory Framework and Analysis of Alex's Case Study

Storylines	Position	Context/Social Forces	Meso- Level Categories
- Experienced Trauma - Transitioned and 'Come Out' at school - Absent Father - Mother who has difficulty communicating in English	- Student - Child - Friend	- Medium/High Socio-Economic Context - Majority Caucasian with Lebanese/Muslim Cultural Group next largest - School teaches the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships Program	- 12 Years Old - Transgender - Economically and Culturally Diverse in this context - English as an Additional Language (EAL)

- Very tall and overweight		- Academic Achievement is a school-wide goal - Teacher is Caucasian, wellbeing focused, neurodiverse and a member of the LGBTQIA+ community	- struggling academically
Micro-Social Moments			
- Younger students teasing others by using Alex's name as an insult. - Older student targeting them in the playground. - Wears a mask due to acne. - Won't eat in front of others. - Another student came out as non-binary in class. - Being asked 'Why are you using these toilets?' - Students within direct cohort very understanding and aware. - Child not eating, parent called to meeting but did not attend meeting (potentially due to language barrier). - Teacher demonstrating ally-ship (creating pro-noun name tags).			

Alex occupies three major roles or positions in the school context, including that of a child, a friend, and a student. Alex's past speaks to their storyline; they have an absent male parent and a female parent who primarily speaks a language other than English and has difficulties communicating in English. They have experienced trauma in their life and are struggling academically. Alex's membership of different meso-level categorisations, such as their gender identity, cultural group, and economic position, contributes to their felt sense of difference, which is maintained by the interactions and micro-social moments that have occurred in the school environment.

The following micro-social moment is demonstrative of the way Alex must continually negotiate their identity in the classroom, occupying a multitude of positions and meso-level categorisations that instil a felt sense of difference, comparison, and failure to meet both societal expectations, and expectations of the dominant social groups in the school and classroom.

> *They always wear a jumper no matter what the temperature is. And they had come back from PE and I said, "Oh, [Alex] aren't you hot? Don't you want to take off your jumper?" Because [they were] sweating, like dripping. [They're] like, "No, I'm okay." And I was like, "Okay." And then, one of the friends was*

> *like, "[Alex] why don't you just take off your jumper?" ... And they did, and I didn't think much of it. But then, they went back to their table and their legs were fidgeting, just really restless. I could see that they couldn't focus. And so I kind of said, "Oh, are you okay?" "Yes, it's fine." I said, "I don't think you are okay. Can I do anything to help?" And they just burst into tears and told me that their mom had taken them to the doctor, and the doctor said they were overweight.*

Analysing this moment in Alex's identity at school, it is likely that they experienced shame and stigma, where their identity is shaped by their comparative position to their peers regarding their body and appearance. This incident highlights the social and contextual pressures to conform to peers' expectations, and the shame associated with being seen as non-conforming. In this example, shame could have been a likely factor that prevented Alex from accessing the learning environment. Body image issues alone are significant places of tension and shame for young people, however the stigma that encircles a young person who is gender diverse and both racially and economically distinct from their peers, blankets Alex in multiple layers of disadvantage regarding their physical presentation.

The following quotes demonstrate how Alex is positioned and affected within the broader school context. The teacher said,

> *So, my students are in grade five, [another teacher] teaches grade three. And a student, not from her class but in her cohort, had been teasing kids and calling them [Alex's] name.*

> *There was a grade six student who would target [Alex]. So, I think it's definitely external pressure. Because when [they're] with [their] friends, [they are] a different person, when [they're] feeling that comfortable. And people then being like, "Oh. Why aren't you using those toilets?" Or "Why are you using these toilets?"*

The decision for this student to come out and change their name and pronouns and use gender affirming toilets is an assertive challenge to societal gender norms. However, the teasing that was alluded to in these examples, further stigmatises Alex as someone

who is not only outside the norm in their gender identity and expression, but as someone who is worthy of derision because of it. While it is positive Alex benefits from pro-social relationships, their relationships and behaviour with their friends is demonstrative of Alex's comfort in their identity when accepted and supported by those around them.

The actions of Alex's teacher are also available to analyse how the teacher has attempted to build a culture of inclusion and acceptance of diversity:

> *We always speak about; you treat others how you like to be treated. And we do a lot of talks about kindness and inclusion and diversity. And I always speak about things and try and set a good example to those. And like I've got different resources around the room; I've got posters up that are like 'support trans kids' and 'everyone's accepted here'. We did a whole, it was for [Alex], [they] didn't know, but we created our own pronoun kind of things where we had our picture and put, this is my name, this is my pronouns, and made a whole display and everything as well.*

Positioning herself in the role of ally, Alex's teacher has offered Alex a safe place to enact their gender identity, a place where diversity is celebrated, and inclusion expected. Her actions contribute to the affective environment and likely play a role in alleviating some of Alex's experience of shame within the classroom. However, these examples also represent how Alex must continually labour to negotiate their identity within the different spaces in the school environment, often receiving conflicting information. It is reasonable to conclude that Alex suffers from multiple levels of disadvantage, resulting from stigma, that continually disrupt their ability to access the classroom in a way that is equal to their peers. It can only be assumed that these recurring micro-social moments will form a part of Alex's storyline and ongoing relationship to the world around them. Given the causal link acknowledged between stigma and shame, it is highly likely that Alex suffers the effects of shame.

This analysis has given insight into one student's daily battle with shame and stigma and how the context of their schooling, their meso-level categorisations, storylines, positions, and their micro-social moments exclude them from participating in learning similarly to their peers. Even in a classroom that promotes and celebrates diversity,

with a teacher who demonstrates proactive measures of inclusion by enacting the position of ally, students are deeply affected by a multitude of affective dynamics. Bearing this example in mind, it gives weight to the urgent need for teachers to understand their students' shame and stigma, and importantly, demonstrates that understanding and responding to shame and stigma is complex. Breaking down a student's experience in this way allows access to the depth of affective understanding teachers may have about a student's experience that is not accessible through language alone and highlights how teachers are also enmeshed within contexts that can dilute the effectiveness of their work when they do respond. The analysis that follows will frame teacher responses in reference to psychology and sociology as disciplines, however the interrelated nature of shame as Affect cannot be ignored.

4.3 Defining Shame in Education

In this section I consider the ways teachers understood and defined shame in line with research question one. Research sub-question one stated, How do teachers describe their students' experience of shame? Through my reading of the data, themes were created as they emerged, where an initial code of 'teacher understanding' was later coded into more specific themes. These included the idea that shame is an emotion, as well as an experience of feeling like one has been seen to have failed the norms that surrounded an individual. Participants in this research considered shame to contribute to negative or poorer outcomes for those who experience it.

