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The negative side of motivation: the role of shame

Stiles, P.

CAMBRIDGE
Judge Business School

Author contact details are as follows:

Philip Stiles
Judge Business School
University of Cambridge
p.stiles@jbs.cam.ac.uk

Please address enquiries about the series to:

Research Support Manager
Judge Business School
Trumpington Street
Cambridge CB2 1AG, UK
Tel: 01223 760546 Fax: 01223 339701
E-mail: research-support@jbs.cam.ac.uk

# THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF MOTIVATION: THE ROLE OF SHAME

## ABSTRACT

Shame has been called the `negative side of an individual's motivational scheme' (Giddens 1991:64) but such statements have not been reflected in work analysing *how* shame influences motivation. Shame has been identified as having an important role in self-regulation in its capacity to establish or modify a person's behaviour and thoughts, usually as the result of an act or omission, or a sense of a personal failing or defect, which will elicit contempt or derision from others. But the experience of shame can help to reinforce social norms within the organisation and so help social cohesion. We examine the relationship between shame and work motivation. We identify a set of relationships between the emotion and goal setting. The analysis of shame allows us to deepen conceptions of emotional effects and theoretically show how the identification and specification of distinct emotions rather than generalised ones such as core affect will provide for an enhanced understanding of motivation.

Shame has long been recognised as having a critical role in social and self-regulation (Tangney, 1995, Williams, 1993), but accounts of shame's regulatory function, and its motivational impact, differ. One view argues that the basic experience connected with shame is that of being seen inappropriately and that the motivational impetus is to withdraw and to avoid situations that elicit it. A second view is that shame is a useful emotion for organisations in motivating individuals to perform at a reasonable level. From the point of view of the organisation, the promoting of corporate goals, values, the encouragement of loyalty and engagement to the team and the organization, and adherence to ethical codes of conduct can be made not only by a promotion focus but also by emphasizing the costs of a failure to live up to these goals.

The role of negative emotions, and in particular shame, is a neglected aspect of theorizing on motivation in work settings. Though there has been increasing attention to the experience and management of emotions within organizations (e.g., Ashford & Humphrey, 1995; Brief & Weiss, 2002; Fineman, 2000; Fox & Spector, 2002; Lord, Klimoski, & Kanfer, 2002), with emotions have been used to explicate such areas as job satisfaction (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), justice (Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Greenberg 1990), recruitment and selection (Ashforth & Saks, 2002), leadership (Huy, 1999; George, 2000; Goleman, 1995, 1998) creativity (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw 2005; Isen, 1999, 2000) organizational citizenship behavior (George & Bettenhausen, 1990), negotiation (Barry & Oliver, 1996; Forgas 1998) and general performance (Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1997; Staw & Barsade, 1993), the link between emotions and work motivation in general has received little explicit attention by comparison (IIies & Judge, 2005).

At the heart of formal motivational processes in organizations is goal setting (Locke and Latham 1998). The setting of goals for employees is intended to encode the objectives of the organization within the individual (Covaleski, Dirsmith, Heian & Samuel, 1998). Goal setting creates a standard or a norm to be matched, or an optimum to be achieved and thereby permits a comparison and differentiation of individuals. Though much research on goal setting has been focused on such technical aspects as goal clarity, goal difficulty, managerial participation, and feedback provision, less has focused on goal setting as a disciplinary technique. The apparatus of goals render individuals both visible and calculable and so constitutes part of the self-management of the individual. Adherence to the norm or standard of the goal is a process of normalization of the employee and, importantly, deviation or failure to meet the standard invokes a judgment of abnormality, which then must be subjected to the

adjustments and corrections necessary to overcome it (Foucault, 1979, Townley, 1993). Failure or potential failure to reach a goal or standard will therefore have important implications for the perception of the self. If an individual attributes the failure (or success) to internal causes, rather than external ones, then self-conscious emotions are elicited (Tangney & Dearing 2002). Self-conscious emotions are cognition-dependent (Izard, Ackerman & Schultz, 1999) and help to regulate people's interpersonal behaviour. Self-conscious emotions such as shame require reflection on how one is being perceived and evaluated by other people, and involve the internalising the expectations of others (Lewis, 1971; Williams, 1993).

