Just Des(s)erts?
The Racial Polarization of Perceptions of Criminal Injustice

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Sociologists have long been interested in how reactions to deviance influence social order and consensus. However, classic statements on this subject present contrasting hypotheses. This article extends previous work by examining how the extensive media coverage of an interracial homicide influences public attitudes toward the criminal justice system. Initial results indicate that race, education, and police contact directly effect perceptions of criminal injustice. Perceptions of injustice are especially high among well-educated blacks who have had recent contact with the police. Further analysis reveals that the media coverage of the homicide seems temporarily to consolidate public confidence in the police and criminal courts. However, this effect varies by race and education. We discuss the theoretical implications of these findings.

Emile Durkheim's (1960) observation that deviance is a normal and necessary part of the development of society's collective conscience is a centerpiece of modern sociology. Most modern sociologists agree that deviance and public reactions to it play a major part in defining boundaries between normative and nonnormative behavior, often helping to draw lines between acceptable and unacceptable activities, and seemingly enhancing social order and societal consensus. However, Kai Erikson (1966) added a different dimension to this Durkeimian insight in his seminal sociolarical analysis of the Salem witch trials and the accompanying hysteria.

The Salem witch hunt spread through the Massachusetts Bay Colony during a crisis of uncertainty about the purposes of Puritanism at the end of the 17th century. The trials may at first have allayed these uncertainties, but the ensuing hysteria eventually

threatened to divide the colony in unexpected ways. Although the witch hunt began predictably enough, with suspicions focused on a slave working in the home of a local minister, the hysteria ultimately produced allegations of witchcraft against the pastor of Boston's First Church who was also president of Harvard College. The witch trials themselves began to undermine the authority and legitimacy of the institutions they putatively supported. The trials spun out of control and in a direction that threatened to tear the collectivity apart. Leaders of the colony eventually intervened to bring this public spectacle to a halt (Erikson 1966).

Highly publicized reactions to deviance, therefore, have the capacity to engender conflict as well as consensus. Indeed, when individuals from identifiable groups are selected for treatment as deviant, it can contribute to the creation of a permanent class of deviants (Erikson 1966:197; Mead 1918; Hagan & Palloni 1990). Erikson (1966:197) called this a "deployment pattern" and writes that "the Puritan deployment pattern was based on the almost permanent exclusion of a deviant class—a category of misfits who would normally be expected to engage in unacceptable activities and to oppose the rest of the social order." Usually, the "misfits" so deployed are drawn from disadvantaged groups in society (Schur 1980).

There is much to learn about highly publicized deployments of deviance, which may sometimes take the forms of dramatizations of evil (Tannenbaum 1938), degradation ceremonies (Garfinkle 1956), or demonized moral panics (Cohen 1972). Our article extends previous work by examining how media coverage of an interracial homicide influences public attitudes toward the justice system. During the collection of data in a survey on justice issues, three black men shot and killed a white woman in a robbery at an upscale Toronto cafe—coincidentally named "Just Desserts." This crime gained extensive media coverage from newspapers, radio, and television.

The event and the resulting coverage at the time when we were in the midst of an ongoing survey created a unique opportunity to examine the influence of highly publicized deployments of deviance further. Before turning to the Toronto data, we review past work.

As deployments of deviance are seldom predictable, the majority of previous work has been historical. For example, Erikson's exploration of deployments of deviance in the Massachusetts Bay Colony was guided by a detached objectivity that historical perspective sometimes allows. His description of the Salem witchcraft hysteria made it possible to see how innocent people can be swept up in deployments of deviance. However, Erikson also emphasizes the relevance of his historical work for

understanding contemporary deployments of deviance in the print and electronic media. He writes:

> In our own past, the trial and punishment of offenders were staged in the market place and afforded the crowd a chance to participate in a direct, active way. Today, of course, we no longer parade deviants in the town square or expose them to the carnival atmosphere of a Tyburn, but it is interesting that the "reform" which brought about this change in penal practice coincided almost exactly with the development of newspapers as a medium of mass information. Perhaps this is no more than an accident of history, but it is nonetheless true that newspapers (and now radio and television) offer much the same kind of entertainment as public hangings or a Sunday visit to the local gaol. A considerable portion of what we call "news" is devoted to reports about deviant behavior and its consequences, and it is no simple matter to explain why these items should be considered newsworthy or why they should command the extraordinary attention they do. (P. 12)

Erikson (p. 5) observes that although this kind of public attention to deviance is central to our sociological understanding of how the boundaries and institutions of society are created and maintained, these processes have not received enough empirical attention. The work of Jeffrey Alexander (1988a, 1988b), however, is a notable exception.

A Revised Durkeimian Perspective

Alexander (1988a) draws on Bellah (1970), Turner (1969), Douglas (1966), Keller (1963), and Eisenstadt (1971) to elucidate the Durkheimian role played by media narrations in shaping public reactions to highly publicized events. Alexander emphasizes that sharply drawn symbolic divisions between the sacred and the profane often play a pivotal role in social crises surrounding highly publicized crimes. He suggests that states of intensified solidarity, or "communitas," can overtake expressions of social conflict in shaping public perceptions of these events, even though underlying conflicts may stubbornly persist (see also Collins 1988). Alexander (1988b) illustrates the manner in which such processes can temporarily obscure underlying conflicts in his analysis of the American experience with Watergate.

Alexander's central thesis is that at its media narrated-peak, Watergate "was a ritualized and liminal event, a period of intense generalization that had powerful claims to truth" (1988b:204). The key to this was the televised coverage of the first several months of the Watergate hearings. Alexander notes: "The decision to hold and to televise the Senate Select Committee hearings responded to the tremendous anxiety that had built up within important segments of the population" (p. 199).

The hearings combined elements of a "civic ritual" and a "sacred process" in which the nation could collectively participate in reaching a generalized judgment about the Watergate crime. A crucial aspect of this process was that it temporarily suppressed strong and enduring conflicts: "The developing ritual quality forced committee members to mask their often sharp internal divisions behind commitments to civic universalism" (p. 200). The medium of television provided the stage on which this play was performed:

> The framing devices of the television medium contributed to the deracination that produced this phenomenological status. The in-camera editing, the repetition, juxtaposition, simplification, and other techniques that made the mythical story were invisible. Add to this "bracketed experience" the hushed voices of the announcers, the pomp and ceremony of the "event," and we have the recipe for constructing, within the medium of television, a sacred time and sacred place. (P. 200)

The result was that viewers saw "a highly simplified drama," with "heroes and villains formed in due course," and "this drama created a deeply serious symbolic occasion" (p. 201). That is, television helped to create a "liminal, ritualized" event of "intensified solidarity" surrounding Watergate.

Alexander demonstrates with survey data that this process involved a substantial shift in public opinion against President Nixon, and that this consolidation crucially involved a change in the publicly expressed views of moderate and liberal Republicans during the first several months of the Watergate Hearings. The latter group's timely acknowledgment and condemnation of Nixon's involvement in covering up Watergate "helped define the symbolic centre as a distinct area, and it demonstrated that this centre was neither liberal nor conservative" (p. 208).

However, Alexander also notes that "[a]lthough an enormous ritual experience had clearly occurred, any contemporary application of Durkheimianism must acknowledge that such modern rituals are never complete" (p. 205). Even in this period of "liminal transcendence," for example, many Southerners remained supportive of the president, leading Alexander to conclude that "the recharged antinomies of the cultural order, and the emotional intensity which underlies them, continue to create moral conflict and, often, to support significantly different cultural orientations" (p. 212). A result was that the aftermath of Watergate and its initial intensification of solidarity actually led to a reemergence and heightening of conflict in the form of challenges to authoritative control, including a succession of scandals, most recently in the late 1990s "Travelgate" and "Whitewater."

Our focal point here is to investigate whether similar processes were involved in shaping public perceptions of crimi-

nal justice during a period of intense media coverage of an inter-
racial robbery-homicide in Toronto, Canada. On the one hand,
prior research and Erikson's analysis suggests that designated
groups (i.e., young black males) are disproportionately swept up
(i.e., through involuntary stops) in deployments of deviance that
follow highly publicized interracial incidents. Higher-status mem-
bers of these groups, who in part have sought to escape such
treatment through social mobility, may also find themselves sub-
jected to such deployments.

On the other hand, Alexander's Durkheimian perspective
also suggests that higher-status minority group members may be
placed under enormous pressure to temper their dissenting
views during periods of interracial crisis. Like the moderate and
liberal Republicans during Watergate, these minority-group
members may be placed under great and special pressure to join
in expressions of solidarity that help to define a symbolic center
in which conflict and dissent temporarily are suppressed. In this
way, media stimulation and coverage of deployments of deviance
may momentarily consolidate public support at the expense of
remaining minority-group members who persist in dissent.

Of course, the location and timing of highly publicized
crimes cannot be easily anticipated or controlled so as to allow
carefully designed analyses for purposes of determining whether
generic processes like those we have described organize these
public events. A result is that we know less about the evolution of
these events than we otherwise might. However, the events we
describe next occurred serendipitously in the midst of our ongo-
ing survey of perceptions of criminal justice in Toronto, Canada.

A Robbery-Homicide at the Just Desserts Cafe

Shortly before midnight on 5 April 1994, three young black
men burst through the doors of an upscale, midtown Toronto
cafe called Just Desserts and held 20 patrons and staff at gun-
point. The assailants demanded money and jewelry, and after en-
countering some resistance, one of the gunmen pulled the trig-
ger of a sawed-off shotgun, mortally wounding a young, white
woman named Georgia "ViVi" Leimonis. The assailants escaped
in a waiting car driven by a fourth suspect (Hall & Stancu 1994;
Stewart 1994a).