4.3.1 Shame as an Emotion

Shame was recognised by teachers as an emotional experience, often described as the way that a student was feeling in response to a stimulus of some kind. Teachers identified that there was usually either a direct cause within the classroom, such as receiving results or reading aloud, or that students were enveloped in negative affect that was linked to their identity, for example their academic ability or their social standing. As such, it was recognised as both a transient emotional experience, and an ongoing one. This was generally related to whether students' experience was a single incident, and easily shaken off, or something that continued to be recognised and drawn attention to, or that continued to affect the student on an ongoing basis.

Often in conversation about specific examples of student shame, teachers used other emotions to help them describe the behaviour or categorise student experience. Recurring themes were embarrassment, guilt, humiliation, disappointment in self, or self-consciousness. Sometimes this merging of terms was done knowingly. One teacher, Priscilla, a teacher with 10 years' experience explained: *'If I'm really honest with myself, I probably still do use [shame] interchangeably with guilt, even though I know they're a little bit different.'* In other cases, teachers used other emotion words as descriptors when defining shame. Sarah affirmed that *'I guess a feeling of embarrassment and maybe wanting to hide something'.* Alice identified shame in opposition to the more positive experience of pride, *'Because I think to me, in my mind, the antithesis or the antidote to shame is someone being proud of you and happy with what you've done.'* In some cases, there was a reticence to use the word shame to describe student experience, where Sarah said, *'I think because it feels quite extreme, and so I feel like there would need to be something that's a real cause of that shame that was quite significant'.*

Generally, teachers seemed to be aware of shame in relation to their students and defined it relative to other emotional experiences. Often, they used emotion words that are considered less intense and less detrimental to identity, which is consistent with an avoidance or shying away from the use of the word shame, or a hesitance to be associated with it at all.

4.3.2 Shame is feeling like one has been seen to have failed expectations

Shame was regarded as being an experience of failure by comparison, particularly when seen by those surrounding an individual. These themes were entwined throughout interviews and are therefore, being considered together. Teachers often considered that shame was the result of making comparisons between what was considered expected of the student and benchmarks of some kind, where the student had experienced failure directly or had merely felt like they had failed. For example Alice said*, 'I guess I think of it as feeling as though you had done something unworthy, or you had done something wrong, and you had been a disappointment.'*

However, these comparisons were always considered with a relational element; a sense that others had higher expectations of you, an internalising of norms from the environment or being seen by others enmeshed within failure. This can be seen in the following quote, where a teacher discussed how shame required an element of visibility, a sense of being seen:

> *I think shame for me is not feeling value in your own thoughts and actions and behaviours. But I feel like often shame is, although you might feel those things internally and you think about shame, in my opinion, it's often what I perceive what other people are thinking of me.*

4.3.3 Shame results in negative or poorer outcomes

All participants considered shame to lead to negative or poorer outcomes for those who experience it. Further examination of this idea of 'poorer outcomes' in my analysis generated sub-themes to identify the specific ways this impacted students with 'educational', 'social', or 'long-term' impacts being discussed predominantly. Interestingly, on an individual level, teachers tended to recognise and discuss one of these sub-themes more than others. Sometimes this was due to personal experience with feeling shame in a particular area, for example feeling unskilled in a particular subject as a child led to better understanding of a student who felt shame in the educational context. This was not always the case, but it does suggest teachers may have a

contextualised view of the way shame manifests or its causes, in some cases mediated by personal experience.

Most commonly, teachers identified that education or a student's relationship with their own achievement by comparison was the cause of shame and resulted in a disengagement from learning. This was seen as anything from a lack of participation in particular classroom or school activities, to deeply affecting a student's identity as a learner in a particular subject. As Jonathan suggested,

> *If you shame someone in your maths class and they're made to feel, "Well, I can't do maths then," the long-term impact is that kid is forever on the back foot for their numeracy. How do you come back and go, " I can have a try at this new unit on algebra," if when you were doing geometry, you were told you're a terrible mathematician?*

Often this was considered as an avoidance of mistake making or risk taking but in more alarming cases, some suggested that shame affected a student's identity as someone capable of learning at all, *'When kids feel shame, then they don't want to try. They kind of give up.'*

These impacts extended to the social context, where failure in this domain resulted in students being stuck in a shame cycle that excluded them from the social space. Sarah acknowledged that children don't have infinite capacity to be understanding and thus can disengage from the shamed person leading to social isolation. Sarah commented:

> *I don't think many kids have the patience or sort of extended empathy to understand. So, if your friend is constantly sort of withdrawing themselves and being a bit upset or wanting to be on their own, I think that reaches a point where kids just say, OK, well, see ya. So therefore, I think that could lead to real isolation, and I guess it becomes a bit of a horrible cycle as well.*

Students' experience of shame in an educational sense was also considered to impact their social interactions, where two teachers suggested they were enacting destructive

behavioural patterns, such as bullying or violence and aggression, as a strategy to gain control.

Teachers in this research study also considered the long-term impacts and talked about how shame stuck to children in a way that was difficult to shake from their identity at all. The following quote by Hannah, a teacher working with students with autism, summarises how shame threatens the individual but also creates a burden within society,

> *So I think in the long term, we end up with adults that aren't trying, who aren't pushing themselves, who are withdrawn from society in general because society has made them feel bad. And I think that's, I mean, that might be the slightly more extreme side of things, but it's the possibil[ity]. You have people who completely withdraw from the world because they have been made to feel that they're not worthy of being part of it.*

The implication in this teacher's words is that shame in childhood can be the catalyst for mental health issues that prevent access to society throughout life.

4.4 The Compass of Shame and Student Behaviour

The CoSS was examined in this research due to the sometimes-concealed nature of shame, and that indicators in student behaviour might provide insight into their experience. It was not expected that teachers would use the language of the CoSS specifically, thus codes were generated for student behaviour described by teachers. Behaviour that could not be coded to one of the four poles of the CoSS were given emergent codes. Emergent codes included, 'Body Language', 'Different Response' and 'Student acknowledges shame'.

Most commonly, teachers discussed behaviour associated with withdrawal, such as Sarah who said, '*I think probably being quite withdrawn and so, quite quiet, perhaps not getting involved in sort of general classroom life or socially out in the playground,'* or from Priscilla '*I tended to look for body language that indicated some form of retreat, which I see through my own lens of when I feel shame, "I want to get out of there."'*

Teachers also discussed preventing withdrawal using pedagogy that aims to reduce a student's experience of shame in their classroom; '*You don't want to necessarily take away and let a kid kind of sit down and withdraw and not participate at all, but you don't want to force them into doing something that makes them feel uncomfortable because they feel shame around it.'* Withdrawal behaviours generally appeared to be quieter and involved an element of passivity.