Where the outcome is considered a failure an internal attribution would evoke shame, while a successful outcome would evoke pride (Tangney & Dearing, 2002**)**. Shame is usually compared to guilt in terms of negative self-conscious emotions. To evoke shame, rather than guilt, two other attributions are important. First, the internal attribution is judged to be concerned with something stable and fixed about the individual, for example ability (Tracy & Robins, 2004). This is contrasted with an `unstable' and unfixed characteristic such as effort. Second, the eliciting of shame involves attributions to the entire self (or `global' self), rather than to just one part of the self. Shame also differs from embarrassment. Shame is elicited by the realisation that others regard one self as deficient, while embarrassment stems from the awareness that others' view one's *presentation* of self as inappropriate (Shott 1979). Shame is generally accompanied by embarrassment but the converse is not, as a rule, true (Shott 1979, Modigliani 1968).

In research which has examined the link between emotions and work motivation, the emphasis has been on mood rather than discrete emotions (Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Elsbach & Barr, 1999; Forgas & George, 2001). Constructs such as positive and negative affect or core affect (Seo, Barrett, & Bartunek 2004) are considered to be parsimonious in modeling emotions. But a simple structure of positive and negative states cannot account for the experiences or consequences of such discrete emotions as feeling angry, sad, proud, or shamed (Brief & Weiss, 2002).

Research on self-conscious emotions has developed in recent years, and in the context of work organisations, there has been work on positive social emotions, particularly pride (Hiller & Hambrick, 2005, Hayward & Hambrick, 1997). But the role of the negative self-conscious emotions, in particular shame, has been less developed. Negative emotions are important to study in terms of motivation for at least two reasons. First, negative emotions are linked more strongly to specific action orientations than is the case with positive emotions (Bagozzi, Dholakia, & Basuroy, 2003) which implies that different negative emotions should

be distinguished from each other (Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1997). Second, negative emotions are more intensely felt than positive emotions (Higgins, 1997) and within the range of negative emotions, there are differing levels of intensity. Shame is the most intensely felt of the negative self-conscious emotions, more than guilt, embarrassment, and humiliation (Tangney, 1995). The strength of the felt emotion will have an impact on motivational force.

In this article, the impact of shame on work motivation is examined. Motivation is conceptualised through goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and shame's role in the goal situation, goal commitment and goal achievement is identified. The analysis and framework presented here identifies the conditions in goal-setting which are likely to increase the probability of shame feelings and further, how, contrary to models of shame emphasising withdrawal behaviour, the conditions under which shame may generate a higher likelihood of prosocial behaviour. It is argued in this paper that organisations, through the goals setting process, implicitly use negative emotions such as shame to highlight the significance of appropriate behaviour, but that this must be done at relatively mild levels. The threat or experience of shame must not be so distressing that they impair the organisation-employee relationship and that shame is used as a means of socialisation rather than an end-in-itself.

## SELF-REGULATION

Goal setting theory is central in explaining the phenomenon of self-regulation involved in work motivation (Locke & Latham 1990). Its core prediction is that goal properties, such as goal level and goal commitment, are direct determinants of purposeful actions and work performance. Goal setting theory states that to maximize employees' efforts and subsequent performance, goals should be challenging and specific.

In the organisational context, goal setting allows for the evaluation and social comparison of employees. In many cases, it promotes, at least implicitly, competition between individuals. Usually, the completion or failure to achieve goals is visible to others, and so issues of shame become highly salient. An important factor is the appraisal of how achievement or non-achievement of the goal will be perceived by others who are valued by the individual.

Research on the link between emotions and goal setting has been a feature of self-regulation approaches, which have focused on how individuals attempt to establish or modify their behaviour, thoughts and emotions to produce a desired state (Baumeister & Vohs, 2005)..

