

# Systematic Field Observation of Procedural Justice in Policing



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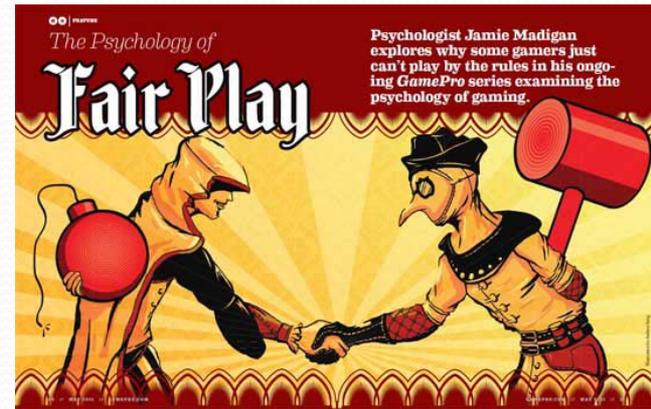
# Today's topics

- Procedural justice & its role in police legitimacy
- Systematic field observation & citizen surveys
- Observing and measuring procedural justice in action
- Implications of observational research
- Future research possibilities



# Procedural justice defined

- Police commit procedural justice when they...
  - Show the public that they use fair procedures in exercising their authority
- PJ is independent of
  - Effectiveness in crime and disorder control
  - Fairness in the *outcomes* of their activities
- What PJ conveys to the citizen
  - His or her worth or value





# Theory: How PJ produces benefits

What police do

How citizens feel

How citizens behave

Procedural  
Justice

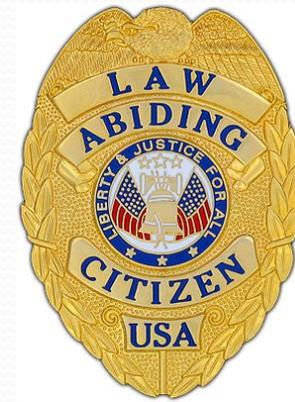
Police  
Legitimacy

Citizen  
behavior

Communicate  
fair process

Belief that laws  
& authorities  
should be obeyed

Compliance,  
Cooperation,  
Law abidingness



# Citizen surveys & systematic social observation

## Citizen Surveys

- Emphasizes subjective measures
  - How citizen perceives & evaluates a situation
- More detail possible on thought processes
- Accuracy of citizen recall
  - Difficult to check
- Methodology widely used
- Relatively inexpensive
  - Can be automated (online)
  - Interviewers require much less training

## Sys. Social Observation

- Emphasizes objective measures
  - Researcher applies same criteria to all situations
- More detail possible on behavior processes
- Accuracy of trained observers
  - Easier to check
- Methodology not widely used
- Relatively expensive
  - Labor intensive
  - Observers require much training

# Research questions

- How much procedural justice is there when measured by systematic observation?
- Is the practice of procedural justice associated with desired outcomes?
  - Citizen compliance with police requests & demands
  - Happier citizens

# Procedural justice in “Everdene”

by T. Jonathan-Zamir, S. Mastrofski, S. Moyal

- Site
  - Suburban city, 35,000-40,000 population
  - Nearly half of residents are Black or Hispanic
  - UCR violent crime rate: 33% above average for suburbs of its size
  - 80-100 officers
  - Organization environment hospitable to PJ
- Observations
  - 2011 (7 months)
  - 12 officers (9 males, 4 minority, age range mid 20s-late 40s)
  - 323 hours: 319 police-citizen interactions
    - Approximately half of citizens were white
    - 64% were male, 30% in their 20's
    - 62% of encounters were traffic or minor disorders, 7% violence

# Systematic social observation

- Observers accompanied patrol officers on full shifts
- Took very brief field notes after citizen encounters
- Full data entry within a day or so of observations
- Data elements
  - Circumstances (problem, location)
  - Citizen characteristics & behaviors
  - Officer characteristics & behaviors
- Data structure
  - Narrative accounts
  - Close-ended coded data

See: Mastrofski, S. D., Parks, R. B., and McCluskey, J. D. 2010. Systematic Social Observation in Criminology. In A. Piquero and D. Weisburd (eds.), *Handbook of Quantitative Criminology*, pp. 225-247. New York: Springer-Verlag.