Another pole of the compass discusses avoidant behaviours. For an avoidance code, behaviour needed to include an element of distraction, resistance, or denial – an active behavioural element. For example, Sarah said:

> *And so, they, if a task is too hard, they will just sort of resist doing it at all. And will find all sorts of ways to avoid even starting on it. And then it sort of escalates into being quite, not aggressive, but ripping paper or breaking pencils or things like that too, because it's that level of frustration.*

Students who were considered to enact an Attack Other response had lashed out in some way, verbally or physically. The following quote by Maria, an experienced teacher, demonstrates how a student knowingly avoided his shame through aggression and power:

> *And then he had all this power over these other kids because of his violent, aggressive behaviour. And it was almost that shame of I'm just dumb anyway. And he would say it. "Nothing's gonna... I think this is the only way I'm going to get power in my life, is by being this bully and then making people scared of me."*

The pole of the CoSS that was least represented by the data was the Attack Self response. This was somewhat expected, especially as it generally manifests as an internalisation of the shame narrative which would require students to discuss their internal narrative or physically act out self-harming behaviours to be recognizable.

Body language or body cues were commonly discussed as an indicator of a student feeling shame. However, these were often dual coded with poles of the CoSS. These codes discussed behaviour such as lack of eye contact, turning inwards, facial expressions, shutting down and not talking, sitting quietly, or appearing scrunched. Three of these codes also acknowledged that the student-teacher relationship and knowledge of the student were essential to be sure that these behaviours were not typical.

What became clearer to me during data analysis was that the CoSS represents a continuum of behaviour, suggesting the overlapping nature of each of the poles. In some cases, it was hard to categorise behaviour to one pole alone. While I was interested in whether the CoSS was applicable in an educational setting, it is not necessarily needed as a categorial tool, but rather it might help teachers determine whether behaviour, considered alongside other factors at the micro, meso or macro level are indicative of shame. Its usefulness becomes apparent when considering that teachers are regularly faced with behaviour, and consequently, behaviour management, to support learning. By assessing that a student's aggressive or withdrawing behaviour could be described as shame, a teacher may be better able to act in support of that student.

4.5 Factors contributing to or inhibiting teacher understanding and response to shame

In this section I examine Research Question two: What factors contribute to or inhibit teacher understanding and response to shame? Teachers were asked to consider the barriers to acting or understanding shame within their context. Initially, 19 different factors were identified by teachers, however when examining these more closely it became clear that they could be grouped into descriptive categories. These will be considered in order of those most to least discussed by the participant group.

4.5.1 Performativity

Based on my literature review, and the participants' responses, performativity became an important code in my data analysis. Secondary analysis allowed for the grouping of the themes of workload, time, stress, and standardised testing within this broader theme

of performativity. It was with affective weight that seven of the teachers spoke of the state and nature of the teaching profession in a post COVID, results-driven culture. By far the most common barrier for teachers lay in time constraints and workload pressures, including the burdens of standardised testing, which are imposed by department priorities and the results driven nature of education within a neoliberal society.

The following quote from Priscilla, a female teacher with approximately 10 years' experience, captures the way culture in schools, burdened by outcomes and performance pressures, can cause stress, and prevent the prioritising of the human experience:

> *I think certainly at my school last year, it was so results driven that a kid would have a meltdown and I'd be like, "I don't have time for this. I need my writing data up. My writing data needs to be better, and you need to stop this because this is a writing lesson." And I know that sounds really horrible, but my stress levels were so high. I was like, "I literally just do not have time." And that stress stopped me getting in touch with meeting human to human, and being like, "Wow, that's a person in distress. Let's carve out some time.*

What this demonstrates is that teachers and their students can be deeply affected by a culture of achievement, while also highlighting the many complexities of teaching in a classroom of competing needs and pressures. This teacher's reflection was a common one in the data and foregrounds how neoliberalism forces the affective experience and student-centred pedagogy down the priority list.

Also coded to performativity were instances when teachers discussed being burdened with paperwork and the demands of monitoring culture that is inherent in education and that imposed upon their time. This teacher's comment reflects a common feeling among interviewees: '*Then just the whole school political side of things and all the paperwork and bureaucracy that comes with it all in the testing and the things that we have to do.'*

4.5.2 Teacher Knowledge

Teachers referred to their own knowledge and understanding of shame and their confidence to make professional decisions in the face of shame and competing classroom priorities as significant barriers to acting or teaching in a shame-aware way. These three ideas were coded together to highlight the knowledge gap that exists, particularly for novice teachers. Many teachers reflected that they just didn't know what it meant to respond when students experience shame. Sarah said, *'And probably knowledge. I don't necessarily know what acting in a shame aware way looks like on a day-to-day basis in a classroom'.* However, some teachers suggested that their participation in these interviews prompted them to think more deeply about what shame meant and that going forward it would be more of a focus in their pedagogy.

Priscilla, a teacher with ten years' experience, suggested that inadequate preparation about issues of emotion and psychology in her teacher training was a factor that contributed to a lack of understanding, *'I have a pretty big interest in psychology, and I just think there's so much in that, that is helpful in the classroom that we don't get in our teacher training.'* Considering this alongside the following quote speaks to a rather large knowledge gap. This teacher, Alice, said:

> *We know as teachers that we're constantly doing emotional education. In fact, it's probably more often than we're doing academic education, because it's constant. Even when you're doing academic education, you are doing emotional education at the same time. But we kind of step back from that a bit because it's difficult and it's scary.*

This lack of confidence was also discussed in reference to time in the profession, where novice teachers seemed to lack the mentorship, or the confidence to prioritise issues of shame. Maria, a teacher with over 15 years teaching experience summarised this:

> *I'm very confident in who I am as a teacher and how I get the job done and I can see that offering voice and stopping a lesson in the middle to deal with the social issue, then moving on, … is a positive thing. Most teachers won't feel that comfortable, "we have to get the maths done."'*

In this example, teacher confidence was related to the way they understood their role in the school and the priorities that teachers must adhere to.