Higgins' (1987) discrepancy theory argues that the negative emotion increases in frequency and intensity as the discrepancy between an individual and a goal increases. Higgins (1997) argues that end states can be defined in terms of (i) ideals (i.e., what one wants to be) and (ii) "oughts" (i.e., what others think one should be). Individuals who seek to minimize discrepancies with their "ideal self" are said to have a *promotion focus*, whereas those who seek to minimize discrepancies with their "ought self" have a *prevention focus*. However, in a test of Higgins' (1987) theory, Tangney and colleagues (Tangney, Niedenthal, Covert, & Barlow, 1997), in a sample of 299 undergraduates found that the tendency to experience shame (though not guilt) was positively related to *all* types of self-discrepancies.

In the following sections, three aspects of goal-setting are examined to highlights the influence of shame: the goal situation, goal commitment and goal achievement.

**Goal situation**

Thoughts about achieving a goal produce *anticipatory emotional* responses (Bagozzi, Baumgartner & Leore, 1998). If there is anticipation of failure to reach the goals, or the goals are not valued enough, negative anticipatory emotions ensue. If individuals believe that they have (or lack) the possibility to achieve success in fulfilling the goals is due to stable, internal factors, this will elicit pride (or shame).

The elicitation of shame can be related to goal linkage (Bagozzi, Bergami, & Leone, 2003; Elliot & Church, 1997; McIntosh, 1996). Negative emotional reactions which follow failure to believe that a goal is possible to achieve are a function of goal linkage; the stronger the linkage of the concrete lower level goal to an important higher order goals, the stronger and more enduring the emotional response. Emotional responses will be especially strong when the higher level goal is *ego relevant*. Individuals high in shame, or propensity for shame, withdraw themselves from situations which require goal achievement (Bagozzi, Verbecke, & Gavino, 2003). In the work environment, if failure seems probable, some individuals will not accept or not try to reach their goals. Brown and Weiner (1984) found that `shame-related' emotions were the dominant responses when students were asked to rate which emotions would be experienced as a result of failure due to low ability. Covington & Omelich (1979) found students avoided challenging tasks, and did not try, in order to avoid appearing to lack ability, and so preserve the ability self-concept.

The link to fear of failure and to self-esteem is instructive. Individuals high in fear of failure physically or mentally exclude themselves from evaluative achievement settings. Part

of the reason for fear of failure is the fear of exposure and the undermining of self-identity. McGregor and Elliot (2005), in two laboratory studies, found that individuals high in fear of failure reported greater shame upon a perceived failure experience than those low in fear of failure, controlling for other-negative emotions.

In the self-esteem literature, studies of individuals with low self-esteem show that, faced with an event threatening to the ego, they tend to experience negative affect and withdraw from the task. This withdrawal represents a behavioural outcome of shame (Lewis 1971; Lindsay-Hartz 1984; Tracey & Robins, 2004). Supporting this account, Brown and Marshall's (2001) found that most of the shared variance between self-esteem and affect is accounted for by self-conscious emotions, specifically shame and pride.

*Proposition 1: The greater the extent to which an individual anticipates they will face setbacks or failure with a goal, and this failure can be attributed to internal, stable, and global causes, the more likely shame avoidance behaviour will be elicited.*

**Shame and goal commitment**

The effectiveness of goal setting presupposes the existence of goal commitment. Goal commitment is the `attachment to or determination to reach a goal, regardless of its origin' (Locke, Klimoski, & Kanfer, 1988: 24). In reviews of goal commitment (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987; Locke et al, 1988), a key internal element is expectancy of success when engaged in the goal-related activity. A number of studies have shown that goal commitment decreases for more objectively difficult goals and/or as the person's perception of achieving those goals declines (Wofford, Goodwin & Premack, 1992). If there are difficulties in realizing the task or there is a lack of good progress being made, or a growing sense of the task's difficulty, then this may induce shame feelings, given the appropriate attributions. Verbecke and Bagozzi (2002), using a sample of 458 salespeople selling financial services, showed that the tendency to experience shame in personal selling leads to protective reactions (e.g., avoidance behaviors), and these, in turn, negatively impact performance.

