ABSTRACT

This presentation will introduce a new model for thinking about how third parties evaluate and respond to justice failure in organizations. We define justice failure as a discrete event where a person who commits a moral violation and benefits from it goes unpunished. Our model is based on the notion that justice failure can be experienced as a meaning threat that evokes uncomfortable and often unconscious emotional arousal that the third party perceiver of justice failure is motivated to alleviate. Drawing on principles from the Meaning Maintenance Model (MMM) (Heine, Proulx, & Vohs, 2006), we theorize that one way third parties can reduce negative arousal following exposure to justice failure is by affirming an alternative meaning framework to the one under threat, a mechanism referred to in the MMM as fluid compensation. We extend the predictions of the MMM by suggesting that the choice of which alternative framework to affirm is driven by an identity that happens to be highly accessible within the current structure of the working self concept. In a series of studies, we test the predictions of our model using various identities as a source of identity-driven affirmation.