4.5.3 Relationships

Relationships were prominent in teachers' comments and appeared in an equal frequency to teacher knowledge. This was understood in two ways; firstly, understanding the student and what would be considered a normal or abnormal expression of behaviour, and second, creating an emotionally safe environment in the classroom, or within the relationship, for the child to talk to the teacher or express themselves in an authentic way. As Hannah**,** put it, '*I think the more you have a relationship with the students, the more likely you are to see signs.'* The CoSS framework suggests that a student's expression of shame is unique to the individual, which can only be known through understanding them on an individual level. As described by Priscilla:

> *Well, there's a couple that I would just describe them as more reserved generally. So if those kids cracked a wobbly and ran around and hid in the corner, I would think the sky was falling down because something catastrophic would have to happen for those kids to lose it. But maybe it really is just shown in a different way.*

Not only were relationships considered important for understanding when students may be experiencing shame but building trust within the teacher-student relationship was also discussed as an enabler for identifying and understanding the emotional experience of the student. Katrina**,** a novice teacher working in a school with a high proportion of neurodiverse students reflected the following:

> *I'd make sure it'd be important that they understood that "I can see why you wouldn't come and tell me something like this, but it's important that you can talk to me about something like this because at the end of this, you'll realize that*

I can help find a solution for you." So, it's again, labelling. ... And just again, strengthening the relationship with them so that in the future if something happens, they feel like they can come and talk to you about it.

4.5.4 Personal Experience of Shame

Half of the participants discussed shame in relation to themselves, specifically that having felt shame about something in their own lives or educational journey enabled them to better understand their students or act in the face of their students' shame. For some teachers this shame was about neurodiversity, such as having recently received an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnosis or about accepting their identity within the LGBTQIA+ community. They also discussed an understanding of social anxiety, where they recognised a student's unwillingness to present or speak in front of others and would provide other, less threatening opportunities to complete these sorts of tasks.

What was particularly interesting was one teacher's reflection that they were more sensitive to issues of shame that had similarities to their own experience, which resultantly had framed their expectations around its expression,

I tended to look for body language that indicated some form of retreat, which I see through my own lens of when I feel shame. I want to get out of there. Because I'm like, "Oh my God, I don't want everyone to see me like this." Which is maybe why I didn't recognize it so much when it came out in a different form for the other little boy, if even shame is the right word there.

This teacher had spoken of her own battle with social anxiety and presenting in front of people, both as a child and even now as a teacher. Her thought process above demonstrates her insight and reflection that outside of her own experience, she cannot be sure that the student she spoke about was experiencing shame, suggesting a gap in understanding, and resultantly teacher education.

4.6 The Affective Classroom's impact on Shame and Stigma

The third research sub-question takes a sociological approach to understanding how the context of the classroom and the characteristics of those who make up that space contribute to a student's sense of shame and experience of stigma within that environment. First, it will examine the ways teachers' own experience may frame their expectations about emotional expression, and secondly, it will look at the ways that schools are value laden spaces, where the complexity of the individuals that make up the space, including teachers themselves, must be continually navigated by teachers.

4.6.1 Teachers and cultural expectations

A primary school teacher who had left the classroom on a full-time basis and was working as a Casual Relief Teacher spoke of her time working in a school in the outer west of Melbourne. She described the school as very multicultural and of a low socio-economic status. Within the interview she was able to discuss the shame of some of her students and had provided specific examples and scenarios, however she also had an important reflection, *'To be honest, I don't think anyone really stood out because it was so multicultural. But I do wonder in hindsight, maybe whether their expression of shame was different because every single kid I've mentioned was white,'* referencing the examples of shame she had already detailed in the interview.

It seems unlikely that only the Caucasian students were experiencing shame, particularly when the school context is described as very multicultural, which points to two possible conclusions. Firstly, that this teacher was less attuned to the emotional experience of the students who were racially or culturally diverse to her, and that perhaps there are cultural or familial expectations around emotional expression that are less identifiable to those external to it. This can reinforce inequality in the classroom space, where students who are culturally or racially similar to their teacher may reap the benefit of emotional understanding and support, or that those who are racially or culturally different may be masking or hiding their experiences to fit within what the expectations of the context demand.

4.6.2 Schools as value laden spaces

In conversation with teachers, it became obvious that the values of the students and teacher added complexity to the affective environment of the school and classroom. The three examples below highlight how religion, politics and values made navigating classroom dialogue and, in some cases, teaching the content, highly complex.

Speaking of her small primary school context servicing a community of Muslim and non-Muslim students, Maria, a teacher with more than 15 year's experience talked about the complexity of teaching the 'Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships' (RRRR) curriculum, in particular issues of gender and sexuality, without causing shame or stigmatising students who have opposing beliefs. This teacher was supporting a graduate teacher who had encountered opposition from students who believed she had not been sufficiently culturally sensitive. She said,

> *That idea of Haram we don't understand. You know, "we have to read this, and we have to do that. And that's all Haram to us. We shouldn't be doing any of that." So, they feel like she hasn't been culturally sensitive, and she doesn't understand what Haram is for them.*

Navigating classrooms where students have religious beliefs that oppose another community's beliefs, in this case LGBTIQ+ individuals or families, is a complex line to walk when attempting not to shame or stigmatise one group. Focusing on inclusion does seem not sufficient in these particularly charged issues of identity.

In another example, Alice discussed the complexity of teaching thinking skills with politically divisive topics, whilst grappling with her own values and belief system. She said,

> *And some of that was really tough as a teacher, because the kids talk about their politics, and I couldn't just turn around and be like, "Oh, you're a bigot then, aren't you?" It had to be like, "Wow, that's really interesting. Tell me more about your MRA [Men's Rights Activism] viewpoints." And then "so how did you*

> *come to that view, and what about this perspective?" And that whole learning perspective is just like, I mean, they're 14.*

While this teacher appeared quite reflective of her personal values and strived to remain value free in the eyes of her students, another example highlights how a teacher may not make this effort. This example comes from Katrina, who described an interaction in her placement classroom between the teacher and his students. The context of this interaction was within an affluent, private boys' school in Melbourne, where the placement teacher was also an alumnus. In this case, the teacher felt her placement teacher used shame to single out students and manage their behaviour. She recounted;

> *I witnessed the teacher put shame on the students. I saw it daily, ... instead of having an honest and open conversation, if someone had made a point that they didn't agree with. For example, they were talking about the AFLW (Australian Football League, Womens) Grand Final, and one of the players had injured themselves, and somehow the conversation got to women playing AFL. And the teacher was like, "Well, this is why there are more injuries in the Women's League because they didn't grow up playing football, therefore they don't know how to play football. They don't know how to fall over. They hurt themselves. They get these major injuries." And one of the kids puts his hand up and goes, "Sir, isn't that sexist?" And he shuts that kid down so quickly. ...[the student] had a totally valid point but shut him down in front of all of his peers.*

In this example, while it cannot be said with certainty that the student experienced shame, the teacher's perceptions and values drove the framing of this complex idea of gender equity, and that their management of the conversation was values driven, enforcing his own beliefs and ideas, rather than open dialogue that would reduce the possibility for shame. It could also be argued that the shutting down of a student's values in front of their peers may have caused shame for the student.