The link of shame to perfectionism is noteworthy (Blatt, 1995; Sorotzkin, 1985; Tangney, 2002). The lack of realization of good progress or withholding output is characteristic of maladaptive perfectionism, in which people withhold output for fear of it seeming less than perfect. Maladaptive perfectionists, instead of actively engaging in

problems or pursuing goals, tend to avoid them (Fedewa, Burns, & Gomez, 2005). Wyatt and Gilbert (1998) found that maladaptive perfectionism was significantly and positively correlated with a measure of shame.

Perfectionism is also often the trigger for imposter syndrome. Neurotic impostors are "absolute" perfectionists, who set excessively high, unrealistic goals and then experience self-defeating thoughts and behaviors when they can't reach those goals. They are driven by the belief that they are currently not good enough, but that they could do better if only they worked harder. Fearing discovery of their "fraudulence," they burden themselves with too much work to compensate for their lack of self-esteem and identity. Sorotzkin (1985) suggests that “the inevitable failure to live up to perfectionistic standards results in profound shame . . . [which] attacks the very fabric of the self ” (1985: 568).

*Proposition 2. The greater the setbacks individuals experience in carrying out tasks, and this failure is attributed to internal, stable, and global causes, the higher the potential for shame to be elicited and the more likely that goal commitment will be reduced*

Feedback is also an important factor in goal commitment. In the unfolding emotion episodes theory (Stein, Trabasso, Liwag, 1993) negative feedback on an individual’s valued goal will produce negative emotional reactions and the greater the magnitude of the feedback, the more intense the negative emotional reactions. If negative feedback is appraised against self-image and self-representation and is attributed to a stable part of the self like ability, shame will be elicited. Shame will also affect feedback seeking. Ashford and Tsui (1998) found that individuals may avoid seeking negative feedback because they see it as ego-threatening (Janis & Mann, 1977; Miller, 1976).

The fairness of the feedback is also important in terms of shame potential. Brockner (2002) argued that in the presence of unfavorable outcomes, individuals use procedural and interactional justice information to make attributions of personal responsibility for their outcome. When faced with an unfavorable distributive outcome, if an individual believes the process has been fair, the more likely he/she is to attribute blame to themselves, rather than to external sources, and so experience shame.

*Proposition 3. The greater the negative feedback or anticipated negative feedback for an individual when carrying out a task and this feedback is interpreted as relating to*

*internal, stable, and global causes, the higher the potential for shame to be elicited and the more likely that goal commitment will be reduced.*

Important in the feedback process is the possibility that not achieving the goals set or a lack of determination to reach the goals would result in a shameful experience before the eyes of valued colleagues. Goal setting has strong normative effects; in addition to setting goals, expectations about social legitimacy are also brought into play. In the goal-setting process, therefore, depending on who is setting the goal, there are strong pressures for an individual employee to meet the expectations of his or her manager/leader or the team, provided these are perceived to be important *valued* others (Kim & Nam, 1998). If individuals believe that they risk losing legitimacy in the face of unfulfilled expectations or unrealised goals, an anticipation of shame will result, lowering willingness to accept or enact the goal.

Similarly with the effect of peer pressure on goal commitment (Locke, Latham & Erez, 1988) particularly where there is high team cohesion and also through the generation of commitments to team members which give a social pressure to follow through (Bandura, 1986). Team members also provide examples of role models. Modeling can affect both goal commitment (Earley & Kanfer, 1987) and performance (Bandura, 1986). Again, unwillingness to be seen as letting the team down or to be seen as inadequate in front of team role models would make a strong impact in terms of goal commitment. A recent study (Ashby, Rice, & Martin, 2006) found a statistically and practically significant association between maladaptive perfectionism and shame in group of 215 students, which was explained as relating to feelings of letting others down.