# Participation

- Did the officer actively solicit information?
- Did the officer appear to seriously consider the information provided?

1. Officer asked for information/ viewpoint?  
[0=no; 1=yes]

+

2. Citizen information/viewpoint provided?  
[0=no; 1=yes]

×

3. Officer expressed interest in the information/ viewpoint?  
0=dismissive listener  
1=inattentive listener  
2=passive listener  
3=active listener

# Neutrality

- Did the officer behave in a biased fashion?
- Was the officer transparent in his/her decision-making?

1. Officer would seek all viewpoints? [0=no; 1=yes]
- +  
2. Officer would not decide what to do until s/he had gathered all the necessary information? [0=no; 1=yes]
- +  
3. Officer did not indicate that his/her decisions were influenced by citizens' personal characteristics (race, age, sex)? [0=no; 1=yes]
- +  
4. Explained police involvement? [0=no; 1=yes]
- +  
5. Explained police resolution chosen? [0=no; 1=yes]

# Dignity

- Did the officer display explicit respect? To what extent?
- Did the officer display explicit disrespect?

To what extent did the officer behave respectfully toward the citizen?

0=Showed disrespect

1=Showed neither respect nor disrespect (“business-like” behavior)

2=Showed brief respect

3=Showed intermittent respect

4=Showed dominant respect (throughout encounter)

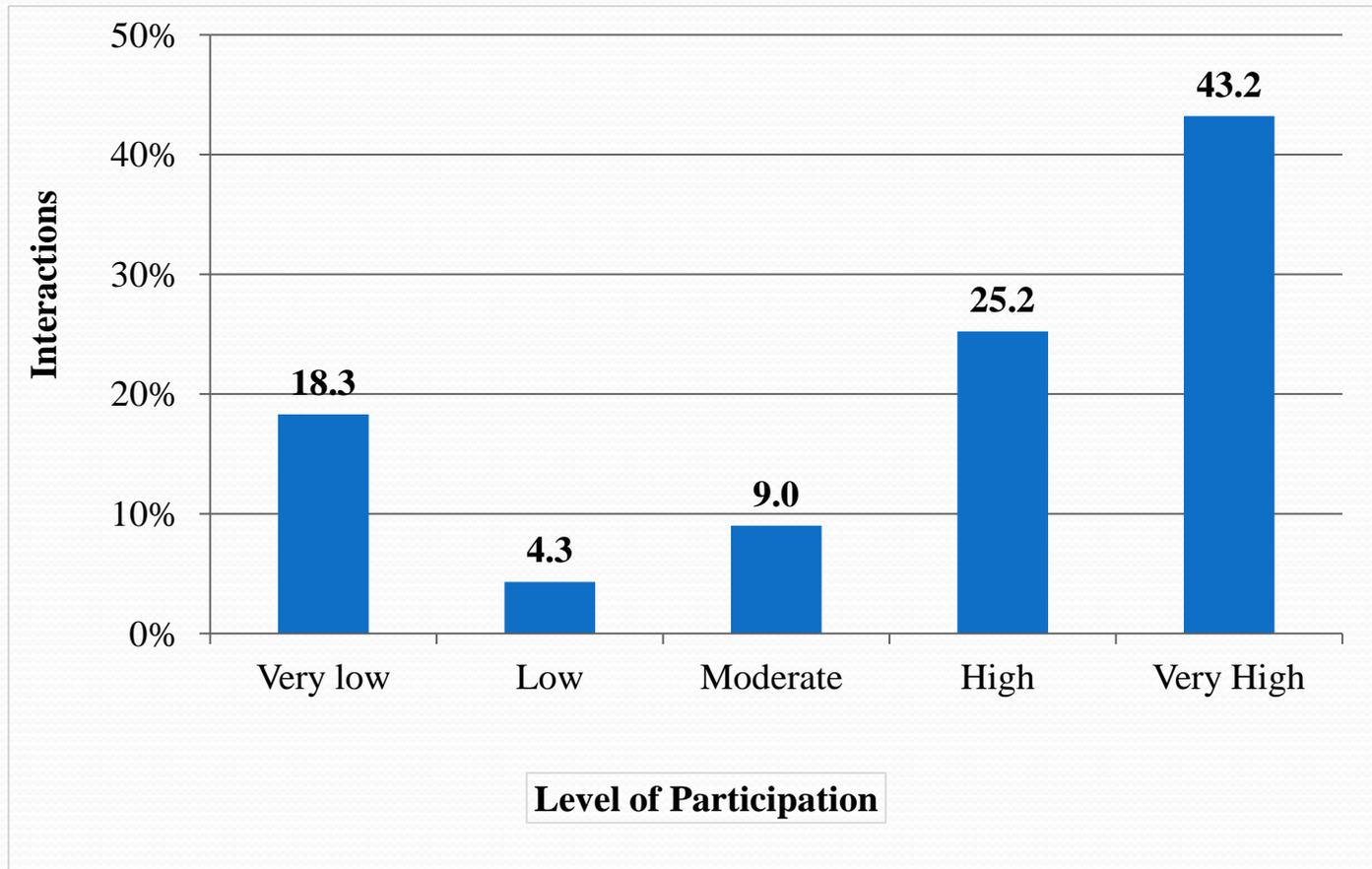
\*In few cases when both are present, “disrespect” overrides any displays of “respect.”