4.6.3 Conclusion

Through analysing a specific example of the shame and stigma experienced by one student in one context, this analysis has demonstrated the inter-related nature of the disciplines of psychology and sociology, and the elements of the affective environment that exist to marginalise students. This analysis found that this student's access to the classroom was affected by their felt experience of difference, and that the teacher, positioning themselves as an ally, contributed to this affective environment. Examining the psychological perspective, analysis of teacher interview data determined that teachers saw shame as an emotional experience of failure in comparison to others, that contributed to negative or poorer outcomes. Applying the Compass of Shame to behaviours of students in the classroom, it appears the CoSS may provide a description of student behaviour, however has recognisable limitations. The sociological perspective analysed the ways that teachers were able to react when they understood shame was occurring for their students, specifically that performativity and performance measures offered by neoliberalist agendas were major inhibitors. Finally, it has acknowledged that schools and teachers are value-laden which offer unique contributions to the affective environment and the way they deal with issues of shame and stigma.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This research has examined teachers' perceptions of students' experience of shame and stigma, framed by the research question, how do teachers recognise, understand, and respond to shame in the classroom? In this chapter I argue that this research study has made four contributions to the research scholarship in the area of shame. First, taking a psychological approach, teachers have an understanding of some elements of shame and often minimise or shy away from the experience of their students through their use of language. Next, the Compass of Shame was found to describe the behavioural responses of students, and while possessing limitations, it could act as a tool for practitioners to better label their students' experience. By taking a sociological perspective, I was able to identify that while teachers do understand that shame and stigma contribute to negative or poorer outcomes, performativity and the neoliberalist agendas in Australian schools prevent them from acting with a student centred, wellbeing focused approach. Finally, I have used an adapted Positioning Theory framework to access to one students' shame and stigma by proxy of their teacher through examining the micro, meso and macro factors, and their storylines and positions, to confine them to a position lacking power.

5.2 Teachers' Understanding of Shame

Overall, when asked to define shame, there was a strong recognition of shame as an emotion and a response to a stimulus echoing some of the earlier work by psychologists, such as Tomkins (1984), who suggests emotion occurs within the body and is inherently devoid of meaning. Conceptually, Tomkins' asseveration lacks the complexity of what scholars have later come to conceptualise. However, teacher accounts of their students' experience demonstrated they understood the lived experience of their students, and shame's affective ephemeral and pervasive quality (Cromby & Willis, 2016). Acknowledging that even scholars continue to debate the shape and form of the construct it is not surprising that teachers' definitions lacked complexity, however, although there was difficulty to constrain their understanding within words, teachers did demonstrate an understanding of the lived experience of the construct through

storytelling. This is also consistent with the literature, which suggests that affect cannot be described by language but is rather an 'experience', or feeling that overlays ones interactions with the world (Seyfert, 2012).

There was a consistent trend of teachers using other emotion language to describe their students' experience, with terms such as *guilt*, *embarrassment*, *self-consciousness*, *humiliation*, or *pride* being used as an opposition to shame. As acknowledged above, it does become difficult to use language to describe shame when it is considered so elusive, however, each of these terms have their own scholarly bodies of work and are considered unique to shame, despite the majority being considered to be self-conscious emotions (Lewis, 2008). Research studies do acknowledge pride and shame as opposites (Nathanson, 1994; Scheff, 1990), however these other emotion words have been demonstrated to be less harmful to the self-image and cause less physiological stall on an individual level (Dickerson et al., 2004). This substitution of terms occurred both knowingly and unknowingly, but it does suggest a shying away from shame which reduces the intensity of the students' experiences in the eyes of the observer, through its labelling. The literature also recognises that the power and intensity of shame can cause people to shy away due to the discomfort it induces, even for the observer (Putnam & Lake, 2020; Taylor, 2015). If teachers are consistently using other emotion labels for shame, the consequences of reducing their students' emotional experience to one less damaging through language only reinforces the socially isolating and 'sticky' quality of shame for the student.

Teachers were also able to speak to the nature of shame as a socially constructed, feeling of failure by comparison. The research, and particularly the idea of stigma, suggests that the prevailing norms and expectations of the context and those people surrounding the student influence their feelings of shame (Dernikos et al., 2020), which was illustrated by teacher accounts. Commonly teachers felt students were concerned about what others were thinking of them, and that their sense of failure was visible and harmful to their identity in the eyes of others or themselves.

5.2.1 Shame and Stigma are associated with negative or poorer outcomes

Teachers associated their students' experience of shame with negative or poorer outcomes, where these were considered to affect the educational or social space or were seen to stick to individuals in a long-term way.

5.2.1.1 Identity as a Learner

Every participating teacher was able to identify that shame had detrimental effects on the students they teach, and further, give a specific scenario of a student enacting a behavioural response to feeling shame about their learning. This was one of the strongest themes that came through in the data analysis. Teachers discussed scenarios where students enacted avoidance or withdrawal from activities as a protective mechanism, limiting risk taking, and provoking a strong desire not to be seen as a failure. Some available research on the educational impacts of shame are, currently subject specific, referring to mathematics (Amidon et al., 2020) and writing (Whitney, 2018). The results of this study indicate teachers felt that learner identity about failure was not subject specific and extended to global evaluations of one's ability to be a learner.

As McGregor and Elliot (2005) suggest, shame is considered to be at the core of the fear of failure, and teachers consistently spoke of students' crippling fear of getting it wrong and being shamed because of it. Considering the Affective definition of shame as experiential; layered affect, social conditioning, and situational mood colliding in a contextual space, it makes sense that students are quick to apply their experience of failure to a global evaluation of the self. It is too risky to make new attempts in a context where past experiences say that one is simply not good enough and may experience shame because of it. The implication being that experiencing shame in one learning situation can be so damaging to learning identity that students become confined by their own expectations: a self-fulfilling prophecy.

5.2.1.2 Social Impacts

This research also found that an experience of shame and stigma was detrimental to students' sense of belonging, much like scholarship that already exists in other contexts, such as Ryökkynen et al. (2021). There was an acknowledgement in this data that shame

could be a barrier to making new friends, but also that enacting a physical response to shame might cause social isolation and damage relationships. There is considerable research on the concept of school belonging and how it mediates students' experience of school and their subsequent engagement and mental health outcomes (Allen et al., 2018; Dadvand & Cuervo, 2019; Osterman, 2000) and it is of no surprise that teachers considered feelings of shame and stigma to be undermining feelings or formations of belonging. This can be particularly damaging when students are of a minority group where the stigma of their difference is engrained within society and cannot be overcome within the school environment alone, as it continues to exist for the benefit of those in power (Tyler, 2020).