The Just Desserts incident received saturation coverage in the
local media. The shooting was front-page news in both the *To-
ronto Star* and the *Toronto Sun*, the city's most widely circulated
newspapers, on 9 of the next 14 days. During this two-week pe-
riod, the *Star* ran 41 and the *Sun* ran 35 stories and editorials on
the shooting. Radio and television news coverage of this event
was also very extensive. However, our discussion would be incom-
plete if we focused only on the *quantity* of media information

released to the public. Although mention of the large number of news stories devoted to the shooting helps illustrate the fact that most Torontonians were probably aware of this high-profile crime, it tells us little about the *qualitative* nature of the news coverage. Thus, in order to better understand how the media constructed the Just Desserts shooting, we must also consider the role played by news narratives.

News narratives refer to the "stories" told to the public through various media sources. These "stories" usually consist of plots which have beginnings and endings and easily identified central characters. As Jacobs (1996:1240–46) notes, news narratives can also be recognized by their comic, romantic, and tragic forms (see also Alexander & Smith 1993:156). Social scientists increasingly recognize the importance of narrative analysis for investigating issues of social process and social change. Indeed, a number of studies have already demonstrated that social actions and identities are guided by narrative understandings (see Darnton 1975; Schudson 1982; Jacobs 1996). As discussed below, the narratives used by the Toronto media clearly depict the Just Desserts shooting as a social crisis and an encounter between the sacred and the profane.

Although Metropolitan Toronto is a city of approximately four million people, it has never experienced more than a hundred homicides in a year. In fact, over the past two decades, homicide rates have declined almost by half. Furthermore, compared with U.S. cities, stranger homicides are relatively uncommon. Nonetheless, the Just Desserts shooting provoked headlines of "Urban Terrorism" (Toronto Star 1994a). The press proclaimed that the crime was committed "In Cold Blood" (Toronto Sun 1994a) and that the suspects had showed "No Mercy" to their victims (Stewart 1994a). The Just Desserts incident was also said to represent the fact that criminals were "Getting More Vicious" (Stewart 1994a) and that a new type of criminal activity, involving the "Lowest of the Low," was sweeping the city (Lamberti 1994). Commentators further urged that "Toronto the Good" had lost its innocence and was experiencing urban violence heretofore associated with American cities (Blatchford 1994b, 1994c; Zerbisias 1994). Indeed, the chief of police remarked that "in the 10 years I was in the homicide squad, I certainly have not seen anything quite as horrible as this" (Lamberti 1994). Echoing these sentiments, one police sergeant warned that violent crime had increased so dramatically in Toronto that "wherever you have people gathered together with money in their pockets, they are liable to get knocked off" (Mascoll 1994a).

Media depictions of victim and villains of this social crisis were sharply drawn. As a result, the specter of interracial violence pervaded coverage of the incident. For example, on 7 April the front pages of both the *Star* and the *Sun* featured professional

quality pictures of the young, attractive, white female victim and grainy security camera photographs of the young, black male suspects. These photos were repeated on the 8 April front page of the *Sun* and on page 6 of the *Star*.

Four days later the police released the name and earlier arrest photo of a suspect: a Caribbean Canadian immigrant, Lawrence "the Brownman" Brown. Brown's picture, which depicts a sullen, angry-looking black man with unruly dreadlocks, appeared on the front page of the *Sun*, alongside a funeral photo of the white victim's father grieving over the open casket of his daughter. Photos of Brown appeared in the *Sun* for the next four days, twice on the front page, usually with a photo of the white female victim. Brown's photo also appeared on the front page of the *Star* on four consecutive days.

Brown surrendered to the police on 14 April, and the following day both the *Star* and the *Sun* published front-page photos of his first court appearance. Stories in both papers stressed the profane nature of this event, noting that Brown appeared cocky and that he smiled and smirked at the crowd and for the cameras (Robertson 1994; Wilkes 1994). The front-page *Star* picture featured the handcuffed Brown smiling while being escorted from court. Such coverage openly supported the claim, made by several news narratives, that the Just Desserts shooting represented the classic confrontation of "Good vs. Evil" (Blatchford 1994a).

Although the press focused a great deal of attention on the pain and suffering of the murder victim and her family (Small 1994; Burnett 1994a; Burnett 1994b; Christopoulos 1994a), early narratives of the shooting also clearly indicate that ViVi Leimonis was not the only perceived victim of the Just Desserts shooting. Indeed, the incident was taken to symbolize a more general threat to Canada's tradition of middle-class, civil society. In a narrative that was typical of much of the narrative, Christie Blatchford, one of the city's most popular columnists, argued that the Just Desserts shooting was a landmark event because it clearly illustrated that the citizens of Toronto were no longer safe to walk the streets:

> Going out for a piece of apple crumble pie and a coffee after the ball game, to a nice little cafe in a chi-chi midtown neighbourhood, can now cost you your life. The touching innocence of this excursion, and the unthinkable price a young woman named Georgina Leimonis paid for it at Just Desserts on Tuesday night, may be what sets this shooting apart from all the rest and why it has become an instant benchmark, one of the dreadful defining moments by which a city measures its descent into New York style fear and loathing. (Blatchford 1994b)

Blatchford (1994c) later lamented, "It's not the end of the world, and there will always be much to like about Toronto. But

changed it is, and a city's safety and self-confidence, like a wo-
man's virginity, is lost only once and is never retrieved."

So not only ViVi Leimonis but all "decent citizens" of To-
ronto were portrayed as the victims of this crime. Similarly, the
city's reported problem with "black crime" was identified as the
villain, along with the individual shooting suspects. Much of the
media attention, in fact, focused on the fact that the suspects
were black, Caribbean immigrants to Canada. The chief of police
was one of the first to point fingers at the immigrant community
when he commented that "our culture is not accustomed to this
type of savagery" (Lamberti 1994). Several editorials argued that
violent crimes were largely the result of "two decades of choosing
too many of the wrong immigrants" (Blatchford 1994b) and that
the government should therefore "turf out crooked aliens" (Mac-
Donald 1994). And the police union president urged the depor-
tation of illegal immigrants and the dissemination of race-crime
statistics, which are not routinely collected in Canada (see Smyth
1994; Barber 1994; Gangley 1994). Even the funeral for the
shooting victim was not exempt from the racial conflict which
pervaded the shooting. While giving the eulogy, the head of the
Greek Orthodox Church in Canada endorsed the use of race-
crime-nationality statistics to limit immigration to Canada from
selected countries (Blatchford 1994c; Wilkes & Small 1994).

Along with portraying the Just Desserts shooting as a social
crisis and drawing a strong distinction between the villains and
victims in the case, media narratives also portrayed Torontonians
as united in their sympathy for the victim's family and their out-
rage toward the robbery suspects. Special attention was given to
the fact that a large number of citizens visited the murder scene
in the days immediately following the killing to leave flowers and
notes of condolence and to express their concern over what was
happening to their city (Lem 1994a). Extensive coverage was also
given to the victim's funeral, which was attended by more than
3,000 people (Wilkes & Small 1994), most of them strangers, who
were "moved to tears" by the tragic nature of the event (Christ-
opoulos 1994b). On the surface, such narratives seem to support
Durkheim's idea that public reactions to crime can bring a com-
munity closer together and subsequently reinforce social norms
and increase social consensus.

Once the details of the Just Desserts shooting were clear, and
public reaction had been established, news narratives suggested
that a number of public figures attempted to claim the "hero"
role in this tragedy. Immediately after the shooting, special em-
phasis was placed on the police manhunt and the "heroic" efforts
of individual police officers who "worked around the clock" in
their efforts to identify and apprehend the suspects (Mascoll
1994b; Conroy 1994; Stewart 1994b; Stewart 1994c; Stewart &
Hann 1994; Tyler 1994). The chief of police used this opportu-

nity to argue for increased police funding so that the police force would be in a better position to fight the scourge of violent crime in the future (Gangley 1994; Lamberti 1994). Politicians and citizen groups also stepped forward to call for tougher sentences for violent offenders (McCarthy 1994; Edwards 1994), stricter gun control legislation (Moon 1994; Durkan 1994; Harder & Fife 1994; Coutts 1994; Lem 1994b; Brent 1994a), and a return to the death penalty (Toronto Sun 1994b; Luyk 1994). Finally, the Canadian minister of immigration responded to the race-crime-immigration debate with promises to "get tough" on criminals and to "plug immigration loopholes" (Thompson 1994; Sarick 1994; Campion-Smith 1994). These responses served to assure the public that the Just Desserts incident was being treated seriously and that action would soon be taken to decrease the risk of violent victimization.

In summary, most of the news coverage of the Just Desserts shooting portrayed the event as both a tragedy and a social crisis. Through news narratives, the white female victim came to symbolize Toronto's innocence, while the black suspects represented a foreign, outside threat to the principles of law and order. However, it must be stressed that the dominant narrative, discussed above, was not the only narrative developed with respect to this case. As Jacobs (1996) demonstrates, newspapers often use multiple and overlapping narratives in their coverage of social crises, and these narratives are often subject to change. A competing narrative with respect to the Just Desserts shooting maintained that the media and the police were blaming all black people for the action of a few and that the negative portrayal of the black community would eventually be used to justify further discrimination against black people (DiManno 1994a, 1994b; Toronto Star 1994b; Maharaj 1994; Brent 1994b; Roberts 1994; Moodie 1994; Desir 1994; Armstrong 1994).