*Proposition 4. The more the leader or supervisor or team is positively regarded by the individual, and the individual experiences setbacks or failure in carrying out tasks, and this failure is attributed to internal, stable, and global causes, the higher the potential for shame to be elicited and the more likely that goal commitment will be reduced.*

**Goal attainment**

There is a positive relationship between goal-directed behaviors and degree of goal attainment (Bagozzi et al, 2003b). The degree to which people attain their goals is positively related to the positive emotions and failure to attain goals is positively related to negative emotions. Self-related affects are more prevalent than other types of affect in achievement situations. Recent work on self-focusing tendencies following outcome (E.g. Greenberg &

Pyszczynski 1986) reveals that individuals are more self-focused after failure than after success.

Bagozzi and colleagues (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, & Pieters, 1998) found that the inverse relationship between goal attainment and negative outcome emotions was stronger than the positive relationship between goal attainment and positive outcome emotions. The implication is that the negative emotional impact of not achieving a goal is stronger than the positive impact of achieving a goal. If not achieving a goal is attributed to stable, internal and global aspects of the self, the consequent negative impact will be greater, because of the ego-threatening implication.

This is supported by work showing that feedback influences affect which in turn influences subsequent goals (Iles & Judge 2005). If failure is experienced, shame can be expected to influence the goal structure for subsequent performance events. If goals are not attained, and this is attributed to effort or institutional environment, then individuals are more likely to exert more effort rather than decrease their goals. Whereas if the attribution is made to stable, internal and global causes, an individual experiences shame, which will likely lead to a decrease or withdrawal from their goals (Iles & Judge 2005). Thompson, Altmann, & Davidson (2004) found that in a study of 319 students, following failure on a task, those students who were more disposed to feel shame showed low levels of persistence and performed poorly after the task, and rejected mitigating circumstances for their failing performance.

*Proposition 5. The greater the failure an individual experiences in carrying out tasks, and this failure is attributed to internal, stable, and global causes, the higher the potential for shame to be elicited and the more likely that future goal commitment will be reduced*

## SELF-REGULATION OF SHAME

If the individual experiences shame as a result of underperformance or anticipated underperformance, three possibilities arise for behavior: the first is that the individual withdraws from the source of the shame. . Employees, for instance, may engage in withdrawal behaviors through absenteeism, decreased commitment to the organization, decreased aspirations, and excuse development. The second is the individual expresses anger or hostility. The third is that the individual may seek to make amends and to increase efforts

to build capabilities; to engage in *restorative action*. Tangney & Dearing (2002) argue that there is no adaptive element to shame. If shame is caused by attributions to both stable and global aspects of the self, then simply increasing effort will not help the underlying problem. But other elements of the shame context suggest that shame experiences can lead to restorative behaviours.

**Internal influences**

**Shame-proneness.** Shame has been operationalized as both a state and a disposition – *shame-proneness,* or *internalised* shame (Cook: 1989, Kaufman 1985, 1989). Although most people have a capacity to experience shame at various points in their lives, it appears that across a range of negative situations, some people are more likely to respond with shame than others (Harder, 1995; Tangney, 2002). There are clear links between shame and a number of psychological symptoms, such as low self-esteem, shyness, depression, anxiety, hostility, defensive narcissism, and external locus of control (Buss, 2001; Cook 1989; Harder, 1995; Tangney, 1995).

Recent research has shown that high shame prone individuals attribute more self-blame involving attributions to stable and global elements of their character than low shame prone individuals (Lutwak, Panish, & Ferrari, 2003). Low shame prone individuals are therefore less vulnerable to the negative effects of failure than high shame-prone individuals. Thompson et al (2004) found that high shame prone individuals internalized the cause of their performance to a greater extent than low shame students, experienced greater anxiety, and greater propensity to engage in avoidant behavior. Relative to low shame students, high shame prone students assessed their performance more in terms of failure than success.