5.2.1.3 Long Term

The results of this study showed that teachers made a link between an experience in school or education and the long term 'sticky' quality of shame and stigma. Teachers discussed how shame may prevent a student from making further attempts in an educational or social sense in the short term, but they also acknowledged that long term damage could also be the result. One teacher discussed how shame may cause a person to withdraw from society entirely. This aligns with research that suggests shame and stigma can cause mental health problems, particularly anxiety, depression, eating disorders and youth suicide (Cunha et al., 2012; Fullagar, 2003; Mustapic et al., 2015) and that shame resulting from stigma sticks to marginalised bodies and is reproduced for the benefit of maintaining power dynamics (Tyler, 2020).

5.3 The Compass of Shame as a Tool for Teachers

The Compass of Shame (CoSS) was a tool used and examined within this research for its potential to help teachers understand their students' behavioural coping reactions to their feelings of shame, particularly given that shame is often hidden or not spoken about openly (Eterović, 2020; Luoma et al., 2012; Putnam & Lake, 2020). The CoSS has not yet been examined in an educational setting, so I was interested in whether the poles of withdrawal, avoidance, attack other and attack self were represented in teacher recounts of their students' behaviour. Through coding scenarios discussed by teachers and the student behaviour that was exhibited, I found that the CoSS is descriptive of student behaviour, however it presents some limitations. There was a large amount of

overlap in coding between the different poles, suggesting that the experience of shame has a fluid quality that makes it hard to categorise. Further, in this data, the 'Attack Self' response was less represented, suggesting that it is potentially more difficult to identify and more concealed in a classroom setting. Some teachers also identified that they may have missed student's shame because the behaviour of neurodiverse students or those who may have culturally different expectations about emotional expression may present in different ways, which are valid points to make.

Despite this, the CoSS may play a useful role in teacher education and may ameliorate some of the concerns of more experienced teachers that novices may not be equipped to understand the shame of their students or to identify when behaviour may be the consequence of shame, rather than something to be attributed to the student's personal psychology or to misbehaviour. The CoSS could be a tool used in teacher education or professional learning to demystify these behaviours and offers a simplified, accessible, and practical framework for teachers who are time poor and already presented with a multitude of considerations for the best interests of their students.

5.4 Responding to Shame: Performativity Pressures and Neoliberal Education

Considering the Affective quality of the interviews themselves, a standout theme was that teachers were passionate, and wholly focused on the best possible outcomes for their students, however, their demeanour changed substantially when discussing what inhibited their action about issues of shame and stigma. It was with emotional weight that teachers discussed the burdens of testing, the overwhelming workload, often acknowledged as a lack of time, and the measures of performance such as department regulated Strategic and Annual Improvement Plans, NAPLAN, and a culture of monitoring outcomes. This landscape in education was already known and recognised in the research evidence (Appel, 2020; Ball, 2003; Dadvand & Cuervo, 2019), however this research provides confirmation that a culture of performativity suppresses teachers' ability to act in the face of shame and stigma specifically.

When considering these data alongside the current political landscape of education in Victoria and post COVID-19 related teacher shortages (Pressley, 2021), it is unsurprising that teachers simply cannot prioritise issues of student wellbeing to the

extent that they would like to. Not only are they contending with the culture of schools framed by these neo-liberalist expectations, but they are also being overworked and burnt out when there are simply not enough teachers to fill the gaps. Additionally, it is worth noting that the participant group of this research are largely homogenous and representative of predominantly inner-city schools, with Index of Community Socio-Economic Advantage (ICSEA) scores above Australia's average. ICSEA scores provide information about student and family advantage, including parent occupation and education, geographic location, and proportion of Indigenous students. Considering this alongside research that suggests that schools in disadvantaged areas are more likely to feel the effects of performativity (Dadvand & Cuervo, 2019; Gewirtz, 2006), this data only tells half the story. It can only be expected that schools that serve more disadvantaged communities would experience these effects to a greater extent. When considering the work of Tyler (2020) alongside this, that stigma exists to maintain hierarchies that enable those with power to remain in power, Australia's already unequal educational landscape continues to disenfranchise.

Another point made by teachers was that teacher education or understanding played a role in their ability to act appropriately in the face of shame and stigma. In some cases, teachers felt like their teacher education lacked adequate training within the issue of shame and stigma. While most of the experienced teachers recognised that teaching is equally academic or curriculum focused and equally about emotional education, they suggested that novice teachers did not seem to have the skills and strategies to foreground these issues. If, as the data suggest, beginning or novice teachers are not being provided with the training to teach within an affective environment where shame and stigma circulate, the teacher education programs themselves are demonstrating to teachers that psychological or sociological imperatives such as shame and stigma are less important. Despite the Australian Institute for Teaching and Leadership (AITSL) standards naming 'Know your students and how they learn' (AITSL, 2021a) as their first priority, teachers' comments presented in this study point towards teacher education may be incorrectly framing the priorities needed for success in the classroom.

5.5 Position-Driven Analysis: Alex's story

Positioning Theory recognises that in all mutually determining interactions, not everybody has access to the same duties, rights and responsibilities as others (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999a). This is particularly beneficial when examining how shame and stigma circulate and enable, or disable, a student from accessing the classroom in an equal way. Through a position driven analysis, I have examined one example, in one context, to understand how a person must negotiate the complexity of relationships and interactions in context, while occupying the role of 'student'. Positioning Theory helps to recognise the Meso-Level categorisations, the Storylines, Contextual Factors, and the Micro-social Moments that occur around the individual, to demonstrate where a person positioned as a 'student' may experience failure in meeting the expectations of the dominant social group, and importantly, how this affects what they believe are their duties, their rights, and their responsibilities. For example, experiencing a micro-social moment of a peer questioning Alex's right to access the gender affirming toilets, positions Alex as someone who has failed the expectations of that peer's definition of gender, presumably one shaped by contextual and societal factors. In this moment, Alex must grapple with their identity as a stigmatised individual, the storylines they have already lived and then negotiate this micro-social moment, and any future ones, with the knowledge that others have not afforded them the right to use the bathrooms that affirm their gender identity in this context and likely other contexts as well.

This can also be seen in the incident about removing their jumper after participating in Physical Education. Alex is shown to be unable to disentangle their experience of shame and stigma to enact the responsibilities of a student. They are seen to grapple with the expectations of their peers, teacher and their own affective experience and subsequently become trapped and unsure how to proceed. Resultingly, they are unable to access the learning in this moment.

