

In **“When Excuses Don’t Work: The Persistent Injustice Effect among Black Managers,”** Martin Davidson and Raymond A. Friedman examine the underlying dynamics of the differences between blacks’ and whites’ responses to social accounts—explanations or excuses for negative actions and events. Across four studies, they found that when black respondents observed unjust behaviors toward a hypothetical black victim, social accounts had a weak impact on perceptions of injustice, confirming the presence of what they call the “persistent injustice effect.” They also found that social accounts have a weaker impact on perceptions of injustice than on disapproval of the harm-doer and suggest that the persistent injustice effect results from a combination of in-group identification with the victim and the respondent’s personal experiences with injustice. These two factors, they theorize, combine to create greater empathy for the victim.

The focus of Davidson’s and Friedman’s study is on perceptions of injustice, not disapproval. They posit that social accounts will in all cases work to reduce disapproval of the harm-doer, because attributions of blame are affected by intent, even though in some cases perceptions of injustice will persist despite the use of an account. In this way, the authors are introducing a conceptual distinction that has not been made in previous studies.

This paper provides an explanation for why differences in the level of perceived injustice might result from the group identity of perpetrators, victims, and observers of unjust acts. Both the history of particular social groups and the relationships triggered by that history affect perceptions of injustice. Justice-related motivations and cognitions

appear to be affected by who is being hurt and how they stand in relation to the dominant group. Future theories of justice, and theories of how managers can shape perceptions of injustice through social accounts, must be informed by an understanding of the social structure in which these conflicts take place.

To request a copy of the full research paper, please contact Martin at <http://www.leveragingdifference.com/contact/>.