# Trustworthy motives

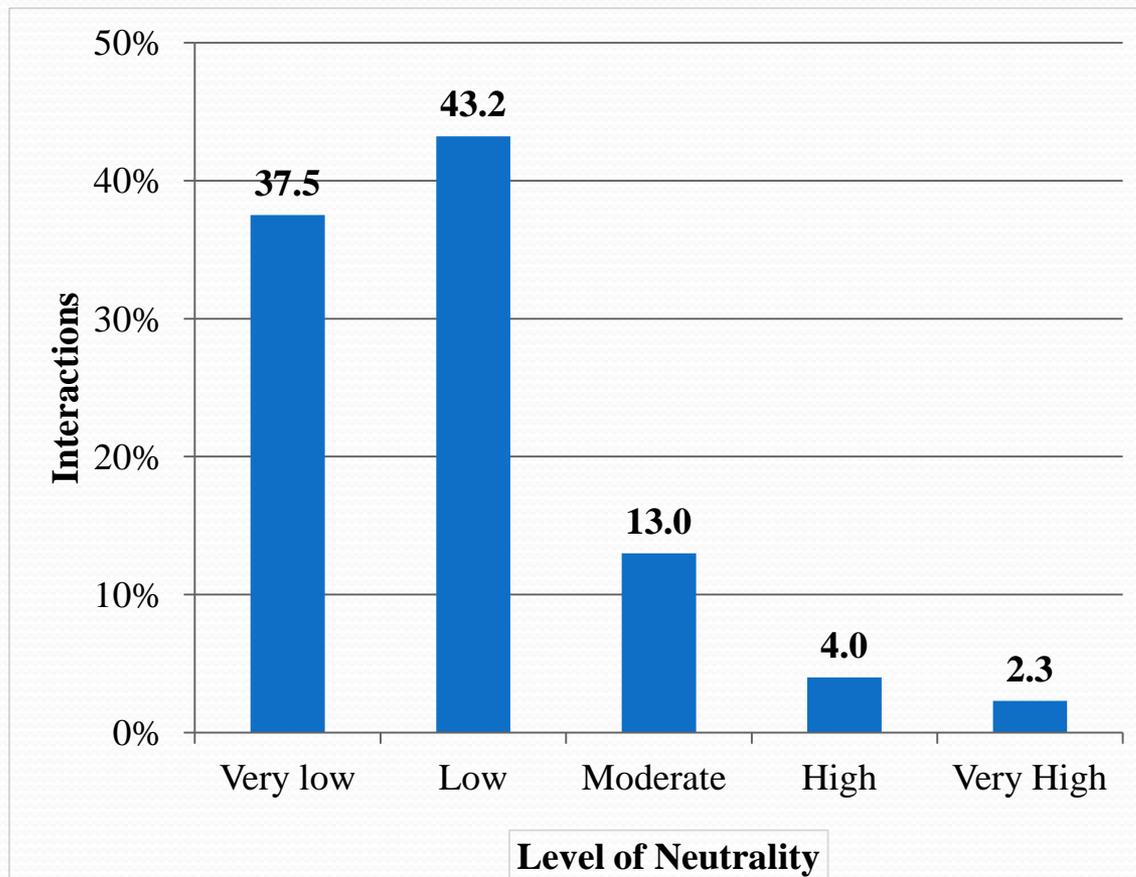
- 7 officer behaviors showing care and concern for citizens (showed or promised).