Looking closely at the case of 'Alex', due to being a member of multiple minority groups this student suffers the effects of being stigmatised. Their physical differences to their peers, their deviation in personal characteristics, such as their gender diversity, economic disparity and their racial minority are all examples of their divergences from the normative expectations of the school context, and in some cases society itself.

Specifically, Alex suffers from the effects of stigma about their physical abnormality (Goffman, 2009); related to their felt comparison to their peers and meso-categorisation by their doctor as someone who is 'overweight'. They also carry the burden of this stigma related to the way their body presents as someone whose gender identity does not match their biological gender. This would overlap with their experiences of stigma relating to their 'deviation in personal characteristics' (Goffman, 2009), experienced due to their gender and economic diversity. Beyond all of this, Alex is also a member of a racial minority within this context, meaning they experience the effects of tribal stigma (Flowerdew, 2008; Goffman, 2009).

As is recognised by Tyler (2020), stigma circulates around inequality which is produced in social settings, marking bodies with power. In this case, it is not these attributes that stigmatise Alex, but it is those people around them, knowingly or unknowingly maintaining the hierarchies that seek to disenfranchise. Alex suffers the effects of stigma in their educational and social pursuits, where the teacher has identified them as academically behind and socially subjugated. It is already acknowledged that stigma can inhibit academic performance (Zirkel, 2005), and Alex is no exception, where their identity will only continue to be affected by their school experience and vice versa.

What is also recognised is that Alex's teacher was able to play a role in their experience of shame and stigma in the classroom, to some extent. Alex does experience inclusion in some relationships, where the teacher identified that with supportive peers, Alex was able to enact the position of friend with a noticeable difference in their affective disposition. This points to social inclusion being a key contributor to a student's affective experience and reinforces that dealing with issues of inclusion are an important and worthy use of teacher time in the outcomes of their students. The problem, perhaps, is that time pressure, issues of performativity and evaluation in teachers' everyday work, do not enhance teachers' ability to put inclusion at the forefront of their daily classroom work (Cuervo, 2012). Nevertheless, this teacher was also able to take up the position of ally in this classroom, by encouraging students to acknowledge one another's chosen pronouns and reinforce that inclusion is essential.

The use of the adapted Positioning Theory framework has contributed to understanding how Alex has come to negotiate their identity in this context and how various factors at the micro, meso and macro level play a key role in what duties, rights, and

responsibilities a student must negotiate to access the classroom in an equal way. Evaluating a specific example in this way allows access to what affects students and how teachers are most able to impact their students' experience.

The analysis has served two purposes, firstly it has demonstrated the complexity of the experience of shame and stigma and how they can circulate and be reproduced within an educational environment to the detriment of students and secondly, it has demonstrated how this adapted Positioning Theory framework gives researchers access to the affective experience of a student by proxy of their teacher's recount. The use of Positioning Theory to understand students' affective experience and the ways that stigma and shame are circulated and reproduced can be considered a contribution to new knowledge that may provide researchers a framework for understanding how a context may reproduce inequality in education. In Australia's increasingly unequal education system, this tool may be of benefit.

5.6 Schools and teachers are value-laden

All individuals come to the school environment with their own values and belief systems, oftentimes ones that are at odds with other students or even the teacher themselves. In some cases, these beliefs and opinions can be the result of religion, identity, or political belief systems. While teachers, especially in government schools, are intended to be value free zones that promote and advocate for critical thinking (Dewey, 1986), it is naïve to assume that personal biases do not contribute to the affective environment of the classroom or the way that content is taught. The challenge is ensuring that healthy debate occurs without stigmatising or shaming students who may be in a minority. This becomes especially challenging when students have beliefs that directly oppose inclusion.

Further to this, as one teacher considered her position as a female in a diverse context, she wondered whether her expectation for emotional or affective expression was socio-culturally built. She recognised that in her interview the examples that she gave and the understanding she had built about her student's shame were solely of students who were culturally similar to her. While this was only one example in data of ten participants, it does raise the question of whether the socio-cultural construction of emotion that is acknowledged by Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1980), means that it is much more

difficult for teachers to understand the affective expression of students dissimilar to them. In classrooms in Victoria where 78% of teachers are female (Victorian Department of Education and Training, 2021b) and diversity of teachers' sociocultural backgrounds are as diverse as students themselves, it is possible the large majority of students' experiences of shame and stigma are not being considered equally.

5.7 Conclusion

Examining shame and stigma from both a psychological and sociological lens has built an understanding of the research question - How do teachers recognise, understand, and respond to shame in the classroom? Specifically, psychology has allowed for examining how teachers define and understand shame and for a focus to be placed on the experience of the student. However, the actions of teachers and the contextual factors of the education system are equally impactful on the experience of the student as they constrain what is and isn't possible. This includes the ways that the socio-political climate influence classrooms, and how learning and teaching is enacted in context. The analysis has built an understanding of what teachers understand about their students' shame, how they may act, or may be inhibited to act, and it has introduced an adapted Positioning Theory framework that describes the interacting factors that exist to circulate and reproduce shame and stigma.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations and Limitations

6.1 Introduction

This research was interested in the affective experience of students, specifically shame and stigma, through the lens of their teachers. It posed the question, 'How do teachers recognise, understand and respond to students' shame in the classroom?' Using Social Constructivism to frame semi-structured interviews, answers to the research question were constructed through thematic analysis and applied to a Positioning Theory framework to understand how shame and stigma are circulated and reproduced in schools. This chapter will highlight the contributions to literature that have been made, discuss implications for practitioners and researchers, limitations of the research design and make recommendations for further research.

6.2 Contributions

This research has made four contributions to new knowledge. First, by taking a psychological perspective this research examined how teachers understand and define shame, which was identified in the literature review as under-researched. In this data, teachers understood their students' shame as an emotional experience of failure by comparison, that produced negative or poorer outcomes. However, there was a demonstrated reluctance in using the word shame to describe students' experience, in line with the literature that suggests people shy away from it entirely (Lynd, 2013; Scheff et al., 2015; Thaggard & Montayre, 2019; Welz, 2011). In using other emotion words to describe shame, teachers in this data minimised the experience of their students to emotions much less physiologically stalling and less damaging to identity (Crozier, 2014; Dickerson et al., 2004; Sabini et al., 2001).

By examining the Compass of Shame and its suitability to the classroom and school context, I have demonstrated that it does describe student behaviour to some extent, where its role may be in helping teachers name and identify their students' emotional experience. Its fluid and categorical quality does present a limitation; however, it may

be a practical framework offered in teacher education that is simple and accessible, especially for teachers who are already time poor.