Within this second narrative, the black community is viewed as the victim, while the media and police are portrayed as the racist villains. However, it should be stressed that this narrative did not appear in the days immediately after the shooting. Most of the discussion of possible media and police racism did not take place until after the suspects were in custody. In fact, this second narrative did not receive front-page coverage until five weeks after the shooting (Campbell 1994). Furthermore, in no case did proponents of the racism narrative suggest that the black suspects were innocent or that they should not be severely punished for their crimes. The second narrative was also tempered by the fact that several minority observers had gone on record to argue that the black community should take at least some of the responsibility for the causes of and solutions to black crime (see Maharaj 1994; Foster 1994a, 1994b).

The implications of the Just Desserts incident, therefore, stretch far beyond the robbery-homicide. This incident involved conceptions of fairness and justice, as reflected in the perceived treatment the legal system provides citizens of differing social and economic backgrounds. The shooting at the Just Desserts cafe and the coincident survey described below offer a unique opportunity to observe the role the media and deployments of deviance can play in shaping public opinion about crime and justice issues.

For example, it is possible in the context of the Just Desserts shooting to explore whether, and if so how, saturation media coverage of this kind of interracial crime can influence majority and minority group perceptions of the criminal justice system. More specifically, it is possible to observe whether there is a generic, time-bound shift toward the appearance of solidarity of a kind that Alexander's Durkheimian perspective anticipates, a shift that uniquely involves higher-status minority-group members and temporarily obscures a continuing distrust in the minority community of the criminal justice system. This opportunity presented by the time and location of our research is set against a backdrop of U.S. studies showing patterns of similarity as well as difference in public responses to criminal justice issues.

Social Sources of Perceptions of Criminal Injustice

A well-established research literature demonstrates considerable similarity among demographic groups in rating the seriousness of different crimes (Wolfgang et al. 1985; Warr, Meier, & Erickson 1983; Cullen, Link, & Polanzi 1982; Hamilton & Rytina 1980; McCleary et al. 1981; Schrager & Short 1980) and in assigning punishments for these crimes (Walker & Hough 1988; Blumstein & Cohen 1980; Stinchcombe et al. 1980). This has prompted some scholars to conclude that there is a high degree of societal consensus with respect to issues of criminal justice (see Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990). However, while there may be general agreement regarding crime seriousness and preferred sentences, other studies indicate that there are significant demographic differences, especially racial differences, in perceptions of how criminal justice is applied.

Race

The evidence is clear that a large proportion of African Americans perceive the courts as well as the police as discriminating on the basis of race (Hagan & Albonetti 1982; New York State Judicial Commission 1991; Mann & Wilbanks 1996; Wilbanks 1987). For example, far fewer black than white respondents agreed in an American Bar Foundation study that an accused

person can get a fair trial and that judges are generally honest and fair (Curran 1977). Two 1988 New York Times/WCBS-TV and Newsday polls found that black respondents were more than twice as likely as whites to perceive court favoritism for white defendants (Meislin 1988; Friedman 1988). In the same year, the *New York Law Journal* asked 402 New Yorkers to "suppose two people—one black and one white—are convicted of identical crimes. Whom do you think would get the lighter sentence?" About seven in ten black respondents, compared with three in ten white respondents, predicted the black offender would get the longer sentence (Kaplan 1988).

Hagan and Albonetti (1982) used data from a large national survey to examine divisions, particularly those of race and class, in public perceptions of criminal injustice. They constructed a Perceived Criminal Injustice Scale. Their multivariate analysis of responses on this scale revealed that black Americans were considerably more likely to perceive discrimination and bias within the criminal justice system than white Americans, even after class, education, income, and age were taken into account. A recent California study also found that, in general, African Americans perceive much higher levels of police and courtroom discrimination than did Hispanic, Asian, and white Americans (California Judicial Council 1994).

The racial gap in perceptions of the criminal justice system was also widely noted in the wake of the highly publicized O. J. Simpson trial. Several public opinion polls revealed that while the majority of white Americans believed Simpson was guilty of the crime, the majority of black Americans thought he was innocent. Furthermore, blacks were much more likely than whites to think that Simpson was the victim of a police conspiracy to frame him for murder (Whitaker 1995).

The fact that blacks perceive higher levels of discrimination in the criminal justice system is consistent with studies showing that blacks also tend to evaluate police performance more negatively than whites (Parker, Onyekwuluje, & Murty 1995; Apple & O'Brien 1983; Peek, Lowe, & Alston 1981; Peek, Alston, & Lowe 1978; Boggs & Galliher 1975). For example, Alpert and Dunham (1988; see also Mann 1993:164) included 1960 and 1980 (Mariel) Cuban immigrants as well as black and white Americans in a 1988 study of perceptions of the Miami police. As with previous studies, the black and Mariel respondents were more negative and suspicious of the police than respondents from other groups. Some suggest that differences in police treatment by race and/or skin color may explain variation in attitudes toward the criminal justice system (Hagan & Albonetti 1982).

Involuntary Police Contact

A second factor influencing perceptions of injustice is previous interactions with the police. Research in Pittsburgh suggests that involuntary police contacts are a major source of negative attitudes toward the police (Scaglion & Condon 1980). Wiley and Hudik (1974) also report that formal police stops and interrogations are the most sensitive of police/citizen encounters and that citizen hostility often results when police officers fail to give reasons for their actions. Concomitantly, ethnographic research suggests that blacks are more at risk than whites of discretionary police stops and searches (Mann 1993; Johns 1992; Wilkins 1985; Georges-Abeyie 1984). In a classic observational analysis of police patrol practices, Skolnick (1966) observed that police tend to perceive young black males as "symbolic assailants" and therefore to stop and treat them differently when they encounter them on the street. Anderson (1990) confirms this impression in more recent ethnographic research.

Researchers further suggest that the police are often rude, insulting, and disrespectful when they interact with black and other minority citizens (Mann 1993; Wilkins 1985), exhibiting prejudicial attitudes toward African Americans in their comments and behavior (Black 1980; Anderson 1990). This may partly explain why young blacks are more likely than young whites to feel aggrieved by the police after being stopped (Parisi et al. 1979). Meanwhile, many higher-status as well as lower-status blacks report discretionary stops by the police (Boggs & Galliher 1975; Raines 1970; Murphy & Watson 1970; Bayley & Mendelson 1969). Hagan and Albonetti (1982) speculate that this vulnerability to police stops may account for a tendency they observe among black Americans with professional degrees to be especially likely to perceive criminal injustice. Andrew Hacker (1993:189–90) observed in his book *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile and Unequal,* "even if the police do not draw their guns, most black Americans can recall encounters where they were treated with discourtesy, hostility, or worse. At issue is a proclivity of police personnel to judge individuals first by their color."

Social Status

Other efforts to understand racial dimensions of perceived injustice have focused on more generic status effects. Conflict theorists hold that the criminal justice system protects the advantaged classes (Turk 1977; Taylor, Walton, & Young 1973; Chambliss & Seidman 1971; Quinney 1970). Recent Canadian research suggests that the general public does indeed perceive the criminal justice system to be biased in favor of the wealthy (Bril-

lon, Louis-Guerin, & Lamarche 1984). A recent survey by the Canadian Sentencing Commission, for example, found that over three-quarters of the public believe that wealthy offenders receive more lenient sentences than poor offenders (Roberts 1988). Similar perceptions have been reported in other public opinion polls (see review in Roberts 1988).

A more direct assessment of the class conflict perspective was undertaken with a national sample of Americans (Hagan & Albonetti 1982). Class was operationalized in relational terms, and members of the surplus (unemployed) population were found to perceive more criminal injustice than individuals in other classes. Yet status and class measures did little to explain race differences in perceptions of injustice. Indeed, strong race differences remained after controls were introduced for class, income, and education. Furthermore, race differences in perceptions of injustice increased with class position. In the professional/managerial class, blacks perceived significantly more discrimination than whites. Smaller but still statistically significant race effects were observed in the working class, while there were no significant race differences in the surplus population. This finding is consistent with a number of other American studies which reveal that higher-status blacks hold attitudes toward the police that are either just as negative (Alpert & Dunham 1988; Apple & O'Brien 1983) or more negative (Peek et al. 1981; Murphy & Watson 1970; Raines 1970) than those of lower-status blacks. Such findings demonstrate the necessity of exploring the intersection of race and social status in understanding perceptions of injustice.

The Media

Attempts to measure the effects of the mass media on public opinion have a long tradition. Despite the predictions of many social scientists, early surveys suggested that media effects on public opinion were rather small (Klapper 1960) and that any impact was mediated by interpersonal contexts (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee 1954; Katz & Lazarsfeld 1964). In recent years, however, the notion that the media have only a small influence on public opinion has come into serious question. Indeed, several researchers, using quite different methodologies, have found that media coverage of important political issues often has a significant effect on public opinion (see Iyengar & Kinder 1987; Brody 1991; Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey 1987; Zaller 1992). As Iyengar (1991) notes, a single news story or broadcast may not have a large effect, but the effect of many stories over several weeks, months, or years may be quite large (also see the discussion of Alexander's work above).

