LETTERS

I would like to enter a brief protest about one aspect of Herb Jacob's otherwise useful and interesting article on perceptions of justice.

I hope his slip was inadvertent, but his use of the term "injustice" without the modifying "Perceptions of" in much of his conclusion leaves his article open to serious misinterpretation. Of course, he has not developed a "measure of injustice," as he says on page 87 — but a measure of *perceptions* of injustice — quite a different thing. He repeats this error six times.

He actually has not indicated that police or judges are *ever* unjust, because he was not studying injustice. I hope that he, or you, can run a brief statement correcting this unfortunate, but rather serious, lapse.

Loren P. Beth
University of Massachusetts

I plead "not guilty" to Professor Beth's charge. My article was entitled "Black and White *Perceptions* of Justice in the City" (italics added). I devoted four paragraphs on pp. 69-71 to a discussion of the implications of using perceptions as a measure of injustice.

Perhaps more to the point, however, is an epistomological disagreement between Professor Beth and myself. Professor Beth implies an absolute view of justice; regardless of what others think, he feels he can reliably distinguish just from unjust actions. I do not believe that I can impose my perception of the just on others — especially on those from considerably different sub-cultures. I believe that when people perceive an injustice, it exists in a meaningful sense and may lead to significant personal and political activities. This epistomological difference, by the way, may be the cause of a wider misunderstanding in the political arena. We may often not take seriously enough the charges by blacks and others that they are the victims of racism or injustice because we do not perceive the same events as having a racist or unjust character. But as the patient who complains of a pain which his doctor doesn't feel, the pain is real even though the doctor discounts it.

My terminology, consequently, was not inadvertent. I meant what I said. In that context, I perceive Professor Beth's complaint to be "unjust."

Herbert Jacob
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