*Proposition 6a. High shame-proneness within an individual will moderate the relationship between shame experience and goal-focused behaviour, promoting shame avoidance strategies which will be likely to induce withdrawal approaches*

*Proposition 6b. Low shame-proneness within an individual will moderate the relationship between shame experience and goal-focused behavior, promoting shame avoidance strategies which will be likely to induce restorative action*

**Self-evaluation.** A second explanation for the differences between shame-induced behaviours lies in the differences in core self-evaluations which represent individuals'

enduring evaluations of themselves (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997). Core self-evaluations are comprised of four self-evaluative characteristics - self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism. Judge & Bono (2001) suggested that core self-evaluations are linked to motivation. In particular, core self-evaluations influence decisions over goal choice and goal commitment in the face of negative feedback or failure. This may not be surprising, given the nature of the four characteristics. Self-esteem is a measure of self-worth. Research has shown that following an ego threat, low self-esteem individuals tend to experience negative affect and withdraw from the task (Bandura & Locke, 1997; Baumeister, Tice & Hutton, 1989). Self-efficacy is concerned with what an individual believes they can do with their ability in a given situation (Bandura, 1997; Judge et al, 1997). Locus of control indicates whether an individual generally believes they can adapt and be personally responsible for making changes in a given situation or whether they are at the mercy of external events (Rotter, 1966). As Judge and Bono (2001: 84) argue: `Research has shown that individuals high in self-esteem, self-efficacy, and internal locus of control (3 of the 4 core traits) tend to increase effort when faced with negative discrepancies between standards and actual performance'.

*Proposition 7a. Low core self-evaluations within an individual will moderate the relationship between shame experience and goal-focused behaviour, promoting shame avoidance strategies which are likely to induce withdrawal approaches*

*Proposition 7b. High core self-evaluations within an individual will moderate the relationship between shame experience and goal-focused behavior, promoting shame avoidance strategies which are likely to induce restorative action*

**Goal-orientation.** Goal orientation is also an important factor in understanding the linkage between self-regulation and goal setting (Cron, Slocum, VandeWalle, & Fu, 2005). In achievement situations, goal orientation theory suggests that individuals pursue two types of broad goals: (i) a performance goal orientation, in which an individual wants to show an attribute and (ii) a learning goal orientation, in which an individual wants to develop an attribute or competence through mastering new tasks (Dweck, 1986, 1999; Elliott & Dweck, 1988). Underlying these orientation are beliefs about the self. In the former case, people believe their personal traits, such as intelligence, are fixed. In the latter, people believe their personal traits can be developed. In the performance goal orientation, difficulties with performance are usually interpreted as representing low ability. In the learning orientation, setbacks are more often attributed to lack of effort, and a subsequent action orientation to

increase effort. The performance orientation, may result in failure or setbacks in performance eliciting shame. Faced with the possibility that the individual might not do well with a goal, a performance orientation would elicit an unwillingness to expose a deficiency or weakness to others, driven by a desire to maintain self-esteem and avoid shame.

*Proposition 8a. A performance-orientation within an individual will moderate the relationship between shame experience and goal-focused behaviour, promoting shame avoidance strategies which will be likely to induce withdrawal approaches*

*Proposition 8b. A learning orientation within an individual will moderate the relationship between shame experience and goal-focused behavior, promoting shame avoidance strategies which will be likely to induce restorative action*

**External influences**

**Culture.** Bagozzi, Verbeke, & Gavino, 2003a) found that in a sample of Dutch (an independent-based national culture) and Filipino (an interdependent-based national culture) sales persons, both groups experienced shame in largely similar ways, but had different responses to their felt shame, with different effects on performance. The Dutch group experienced negative effects on performance whereas the Filipino group responded with enhanced customer relationship building, and helping behaviours. The difference was explained by national cultural characteristics, with the collectivist culture of the Filipinos inducing a desire to turn outwards from the self and make amends to the social group.