Unfortunately, less is known about how news coverage of specific criminal events like the Just Desserts shooting influences

public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that media impact might be substantial. For example, several studies have shown that the general public overwhelmingly cites the media as their primary source of information about crime (Knowles 1982; Broadhurst & Indermaur 1982; Roberts 1992). Thus, while very few people have actually been to criminal court, nearly everyone has a strong opinion about the court system (Moore 1985). Furthermore, various content analyses have revealed that the media greatly over-represent violent crime in their coverage of crime stories (Liska & Baccaglini 1990; Doob 1984). This often leads the public to overestimate the actual amount of violent crime that occurs (Roberts 1992; Sheley & Ashkins 1981; Garofalo 1981; Davis 1952) and may thus explain why individuals who derive their information from the media often express greater fear of crime (Roberts 1992), view judges and offenders more negatively (Roberts & Doob 1990), and have more punitive views about sentencing (Barrile 1984).

A Reprise

It seems likely, therefore, that a combination of factors are joined in influencing public perceptions of criminal justice. Although these factors have not been brought together and jointly analyzed in past research, the constellation of findings suggests that media coverage of crime and criminal justice may interact with other forces—specifically, race, police stops, and social status—to polarize public perceptions.

The Durkheimian view suggests that highly publicized crimes consolidate the collective conscience by defining kinds of crime and criminals as unacceptable. Erikson's analysis suggests that specific groups as well as acts and individuals are deployed selectively in these public designations of deviance. Innocent members of designated groups disproportionately are swept up in such deployments. Even higher-status members of disadvantaged groups, who in part have sought to escape such treatment through social mobility, may still find themselves subjected to such deployments through discretionary police stops. However, Alexander's work suggests that in highly publicized crisis situations, higher-status minority-group members may experience strong pressures to join in expressions of group solidarity. These pressures can become particularly intense as victims and offenders become highly publicized symbols of the sacred and profane and as secular and religious concerns are merged in ritualized expressions of civil solidarity.

In these exceptional circumstances, media coverage may consolidate public opinion at the expense of lower-status minority-group members who may become isolated in their expressions of

suspicion and distrust of the criminal justice system. Indeed, Alexander's Durkheimian perspective suggests that there may be generic processes that lead to these patterns of public opinion in crisis situations arising from highly publicized crimes. However, we do not know how, or even whether, such processes generally occur. There simply is no well-developed empirical research literature that explores and confirms our speculation about the factors that operate in contemporary deployments of deviance.

A Serendipitous Survey

The Survey

The data used in this research come from a public opinion survey that began interviews 12 days before the Just Desserts shooting. As one of the most ethnically diverse cities in North America, Toronto provides a unique opportunity to examine racial dimensions of perceptions of criminal injustice. A sample was drawn with a 60% response rate from the adult population (18 years and older) living in private homes in Metropolitan Toronto.[1] The sample was stratified in a two-stage probability selection using random-digit dialing to include approximately equal numbers of self-identified black, Chinese, and white respondents. Telephone interviews were conducted in English or Chinese by the Institute for Social Research at York University (see Northrup 1994). The questionnaire included a number of open-ended questions that were used to collect qualitative background material that we introduce in a concluding discussion of our findings.

Measuring Perceptions of Criminal Injustice

The primary purpose of the survey was to measure variation in public perceptions of criminal justice. The items used to measure these perceptions are an elaboration of the Perceived Criminal Injustice Scale originally developed by Hagan and Albonetti (1982). A series of items asked about the treatment of specific groups relative to others. The contrasts presented to respondents included "persons who do not speak English versus those who do," "black people versus white people," "Chinese people versus white people," "poor people versus wealthy people," "younger people versus older people," and "women versus men." Various items asked about treatment by police and by judges.

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[1] The overall response rate for this survey is calculated as the number of completed interviews divided by the number of eligible households. This method of calculation is more conservative than other methods of determining response rates. The sample characteristics are strongly consistent with population descriptions from the 1991 Canadian census. This increases our confidence that the sample is representative of people living in the metropolitan Toronto area and that our survey findings are generalizable.

Respondents were first asked to indicate whether the contrast group received similar or different treatment. Responses indicating no perceived differential treatment were scored 0. Those who did perceive differential treatment were then asked whether the contrast group was treated "much better," "somewhat better," "somewhat worse," or "much worse." Answers to these items were recoded as 1 if the respondent was uncertain of the magnitude of differences in treatment, 2 if the respondent reported "somewhat worse" or "somewhat better," and 3 if the respondent reported "much worse" or "much better." Finally, a third set of items asked respondents to comment on how often they thought differential treatment occurred. Responses to this item were coded from 1 if the respondent felt differential treatment "almost never" occurred to 5 if the respondent perceived it as occurring "often." The different items tapped two dimensions, the magnitude and frequency of differential treatment, and they were multiplied to create 12 separate measures of the perception of criminal injustice. These items and explanatory variables discussed further below are described in the inventory of variables presented in Table 1.

We thought respondents might react differently to the demographic (i.e., gender, age, and wealth) than to the racial/ethnic (i.e., black, Chinese, and non-English speaking) contrasts embedded in the above items, and confirmatory factor models supported this expectation (see Table 2). While a simple one-factor LISREL model is a significant improvement (Dif χ^2 = 5,208.75, d.f. = 12) over the null model, a two-factor LISREL model distinguishing racial/ethnic items from other demographic items provides a further significantly improved fit (Dif χ^2 = 252.91, d.f. = 1). Several pairs of errors were also correlated with a further improvement in fit. Still, the correlation between the demographic and racial/ethnic factors is .871, indicating a very strong interconnection. This suggested further fitting of a second-order factor model that incorporates both subscales. The second-order model provides an additional significant improvement in fit (Dif χ^2 = 115.82, d.f. = 1). This model is summarized in Figure 1. Alpha scores of .81 and above reported in Table 1 provide further evidence of the reliability of these scales.

Several general conclusions emerged when we looked at perceptions of criminal injustice in relation to the individual items and the scales. First, black respondents perceived more injustice than did Chinese or white respondents on 10 of the 12 dimensions, with black respondents even more likely than Chinese respondents to perceive differential treatment of Chinese people. Second, although Chinese respondents were slightly more sensitive to ethnic differences in treatment than white respondents, and whites were slightly more sensitive to differences in treatment along demographic dimensions, these two groups were

Table 1. Inventory of Variables ($N = 1,201$)

Variable	Description	Mean	S.D.
Race	"Do you consider yourself to be Black, Chinese, East Asian, South Asian, South East Asian, Arab, an Aboriginal Person or White?" (Black = 1, Other = 0)	.33	.47
Sex	Respondent's gender (Male = 1, Female = 0)	.45	.50
Income	"How much income did you and other members of your household receive in 1993?" (From 1 = Less than $20,000 to 10 = More than $100,000)	4.02	.28
Education	Highest level of education completed (University degree = 1, Other = 0)	.26	.44
Marital status	"At present, are you married, living with a partner, widowed, divorced, separated, or have never been married?" (Married = 1, Other = 0)	.46	.50
Age	"In what year were you born?" (mean given in age)	39.43	15.08
Unemployed	Employment status (Unemployed = 1, Other = 0)	.10	.30
Time period	Interview conducted during two-week period immediately after Just Desserts shooting	.28	.45
Stopped by police	"Have you, in the last two years, been stopped by the Metro police when you have been in a car, walking on the street, in a shopping mall or some other place?" (Yes = 1, No = 0)	.21	.41
Perceptions of injustice based on race/ethnicity	"Do you think the police/judges treat people who do not speak English much better, better, worse, or much worse, than they treat people who do speak English?" (From 0 = same to 3 = much different)	24.88	15.35
	"How often do you think they treat people who do not speak English [respondent's previous answer] than people who do speak English?" (From 1 = almost never to 5 = often)		
	"Do you think the police/judges treat Black people much better, better, worse, or much worse, than they treat White people?" (From 0 = same to 3 = much different)		
	"How often do you think they treat Black people [respondent's previous answer] than White people?" (From 0 = almost never to 5 = often)		
	"Do you think the police/judges treat Chinese people much better, better, worse, or much worse, than they treat White people?" (From 0 = same to 3 = much different)		
	"How often do you think they treat Chinese people [respondent's previous answer] than White people?" (From 0 = almost never to 5 = often)		
	(Alpha = .85)		
Perceptions of injustice based on demographic characteristics	"Do you think the police/judges treat poor people much better, better, worse, or much worse, than they treat wealthy people?" (From 0 = same to 3 = much different)	26.50	20.13
	"How often do you think they treat poor people [respondent's previous answer] than wealthy people?" (From 0 = almost never to 5 = often)		
	"Do you think the police/judges treat younger people much better, better, worse, or much worse, than they treat older people?" (From 0 = same to 3 = much different)		
	"How often do you think they treat younger people [respondent's previous answer] than older people?" (From 0 = almost never to 5 = often)		
	"Do you think the police/judges treat women much better, better, worse, or much worse, than they treat men?" (From 0 = same to 3 = much different)		
	"How often do you think they treat women [respondent's previous answer] than men?" (From 0 = almost never to 5 = often)		
	(Alpha = .81)		
Overall perceptions of criminal injustice	Composite of ethnicity and demographic characteristics scales	49.42	37.33
	(Alpha = .89)		

Table 2. Fitting Confirmatory Factor Models to Perceptions of Injustice Items

Model	χ^2	d.f.	GFI
A. Null model—items uncorrelated	6,366.99	66	—
B. One-factor model	1,158.24	54	.803
C. Two-factor model—factors correlated	905.33	53	.840
D. Two-factor model—factors correlated and correlated errors within subsets of items	371.68	44	.911
E. Second-order factor model—correlated errors	255.86	43	.938

NOTE: For all models $p < .001$.

much closer in their perceptions to one another than either group was to the black respondents. This is reflected in the overall mean score on the criminal injustice scale for blacks of 65.3, compared with 39.0 for the Chinese and 41.3 for the white respondents.