When taking a sociological lens to the themes discussed by teachers, it was clear that, while teachers were wholly focused on doing what is best for their students, acting in support of their students' affective experience was often obstructed by issues of performativity (Ball, 2003; Thrupp, 1999; Thrupp & Lupton, 2006). It is not often, to my knowledge, that performativity is linked to the equity issues of shame and stigma in the school environment, and thus presents a contribution to new knowledge. Further, it also highlighted that the integration of cultures and economic diversity in schools presents unique and highly contextual challenges for teachers who must also navigate their own personal biases and opinions when managing a classroom of diverse learners and ensuring that personal beliefs are not shamed or stigmatised.

Finally, this study has examined Positioning Theory research (Harré & Moghaddam, 2015), and expanded on the work of Anderson (2009) that suggests learner identity can be examined by analysing classroom interactions. This framework has been applied to understand how students' identity as 'shamed' or 'stigmatised' can be circulated and reproduced through the micro, meso and macro levels of context, alongside a person's storylines and positions, which can contribute to disparities in a learner's ability to access the classroom in an equal way. In this way, I have developed a framework for examining how power is negotiated in classrooms and school settings such that those who bear stigma, and resultantly, shame, are disenfranchised for the benefit of those in power (Tyler, 2020). While this does not provide an answer to the urgent question of inequity in Australian schools, it does illuminate the mechanisms of reproduction, which Tyler (2020) suggests must be seen and acknowledged to be disrupted. Further, by making use of teacher recount, I have, in addition to the psychological focus above, answered the question of how teachers recognise, understand, and respond to their students' shame with a sociological lens.

6.3 Implications and Recommendations

This research has highlighted the importance of understanding shame and stigma and their role as drivers of inequity of access to the classroom and school environment, particularly through the use of Alex's case study. While teachers do have the ability to

define shame as an experience of failure by comparison with negative impacts on students social and educational outcomes, they often minimise or shy away from their students' shame through labelling. This finding offers an argument for future research to determine the extent to which language use impacts students' affective experience in schools. Beyond further research, it is worth implementing the Compass of Shame as a tool in teacher education programs for teachers to better name and acknowledge their students' experience and react in support of the student. Researching the impacts of implementing this tool may also be of benefit.

In addition, this research has emphasised the impact of performativity on teachers and their ability to act in the face of their students' shame. While the teachers in this research understood the value of acting to support their students' affective experience, they spoke frequently of the pressures of work within neoliberal structures, the ongoing monitoring of goals and priorities and the need for growth and achievement. Neoliberal structures are deeply embedded within education systems around the world (Braithwaite et al., 2017; Sellars & Imig, 2023), however, understanding the impacts of performativity on equity and student outcomes, specifically in relation to shame and stigma are contributions to new knowledge. Further research is required to examine how to confront the pressures of performativity that confine the work of teachers, specifically related to shame and stigma.

Finally, the Positioning Theory framework adapted from Anderson (2009) has been applied to understanding how stigma, and resultantly, shame is circulated and reproduced in a school environment for the benefits of maintaining power. This tool has been applied to one student in one context. Application of this framework to other students, contexts or structures may be of benefit to researchers who are looking to understand shame and stigma and the reproduction of inequity in schools.

6.4 Critical Reflections and Limitations

This research has examined the shame and stigma of students by proxy of their teachers. While this has allowed access to how teachers recognise, understand, and respond to shame and stigma experienced in the school environment, the conclusions drawn are limited by the idea that student accounts were not available to confirm their experience of shame or stigma.

Further to this, participants in this study were representative of predominantly socio-economically and educationally advantaged settings with limited First Nation students. This presents a limitation in the interpretation of the data across context, especially as the experience of students who exist in disadvantaged settings are more likely to feel in the impacts of performativity (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006). Given this information, it is likely that shame and stigma are experienced to a greater extent in school settings that have not been examined in this research, and perhaps for vastly different reasons. This idea was further reinforced for me by one teacher who came to the realisation that they had only talked about students who were culturally similar to them in interview (despite working in one of the more diverse contexts discussed in this study). Their reflection that perhaps emotion and affect might be culturally or relationally enacted presents a limitation in the way teacher interpretation plays a role in their recognising, understanding, and reacting to shame in the classroom. Given the largely monocultural group of teachers represented, and higher representation of women over men (as is representative of the teaching workforce), it stands to question whether this also impacts the way teachers of different backgrounds and contexts may conceptualise the same ideas.

Finally, throughout this research, I have chosen to focus on the negative consequences of shame due to its impact on equity. Educational equity in Australia is a complex issue that demands attention due to the widening gap related to socio-economic status. Throughout this research I made every attempt to remain unbiased about the value of shame. Two teachers in the study shared their thoughts that supporting students through their emotional experience was far more important than prevention, whereas it was more common in this research for teachers to feel that prevention was the aim. Whilst outside the scope of this research, this idea of preventing the experience of shame (as distinct from shame experienced because of stigma), seems worthy of exploration. As a teacher myself, I have seen how the idealisation of the prevention of affective experience (both from teachers, students, and parents) has been to the detriment of students and their wellbeing, or their expectations of the reality of the world. This is an idea I would like to explore in further research.

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Appendix A

Example Questions and Scenarios for focus groups and Semi-Structured Interviews

General Questions

What is your teacher specialisation, if any?

What grade level do you teach?

How long have you been a teacher?

Did you work in another profession before entering teaching? If so, what was it?

How long have you worked at this school?

How would you describe the current goals and priorities of your school context?

How do you teach the personal and social curriculum in your context? What pedagogy or program do you use?

Do you feel as though your professional judgement is respected in your school?

Shame based questions

Would shame be an emotion you consider in your day-to-day teaching practice and student interactions? If so, how?

Can you describe a situation where you identified a student feeling shame? What triggered this situation and emotion?

How did you decide that the student was experiencing shame?

What behaviours would you expect a student experiencing shame to exhibit?

What pedagogical strategies do you employ that may reduce the development of shame?

How did you address shame with a student, or in your classroom?

What do you consider are the impacts of shame for students?

Can you give an example of a time you have reacted to a student experiencing shame?

How would you describe the barriers you experience to acting in a shame aware manner?

Example Scenario

You notice a student in your classroom often attends school without a packed lunchbox for the day. During their eating breaks the student will ask to use the bathroom, stay behind to pack up classroom equipment or pretend they have already eaten or weren't hungry. When you speak to the student about the issue, they look towards the ground and mumble that there is no food in the house and their parent usually leaves early for work.

How would you label the emotional experience of the child in this scenario?

What information makes you think that?

What actions would you take in this scenario as the child's teacher?

How are teachers able to address this issue of shame? What supports or hinders them in doing so?