This suggests that culture moderates the self-regulation of shame and its effects on performance. A number of commentators have argued for cross cultural differences in the experience of the experience of the shame state, for example, in Spain (Fischer, Manstead, & Rodriguez Mosquera, 1999; Roderiguez Mosquera, Manstead & Fischer, 2002); China (Lin, Wang, & Fischer, 2004); Indonesia (Heider, 1991) and India (Menon & Schweder, 1994). Common to these explanations for the differences between national cultures tends to be the distinction between cultures that emphasise individual conceptions of the self and those which emphasise collective conceptions. In collectivist cultures, shame is interpreted as a sign that social harmony must be restored and that effort must be made to repair broken relationships.

*Proposition 9a. An individualistic conception of self will moderate the relationship between shame experience and goal-focused behaviour, promoting*

*shame avoidance strategies which will be likely to induce withdrawal approaches*

*Proposition 9b. A communalist conception of self will moderate the relationship between shame experience and goal-focused behavior, promoting shame avoidance strategies which will be likely to induce restorative action*

**Organisational use of shame mechanisms**

As a self-regulatory mechanism, shame is an important emotion in ensuring that individuals perform at a reasonable level. The risk of being seen by one's colleagues as letting the group down can have positive consequences. With respect to motivation, goal setting and feedback can be viewed as sources of perceived organizational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). POS refers to employees' 'global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being' (Eisenberger et al., 1986: 501). Employees develop perceptions of organizational support through the accumulation over time of rewards and punishments the employee has received. Favorable or unfavorable treatment received by employees indicates the organization's benevolent or malevolent orientation towards them.

Though an organization's performance management systems and cultural norms present a constant threat of sanctions and a potential source of shame, this will be moderated by the degree of perceived organizational support to the employee. For example, firms that emphasize strong use of shame mechanisms, such as degradation ceremonies and selective humiliation (Gephart 1978, Nussbaum, 2001), will have low POS and so increase the likelihood of withdrawal behavior, while firms high on POS and have, for example, a toleration of mistakes and a developmental focus towards underachievement, will reduce the likelihood of withdrawal behaviour. The threat of shame helps to socialize employees. Exposure, or the threat of exposure, to negative emotions is important to highlighting the significance of appropriate behaviour. In work on the developmental aspects of shame, shame mechanisms are important in promoting an individuals social and moral development, provided they are not used to harm the individual, but rather to socialize them (Fung, 1999; Fung and Chen, 2001; Mills, 2005). Exposure to a harsh shame environment nay promote the development of shame-proneness, whereas if the threat of shame is at relatively mild levels, this will elicit low level negative emotions that are short in duration (Shott, 1979)

*Proposition 10. Perceived organizational support will moderate the effects of goal setting and feedback on shame avoidance behavior.*

## DISCUSSION

The conceptual analysis developed here points to a number of important motivational implications of shame at work. First, shame affects the goal situation, in which the individual assesses the prospects of both success on attaining the goal, and failure to do so, which in turn elicits emotional reactions. If non-achievement is likely and this would be attributed to ability rather than effort, it is likely that shame-avoiding behaviour will be elicited. Second, in goal commitment, the effect of negative feedback is likely to induce shame if the feedback is interpreted as an attack on the credibility of the self. Third, in goal attainment, failure to reach the goal where this is attributed to stable and global aspects of the self will induce shame and also make future goal acceptance less likely.

This study contributes to theory in four respects: First, in terms of organisation theory, it argues that organisations encourage the use of shame in motivational processes, rather than shame being an unwanted outcome of them. The disciplinary nature of goal setting acts on both social and self-control and actively tries to encode the goals on the organisation into the individual. Failure to achieve goals therefore has strong implications for the sense of self and one's place among one's colleagues. The goal setting process renders the individual visible and calculable and the threat of not matching the norm or standard has strong motivational consequences.

Second, the paper extends the literature on emotions in the workplace and specifically emotions and the linkage to workplace motivation. Though there have been recent attempts to show the interaction of emotions and motivational phenomena, these have taken the role of core affect or mood, rather than discrete emotions. Because different emotions have different motivational tendencies, it is important to examine discrete emotions rather than global constructs of positive and negative affect.