The Media Barrage

As indicated above, there was a barrage of news stories in the two weeks following the Just Desserts shooting, including a highly publicized manhunt by the police for the accused. The story received extensive front-page coverage that included prominent photographs of the white female victim and the accused young black male assailants. This probably triggered white fear of interracial victimization and promoted a racial villainization involving stereotypes of blacks as criminals. Young black males were a focus of attention in both mainstream newspapers (Daly 1994; Makin 1994; DiManno 1994d; Armstrong 1994; Campbell 1994; Odetoyinbo 1994; Collins 1994; Foster 1994b) and the black press (Quamina 1994; Rickards 1994).

Two incidents provide qualitative evidence of the impact of the racially charged atmosphere that surrounded the Just Desserts episode. In the first incident, two dozen police officers descended on a subway station where they arrested, to the applause of subway patrons, a young black man who fit the description of one of the suspects. This proved to be a case of mistaken identity and the man was released (Pron & Duncanson 1994). In a second incident, a young black man was tackled and detained by a group of white citizens who felt he fit the description of another suspect. He also was later released by police, and no charges were laid against the white vigilantes (Makin 1994; Daly 1994).

The majority of the newspaper stories occurred during the two weeks immediately following the Just Desserts shooting. This was the period of social crisis or moral panic. However, as is the case in many moral panics, this news story disappeared from the front pages almost as quickly as it appeared (see Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994). We therefore dummy coded the telephone interviews conducted during the two weeks immediately after the shooting as 1 and the remaining interviews 0. Introduction of
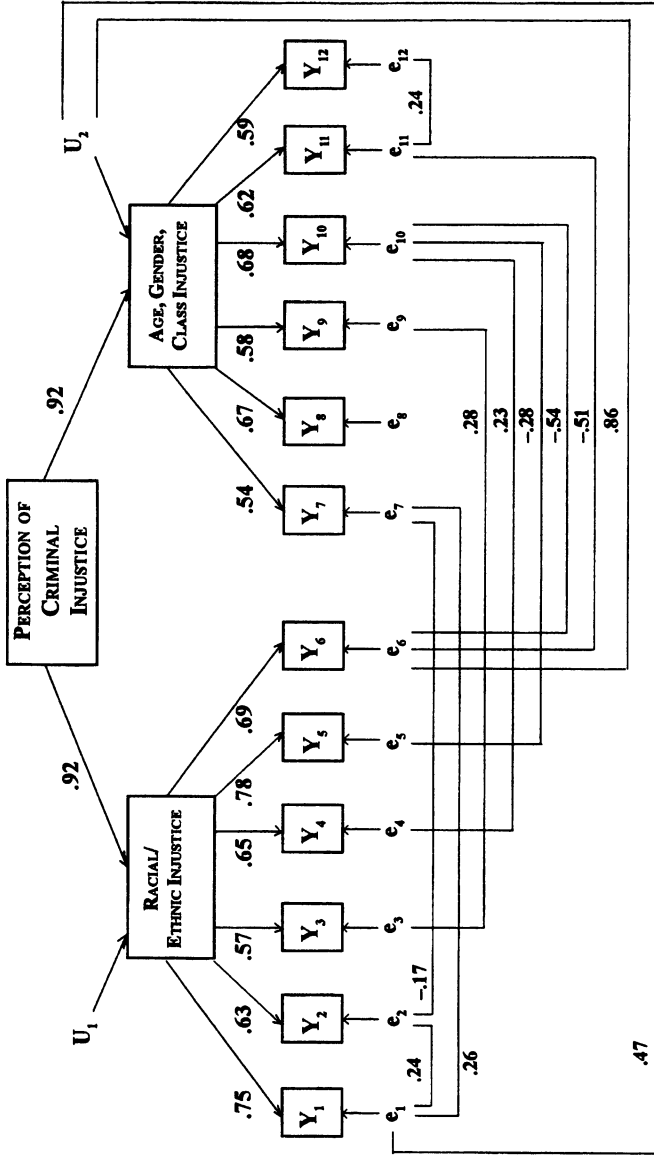
Figure 1. Second-order factor model of perception of criminal justice

this dummy variable into the analysis presented below yields results that are more parsimonious but also consistent with alternatively employing dummy variables for each of the weeks following the shooting, or employing a moving regression procedure that systematically varies inclusion of respondents by date of interview (Isaac & Griffin 1989).

Police Stops

We have emphasized that discretionary police stops are a prominent source of minority perceptions of criminal injustice. Minority persons may be stopped more often by the police, and they may react more strongly to this experience. Respondents were asked if during the previous two years they had been stopped by the police while driving a car, walking on the street, or while walking in a shopping mall or some other place. More than one in five respondents (21%) indicated they had been stopped; their responses were coded 1 and the others as 0.

Racial differences in being stopped were striking: 43% of black males reported that they had been stopped by the police in the past two years, compared with 25% of white and 19% of Chinese males. Furthermore, a third of black male respondents (34%) reported being stopped on two or more occasions, compared with only 17% of white and 14% of Chinese males. Even more striking is the heightened vulnerability of highly educated black citizens: 50% of black male respondents with a university degree[2] reported police stops in the past two years, and 40% reported being stopped on at least two occasions. By contrast, only 7% of Chinese males and 11% of white males with university education reported two or more police stops.

Demographic Characteristics

In addition to race (black = 1), gender (male = 1), age (coded in years), and marital status (married = 1), our analysis also includes information on employment (unemployed = 1), education (university degree = 1), and income (coded from $20,000 to $100,000 in $10,000 intervals). The sample is one-third black, about two-thirds foreign born, nearly half male, about 9% unemployed, an average of about 40 years of age, nearly half married, about one quarter university educated, and respondents' average family income is approximately $60,000 (Canadian).

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2 "University" here and throughout includes education completed in four-year college programs as well as at universities.

Just Deserts and Perceptions of Criminal Injustice

We begin by estimating ordinary least squares (OLS) models that temporarily leave the occurrence of the Just Desserts shooting unanalyzed. These models intentionally parallel earlier analyses of attitudes toward the police and courts in the United States, except that the previous studies did not *simultaneously* consider the impact of race, education, and police stops on attitudes toward the criminal justice system. Our preliminary Toronto results largely replicate and synthesize findings of earlier American studies, suggesting that our results are not confounded by national differences and that they instead probably reflect more generic processes, especially with regard to race and perceptions of criminal justice.

Table 3. Main Effects Models of Perceptions of Criminal Injustice (Unstandardized Ordinary Least Squares Coefficients; Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Racial/Ethnic Group Subscale	Age, Gender, Class Subscale	Perceptions of Criminal Injustice
Black	11.0992***	15.4108***	26.5100***
	(1.2635)	(1.1822)	(2.2136)
Education	5.3196***	3.7310***	9.0506***
	(1.3670)	(1.2790)	(2.3948)
Stopped	3.5653**	4.7708***	8.3361***
	(1.4475)	(1.3544)	(2.5360)
Married	−0.3209	−2.7347**	−3.0556
	(1.2068)	(1.1291)	(2.1142)
Unemployed	0.0168	1.7780	1.7948
	(1.9544)	(1.8286)	(3.4239)
Male	0.0640	2.1772**	2.2412
	(1.1559)	(1.0815)	(2.0251)
Age	−0.2050***	−0.1561***	−0.3611***
	(0.0396)	(0.0371)	(0.0694)
Income	0.3662	0.6826***	1.0488**
	(0.2462)	(0.2304)	(0.4314)
Intercept	23.8723***	22.9524***	46.8247***
	(2.1500)	(2.0117)	(3.7667)
R^2	0.1109	0.1863	0.1701

* $p < .10$ (two-tailed)   ** $p < .05$ (two-tailed)   *** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

The initial main effects models for the racial/ethnic and demographic subscales and the perceptions of criminal injustice scale are presented in Table 3. The results reprise and extend prior American studies in indicating that black respondents, respondents with university degrees, and respondents who have been stopped by the police in the last two years are all more likely to perceive criminal injustice in relation to racial/ethnic and other demographic groups, as well as on the overall scale. Black respondents score an average of 27 points higher than others on the latter scale, while university graduates and respondents who have been stopped by the police respectively score an

average of 9 and 8 points higher than others on this scale. Higher-income and younger respondents share these negative perceptions, again across the subscales and on the overall scale. Less consistent results emerge for male respondents. Males perceive criminal injustice in relation to demographic characteristics other than race and ethnicity.

Table 4. Interaction Effects Models of Determinants of Perceptions of Criminal Injustice (Unstandardized Ordinary Least Squares Coefficients; Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Racial/Ethnic Group Subscale		Age, Gender, Glass Subscale		Perceptions of Criminal Injustice	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Black	9.4282***	10.0647***	13.1023***	13.7994***	22.5305***	23.8641***
	(1.5295)	(1.5600)	(1.4290)	(1.4565)	(2.6769)	(2.7282)
Education	4.5437***	5.2417***	3.0222***	3.7867***	7.5660***	9.0284***
	(1.6108)	(1.6458)	(1.5049)	(1.5366)	(2.8191)	(2.8782)
Stopped	3.0889	4.3185**	2.2752	3.6218*	5.3641	7.9402**
	(2.0869)	(2.1720)	(1.9497)	(2.0279)	(3.6524)	(3.7985)
Married	−0.3143	−0.3140	−2.8090**	−2.8086**	−3.1233	−3.1226
	(1.2066)	(1.2050)	(1.1273)	(1.1251)	(2.1117)	(2.1074)
Unemployed	−0.0021	0.0452	1.7973	1.8491	1.7953	1.8944
	(1.9524)	(1.9500)	(1.8240)	(1.8207)	(3.4169)	(3.4103)
Male	0.0430	0.0706	2.0510	2.0812	2.0940	2.1518
	(1.1570)	(1.1556)	(1.0809)	(1.0789)	(2.0248)	(2.0209)
Age	−0.2046***	−0.2030***	−0.1580***	−0.1563***	−0.3626***	−0.3593***
	(0.0397)	(0.0396)	(0.0371)	(0.0370)	(0.0694)	(0.0693)
Income	0.3760	0.3726	0.7109***	0.7072***	1.0869**	1.0798**
	(0.2463)	(0.2460)	(0.2301)	(0.2297)	(0.4311)	(0.4302)
Black × Education	6.6677**	2.4890	4.2432	−0.3333	10.9109*	2.1558
	(3.3477)	(3.9362)	(3.1276)	(3.6751)	(5.8589)	(6.8839)
Stopped × Education	−3.7226	−8.4985**	−2.1650	−7.3955*	−5.8876	−15.8940*
	(3.4836)	(4.2129)	(3.2555)	(3.9335)	(6.0986)	(7.3678)
Black × Stopped	2.6556	−0.0527	6.8303**	3.8643	9.4859*	3.8116
	(2.8783)	(3.1743)	(2.6891)	(2.9637)	(5.0374)	(5.5514)
Black × Stopped × Education	—	14.9958**	—	16.4229**	—	31.4187**
		(7.4549)		(6.9604)		(13.0375)
Intercept	24.3016***	24.0025***	23.7363***	23.4087***	48.0379***	47.4112***
	(2.1924)	(2.1947)	(2.0483)	(2.0491)	(3.8371)	(3.8381)
R^2	0.1151	0.1181	0.1926	0.1963	0.1757	0.1797

* $p < .10$ (two-tailed)   ** $p < .05$ (two-tailed)   *** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

Table 4 presents models that test for further interactions between race, education, and police stops in determining perceptions of criminal injustice. Two-way interactions involving race, education, and stops are presented for the subscales and overall scale of perceived injustice in models 1, 3, and 5 of Table 4. These results reveal that highly educated black respondents score significantly higher than others on the racial/ethnic subscale and the overall scale, while blacks who have been stopped by the police score higher on the demographic subscale and the overall scale.

The pattern of interactions becomes both more consistent and more complicated in models 2, 4, and 6 of Table 4. The three-way interaction introduced in these models involves the compounding effect of being stopped, race, and education. This

three-way interaction is persistently significant, indicating that highly educated blacks who have been stopped by the police score consistently higher on both of the subscales and on the overall scale of perceived criminal injustice. Note in addition, however, that when the higher-order influence of race is held constant by introducing the three-way interaction, the two-way interaction of education and being stopped by the police becomes significantly negative in relation to both of the subscales and the overall scale. This strong and persistent negative effect suggests that when the higher-order interacting influences of race and other variables are taken into account, highly educated white and Chinese respondents react to the experience of having been stopped by the police with feelings of increased confidence in the justice system. We pursue this finding further below.

The differential effects of race on perceptions of injustice indicated by the three-way interaction in Table 4 are graphically represented in Figure 2. This figure shows the mean levels of perceptions of injustice for the eight subgroups identified by the three-way interaction. These levels were generated from model 6 by setting all variables that are not part of the interaction terms constant at their means. Although blacks uniformly perceive more injustice than do whites and Asians, the race differences are most dramatic for respondents with a university education who had been stopped by the police. College-educated blacks who had been stopped by the police perceived substantially *more* injustice (20 or more points) than blacks in the other categories. In contrast, college-educated whites and Asians perceive *less* injustice (as much as 10 points less) than other whites and Asians.

The influence of the Just Desserts shooting is introduced in Table 5. Given the consistency across the subscales in earlier tables, and to conserve space, we only present results for the combined overall scale in this table. Model 1 introduces the main effects alone. The effects of previously examined variables in this model remain largely as they were in Table 2, while the dummy variable that represents interviews conducted during the two-week crisis period following the Just Desserts shooting is statistically significant and negative, reducing scores on the perception of criminal injustice scale by an average of more than four points.

This might simply be interpreted as reflecting a kind of Durkheimian consolidation of support for the criminal justice system during this period of intense media attention to the Just Desserts shooting and subsequent events, a period that Erikson describes as involving a deployment of deviance. Yet, a further issue we have emphasized here is whether this kind of consolidation obscures a generic process of intragroup and intergroup conflict.
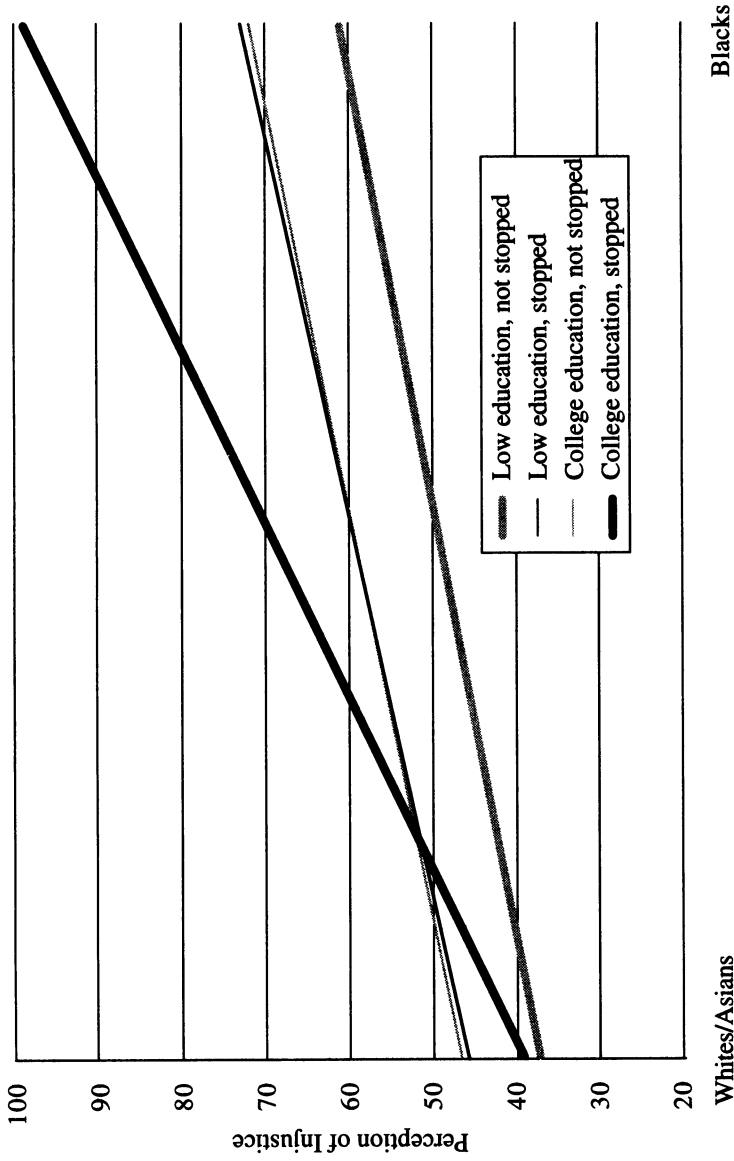
Figure 2. Perceptions of injustice by race, education, and police stops

Table 5. Contextual Effects of the Just Desserts Shooting on Perceptions of Criminal Injustice (Unstandardized Ordinary Least Squares Coefficients; Standard Errors in Parentheses)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Race	26.9315***	25.2072***
	(2.2227)	(3.1783)
Education	8.9886***	8.8605***
	(2.3925)	(3.2241)
Stopped	8.2126***	7.0553*
	(2.5341)	(3.9945)
Married	−3.0992	−3.0631
	(2.1121)	(2.1064)
Unemployed	1.5025	1.3841
	(3.4238)	(3.4140)
Male	2.1549	2.0285
	(2.0235)	(2.0210)
Age	−0.3613***	−0.3596***
	(0.0693)	(0.0693)
Income	1.0640**	1.1177***
	(0.4310)	(0.4305)
Two-week period (after killing)	−4.1159*	−2.3366
	(2.1968)	(3.4533)
Black × Education	—	12.7127
		(8.5760)
Stopped × Education	—	−15.9607**
		(7.3942)
Black × Stopped	—	3.4202
		(5.5814)
Education × Two-week period	—	0.0604
		(5.9662)
Black × Two-week period	—	−3.0522
		(5.1137)
Stopped × Two-week period	—	3.6331
		(5.5216)
Black × Stopped × Education	—	24.3589*
		(13.4141)
Black × Education × Two-week period	—	−21.8472*
		(12.5769)
Intercept	47.9322***	47.9631***
	(3.8089)	(3.9551)
R^2	0.1725	0.1856

* $p < .10$ (two-tailed)   ** $p < .05$ (two-tailed)   *** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

Model 2 in Table 5 responds to this issue by adding further three-way interactions that incorporate the two-week media barrage.[3] The main effect that reflects black respondents' perceptions of criminal injustice remains stubbornly strong and significantly positive in this model. The positive three-way interaction

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[3] The authors considered including a four-way interaction—race * stopped * education * time of interview—for the final model. An examination of the *N*-way tables for these four variables revealed very few cases in some of the cells. Of particular significance, there were only 3 respondents in the focal group identified by the four-way interaction: university-educated blacks, who reported being stopped by the police and who were interviewed during the two-week period after the "Just Desserts" shooting. Consequently, any results derived from the model including the four-way interaction could not be regarded as stable. Only the interactions shown in the final model displayed statistically significant effects.

involving being black, stopped by police, and university educated also remains highly significant in this model, although the effect is now somewhat smaller than shown in Table 4. As well, the main effect of the two-week media barrage is now reduced below significance. These changes result from the statistically significant three-way interaction involving highly educated blacks who were interviewed during the two-week crisis period following the Just Desserts shooting. This negative interaction indicates that in the two-week aftermath of the Just Desserts shooting, highly educated black respondents reported reduced perceptions of injustice compared with their counterparts who were interviewed outside of this two-week period. This latter three-way interaction also decreases the strength of the earlier interaction between being black, stopped by police, and university educated.