Third, the study also contributes to motivational theory in organisations. Though shame has been characterised as the negative side of motivational phenomena, it represents an important aspect of self-regulation. All discrepancies between ideal and ought and current self are linked to experiences of shame (Tangney et al, 1997) which makes shame reduction and elimination a highly important element in ensuring motivation.

Fourth, the study contributes to the literature on shame specifically. Negative emotions elicit more intensity than positive emotions, and shame elicits more intense feelings than other negative emotions, which has important implications for motivational impact. The literature on shame has been focused largely on developmental issues and with distinguishing shame from other negative self-conscious emotions; research on shame in work settings has been less evident. In particular, it has been assumed that promotes only avoidance behaviour. But it is argued here that an approach-oriented view is sustainable, and that shame is a useful emotion in ensuring that individuals perform at a reasonable level.

A focus on shame also helps to inform other important motivation-related phenomena. Shame is one of the main self-esteem regulatory mechanisms. Self-esteem is defined as the attitude a person has towards him- or herself. It can be seen as the sum of evaluations of a person's characteristics (Rosenberg, 1965). Shame, a relatively transient emotional experience emotional experience, is distinct from more global and enduring cognitive conceptions of self, such as low self-esteem; that is, feelings of shame arise from specific failures or transgressions. But shame's role in self-esteem regulation is important.

Shame experiences also add to our understanding of self-efficacy. Adding beliefs about the perception of others in case of achievement and non-achievement of goals and the subsequent eliciting of social emotions allows a higher-order emotional component of the cognitive evaluation to be included in goal setting efficacy (Bandura, 1991).

**Implications for managers**

If the emotions are linked to motivation and self-conscious motivations such as shame in particular, then it is important that managerial attention to such emotions occurs. For individual employees, the risk of being seen (or perceived to be seen) by one's colleagues as not pulling one's weight or letting the group down has positive consequences. The downside is that if too much emphasis is placed on shame, individuals will seek to avoid difficult goals and tough assignments for fear of exposure. In many environments where creativity and innovation are prized, individuals must be allowed to fail or make mistakes without thinking that there is any shame in doing so. For managers, therefore, the goal setting process and the feedback process should be designed to focus both on ability and effort and where ability is lacking, to produce positive encouragement and training where appropriate. An important consideration is the fundamental attribution error which, regardless of actual performance, those observing the performance of others are more likely to attribute poor performance to

internal stable conditions (e.g. ability). Managers should be aware that the possibility of this fundamental bias when handling individuals in a motivational context.

**Suggestions for research**

We have examined how shame is linked to motivational phenomena such as goal setting and goal commitment. More attention could also be given to how other motivational constructs can be integrated valuably with self-conscious emotions, such as needs theory, equity theory and justice theory. An integration of primary and secondary emotions into theories of motivation would also serve to deepen our understanding of these interrelated phenomena. The role of self-conscious emotions such as shame in work motivation would benefit from empirical research both from a between-individuals design and a within-individual design.

Other `hidden' affective motivational factors, such as embarrassment, humiliation, guilt and fear also deserve wider attention in the area of work motivation.

An important issue is whether shame, or the propensity to feel shame, is differentiated by gender. Ferguson & Crowley (1997) found shame proneness in a sample of college women was associated with feminine role orientations connected to passivity and dependency. And Tangney & Dearing (1998) found that across a range of samples, from school children to adults, female respondents reported greater shame and guilt that men consistently. But more research is needed to establish whether self-conscious emotions such as shame are differentiated along gender lines, particularly in work environments.

Emotions are not mere epiphenomena in the process of motivation but are central to it. In particular, certain emotions are central to social control and to the adherence of individuals to social norms and goals (Schott, 1979). Negative self-conscious emotions such as shame are important in deepening our understanding of motivational phenomena.

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