The effects of the Just Desserts shooting on race differences in perceptions of injustice is further illustrated in Figure 3. As in Figure 2, all variables not implied by the interaction terms are held constant at their means. The most salient feature of this figure is the decrease in perceptions of injustice for educated blacks who were interviewed in the two-week period following the Just Desserts shooting. While all other groups report substantively similar perceptions of injustice independent of Just Desserts, educated blacks reported significantly *reduced* perceptions of injustice (by 26.4 points) in the two weeks following this event. Educated blacks interviewed within the two-week period after Just Desserts report perceptions of injustice that are much closer to those of similarly situated respondents from the other two racial groups. Outside of the shooting period, college-educated blacks score 44 points higher on the injustice scale than college-educated whites and Asians. During the shooting period, however, this difference drops to only 18 points. Furthermore, outside the Just Desserts period, college-educated blacks report significantly higher perception of injustice than lower-educated blacks. During the shooting period, this difference disappears.

The implication of these findings is that the publicity surrounding the Just Desserts crisis temporarily increased the appearance of support for the criminal justice system by modifying the perceptions of college-educated black respondents. These more highly educated blacks who were interviewed during the two-week period following the Just Desserts shooting responded with reduced perceptions of criminal injustice, while less-educated black respondents continued to perceive higher levels of criminal injustice. Overall, black respondents continued to perceive more criminal injustice than white and Asian respondents. However, during the two-week media barrage following the Just Desserts shooting, highly educated blacks ceased to play a leadership role in the expression of this discontent.
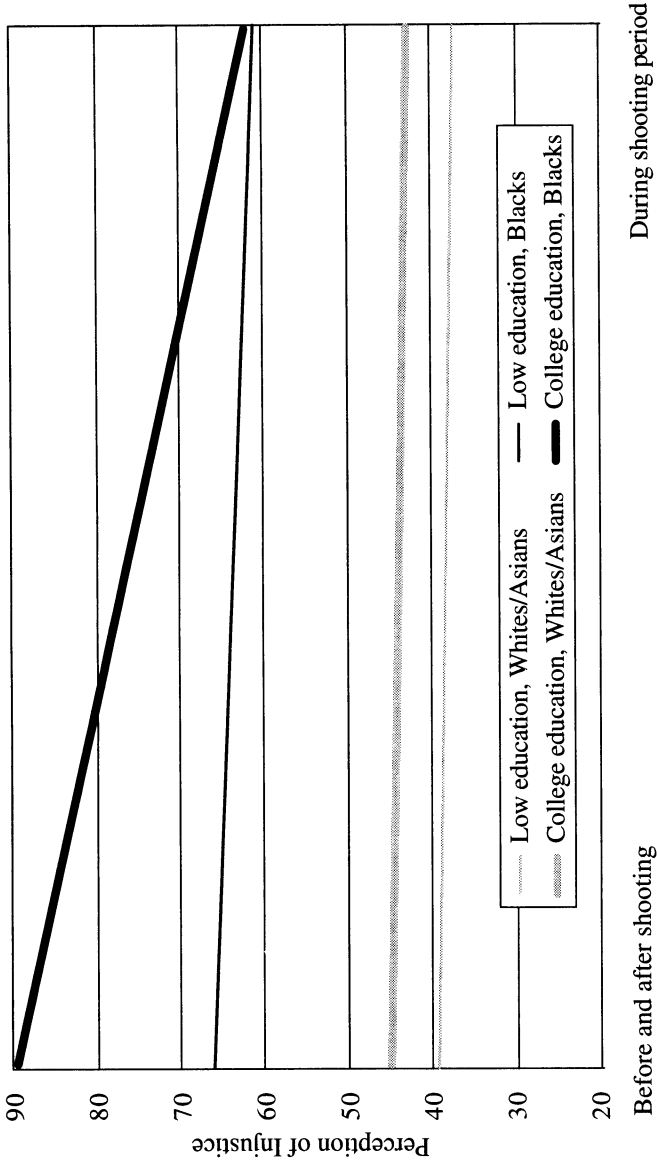
Figure 3. Perceptions of injustice by race, education, and just deserts

Discussion and Conclusions

The mass media provide a symbolic platform on which crimes and criminals are paraded before the public and collectively condemned. These media portrayals can be understood as simple morality plays that reaffirm ideas about right and wrong and consolidate the collective conscience. Yet they can also be moral spectacles which draw ritualized distinctions between victims and villains and perpetuate cleavages between and within social groups. These spectacles therefore also can corrode the collective conscience.

Media depictions of race and crime can be among the most damaging of these symbolic spectacles, but the processes involved are subject to more speculation than study. We have sought to identify and analyze such processes in the results of a survey serendipitously undertaken in a period that included extensive media coverage of an interracial homicide in Toronto, Canada. However, before we reach conclusions about the effects of the media publicity, it is important to review and consider a number of our more general findings.

First, there appear to be generic processes of racial conflict surrounding criminal justice that go beyond specific events and situations in the United States. Consistent with American research (Hagan & Albonetti 1982; Freidman 1988; Meislin 1988; Kaplan 1988), black respondents in our survey of Toronto residents perceived much higher levels of criminal injustice than did either white or Asian respondents. In fact, on some measures, Asian respondents perceived less bias or unfairness in the system than did white respondents (see also California Judicial Council 1994). Meanwhile, blacks not only perceive that they themselves are treated differently, they perceive discrimination based on an array of other demographic characteristics.

The fact that whites and blacks differ in their opinions of the criminal justice system parallels findings about racial attitudes toward other public institutions. Recent studies document large attitudinal differences between black and white Americans on a variety of race-related issues. For example, a recent Harvard University/Washington Post Survey (see Morin 1995) found that the majority of white Americans deny the existence of widespread racism in America, while the vast majority of blacks feel that racism is still a major societal problem. Indeed, the same survey found that most white Americans hold the view that blacks are faring just as well as, or better than, whites in such areas as employment, education, and health care. These opinions exist despite the fact that white Americans, on average, earn 60% more than blacks, are far more likely to have medical insurance, and are twice as likely to graduate from universities (Morin 1995:1). Furthermore, as with results of this study, the Harvard/

Washington Post survey found that on many issues the views of Asian Americans were very close to those of whites.

What accounts for the large attitudinal differences between blacks and Asians? To begin with, although both groups are racial minorities in Canada and the United States, they have radically different immigration histories. Over 90% of the black respondents to this survey are immigrants from the West Indies. Thus, like most black Americans, they are the descendants of African slaves. Indeed, the legacy of slavery may lead blacks in both Canada and the United States to distrust "white" social institutions. By contrast, over 90% of the Chinese respondents voluntarily immigrated to Canada over the past decade. Most are either political refugees from mainland China or affluent individuals who have "escaped" from Hong Kong before economic control passed from Britain to China in 1997. Furthermore, the black respondents, on average, have spent a longer period of time in Canada (mean = 16 years) than their Chinese counterparts (mean = 9 years). In fact, almost one-third (31%) of the Chinese respondents have been in Canada for five years or less, compared with only 11% of the black respondents. Thus, it might be argued that the black respondents have been exposed to the racism that exists within the Canadian criminal justice system for a longer period and that this greater exposure is responsible for their more negative attitudes.

One must also consider the possibility that attitudinal differences between blacks and Asians reflect the fact that these groups experience different types of racial stereotypes and thus have different experiences. Indeed, studies of popular culture have shown that while black people are often depicted as crime-prone and sexually permissive, Asians are often depicted as intelligent and hard-working (Roberts & Gabor 1990). The differential treatment that arises from such stereotypes may be reflected in the fact that in both Canada and the United States, Asians have higher levels of educational attainment, lower levels of unemployment, and higher household incomes than persons of African descent (Mann 1993; Statistics Canada 1993; Harvey & Wortley 1993). Previous research has suggested that blacks, more than any other racial minority group, are the targets of discriminatory treatment by criminal justice personnel (Lynch 1991; Hood 1992; Mann 1993). Indeed, our own data suggest that black citizens, particularly black males, are much more likely than are respondents from other racial groups to report discretionary police stops. Thus, compared with Asians, the more negative attitudes blacks hold toward the criminal justice system may stem from their more negative experiences.

Aside from the period immediately after the Just Desserts shooting, we found that highly educated black respondents who had been stopped by the police were especially likely to perceive

criminal injustice. However, the pattern of findings is more complicated than this, for we also found that when interacting influences including race were held constant in our analysis, university-educated respondents who were stopped by the police actually had increased confidence in the justice system. Among highly educated white and Asian respondents, being stopped by the police actually seemed to confirm the sense that the system treats all groups alike, while blacks, especially when highly educated, more often drew the opposite inference from police contact. This finding may reflect important differences in how black, white, and Asian respondents interpret involuntary police contact. In our study, for example, four out of ten black respondents (41%) who were stopped by the police report that they were treated unfairly—compared with only 15% of Chinese and 10% of white respondents. Qualitative information gathered during the interviews further confirmed that many blacks felt that their race was the only reason that they were stopped by police. When asked why they were stopped, a large number of black respondents simply stated, "Because I'm black." Others seemed resigned to the fact that simply being black means that you will eventually be stopped and questioned by the police. As one young black male respondent put it: "I was stopped by the police—just for the heck of it, it was just the usual 'cops always stop black people routine.'" A young black female respondent described her frustration with being stopped by the police and linked this frustration directly to the Just Desserts episode.

> I was in the Town Centre and went there on the wrong night—they [the police] call it "nigger night" and they [the police] always stop black people. I wear a baseball cap so maybe I look tough to them. But I was just walking. Every time I go anywhere being a black female, it's pretty sad. I can't even get a cab. I am stopped constantly, especially after that shooting at Just Desserts. I used to want to be a cop but I forget it now because I'm black and it's a no win situation.

We have noted that aside from the period just after the Just Desserts shooting, well-educated black respondents were particularly sensitive to being stopped by the police, and that university-educated blacks actually were stopped more often than less-educated blacks. The implication of this finding is that class mobility does not insulate highly educated blacks from the impact of contact with the police (see also Anderson 1990; Boggs & Galliher 1975; Hagan & Albonetti, 1982). Indeed, well-educated black males often attributed their experiences with the police to their relative affluence. A number of black respondents reported that their chances of being stopped by the police increased when they were riding in expensive automobiles. When explaining why he was stopped, one respondent stated, "because we were three Black guys in a BMW. We were not doing anything." Another

remarked, "because they saw a Lexus with a black driver. We weren't speeding or anything. They had no real reason to stop us." One white respondent also attributed his experience with the police to the fact that "my friend was driving my Mercedes and he is black." Several respondents further suggested that the police often draw a connection between being black, driving a nice car, and dealing drugs: "If you are black and you drive something good, the police pull you over to ask about drugs."

There probably are other reasons, besides personal experiences with the police and courts, to account for black perceptions of criminal injustice. First, blacks may experience racism in other areas of their lives and consequently generalize these experiences to all social institutions. Second, blacks may learn about police and courtroom discrimination indirectly, through the experiences of family members and friends. Highly publicized examples of racism in the criminal justice system, like Rodney King's videotaped beating by Los Angeles police officers and detective Mark Furman's recorded racist rantings revealed during the O. J. Simpson trial, may further explain the disparity in perceptions by race. Finally, North America has a long history of institutionalized racism. This legacy is not easily forgotten by most blacks, and as part of a general survival strategy, black youth may learn to be suspicious of white society and to be sensitive to the possibility of racism in all areas of public life, including interactions with criminal justice personnel. This socialization experience might account for the fact that even young black children often hold more negative views than white children toward public institutions (Orum & Cohen 1973). Thus, for black people, involuntary contact with the police and courts may not only create perceptions of unfairness but reinforce and strengthen prior beliefs that the criminal justice system is biased.

Finally, the racially charged media coverage following the Just Desserts shooting in Toronto, part of what Erikson has called a deployment of deviance, produced its own unique effects. This deployment occurred in a city that over the past century has experienced massive immigration. This immigration changed the face of Toronto, from a predominately white Anglo Saxon Protestant community to one that is now multiethnic and multiracial. The status politics of this shift sometimes have been divisive, and media coverage of the interracial shooting at the Just Desserts cafe occurred in the context of divisions involving the recent immigration of Caribbean blacks to Toronto.

The media coverage that reported and stimulated this deployment signaled a social crisis in need of resolution. Alexander's Durkheimian analysis of the Watergate experience suggests that the resolution of such crises may involve a generic process in which influential dissenting group members experience strong pressures to support threatened institutions. This can help create

the appearance of solidarity that minimizes or obscures underlying conflicts. This appearance of solidarity was reflected in our finding of overall reduced perceptions of criminal injustice during the two-week crisis period following the Just Deserts shooting. As Alexander anticipates, this appearance of support for the criminal justice system was shown in our analysis to result from a sharp decline in perceptions of criminal injustice among highly educated blacks during the two weeks following the Just Deserts shooting. However, as Alexander's Watergate analysis further suggests, this appearance of solidarity was incomplete and impermanent. Less-educated members of the black community at risk in the deployment of deviance that followed the shooting continued to express their suspicions about the criminal justice system, and the more highly educated members of this community again voiced their perceptions of criminal injustice in the aftermath of this crisis.

The fact that the media effect observed in the above analysis was isolated among well-educated blacks might be further explained by this group's greater exposure to news coverage. Media analysts, for example, have long distinguished between the "attentive" and the "inattentive" public (see Price 1992; Zaller 1992; Price & Zaller 1990). The attentive public is usually described as the rather small, highly educated proportion of the general population that closely follows news coverage of political issues. Thus, it is possible that because of their greater attention to news stories, the university-educated blacks in our sample were more aware of the dominant news narratives surrounding the Just Desserts shooting than were blacks with lower levels of educational attainment. One could therefore expect media effects to be more pronounced among the well-educated group.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the reduction in expressions of perceived injustice among well-educated blacks reflected a tendency rather than an invariance in our survey. That is, our analysis does not indicate that all highly educated black citizens expressed increased acceptance of the criminal justice system in the aftermath of the Just Desserts shooting. Instead, it is more accurate to say that the shooting temporarily diversified and divided the views of well-educated blacks on issues of criminal justice and black crime. A highly publicized debate between two prominent black leaders in Toronto helps to illustrate this point.

In the days following the robbery, Cecil Foster, a noted Toronto journalist and author, wrote a series of articles calling on the black community to take some of the responsibility for the "growing violence we are exposed to at the hands of the very people we socialize with daily." He wrote further, "a significant part of any solution will have to come from the African Canadian community and it might start with the exertion of peer pressure

to harness some of the bad elements that are robbing us of so much" (Foster 1994a).

Arnold Minors, the only black member of the Police Services Board, publicly disagreed with Foster's stance and was harshly critical of the media coverage of the Just Desserts shooting. He charged that "the whole community should not be criminalized for the actions of a few" and that the Toronto news media were reinforcing an image of blacks "as malevolent by presenting people of color almost exclusively in the context of crime and social deprivation" (DiManno 1994c). However, Minors's voice was rather isolated amid the din of hostile media coverage. Following an annual banquet celebrating local black achievement, Foster replied to Minors by stating:

> The presence of a small, violent element in the black community is causing some people to conveniently put aside the notion of shared responsibility. . . . We cannot have it both ways. Unless we want to be hypocritical, we cannot hold up our heroes as positive role models without also acknowledging the criminals. After all, criminals are negative role models. The two archetypes of the same coin—the double burdens of being black in this society. (Foster 1994b:A11)

This exchange of views graphically illustrates the intense kinds of cross-pressures that media coverage of an event like the Just Desserts shooting can place on the leadership of the black community. Interestingly, the debate that took place between Foster and Minors parallels the competing news narratives that emerged in the aftermath of this robbery-homicide. As discussed in the introduction, the dominant narrative, which arose in the two weeks immediately after the shooting, depicted the Just Desserts shooting as a social crisis. In this social crisis, white civil society was portrayed as the victim, while black immigrant criminals were seen as the villains. However, a competing narrative soon appeared in both the mainstream and the black press. In this narrative, the shooting was seen as an excuse for the criminal justice system to scapegoat black males and justify discriminatory treatment of the black community. Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, well-educated blacks may have felt pressure to accept the shooting as a social crisis and quiet their opposition to the criminal justice system. However, the competing narrative also may have helped reinforce or rejuvenate perceptions of the criminal justice system as racist, thus leading the views of well-educated blacks to ultimately return to original levels.

The media coverage of the Just Desserts episode can only be said to have consolidated public support for the criminal justice system to the extent that it tended to lead highly educated members of the Toronto black community temporarily to moderate their expression of criminal injustice. Alexander's Durkheimian perspective predicts no more than this and, indeed, anticipates

that underlying conflicts persist in the face of crisis-inspired expressions of solidarity. More generally, members of the black community remained highly suspicious of a criminal justice system that they perceived as unjust. Thus, there would clearly seem to be as much evidence of conflict as there is of consensus.

In conclusion, group-based perceptions and expressions of injustice should be of special concern because they warn of potential breakdowns in relationships between legitimacy and compliance that undergird fundamental assumptions about the observance of law. The research literature on legitimacy and compliance demonstrates that citizens are less likely to comply with the law when they regard the administration of law as illegitimate. Tyler (1990:178) notes in summarizing his seminal research in this area that "people obey the law because they believe that is proper to do so, they react to their experiences by evaluating their justice or injustice, and in evaluating the justice of their experiences they consider factors unrelated to outcome, such as whether they had a chance to state their case and had been treated with dignity and respect." The combined message of Tyler's research and our own is that insensitive criminal justice practices and media coverage run the risk of perpetuating intergroup conflict and creating self-fulfilling prophecies about the kinds of conflict they portray.

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