- |   |   |               |
|---|---|---------------|
| 1. Asked about <u>well being</u> ?                                |   | [0=no; 1=yes] |
|   | + |               |
| 2. <u>Comforted or reassured</u> ?                                |   | [0=no; 1=yes] |
|   | + |               |
| 3. <u>Controlled/influenced another citizen</u> for this citizen? |   | [0=no; 1=yes] |
|   | + |               |
| 4. <u>Filed a report</u> for citizen?                             |   | [0=no; 1=yes] |
|   | + |               |
| 5. <u>Acted on behalf of citizen</u> w/an organization?           |   | [0=no; 1=yes] |
|   | + |               |
| 6. Provided/arranged <u>physical assistance</u> for citizen?      |   | [0=no; 1=yes] |
|   | + |               |
| 7. Provided <u>advice</u> ?                                       |   | [0=no; 1=yes] |

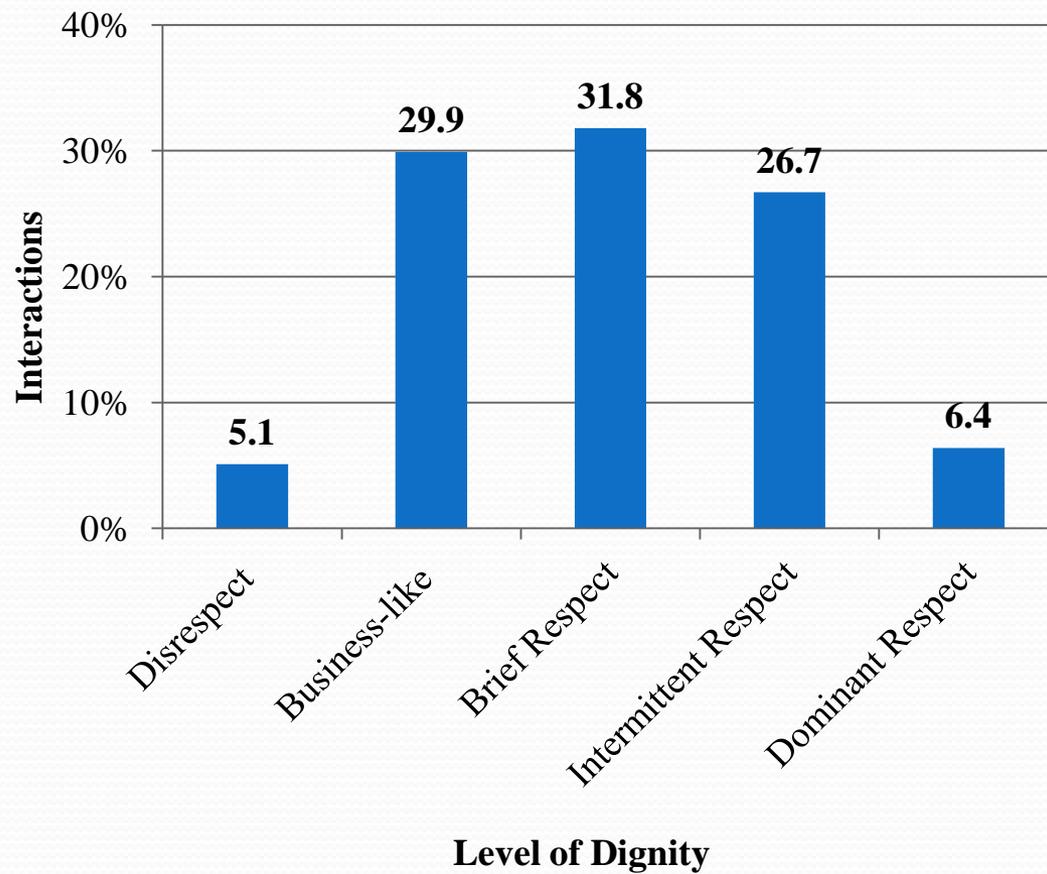
# Participation



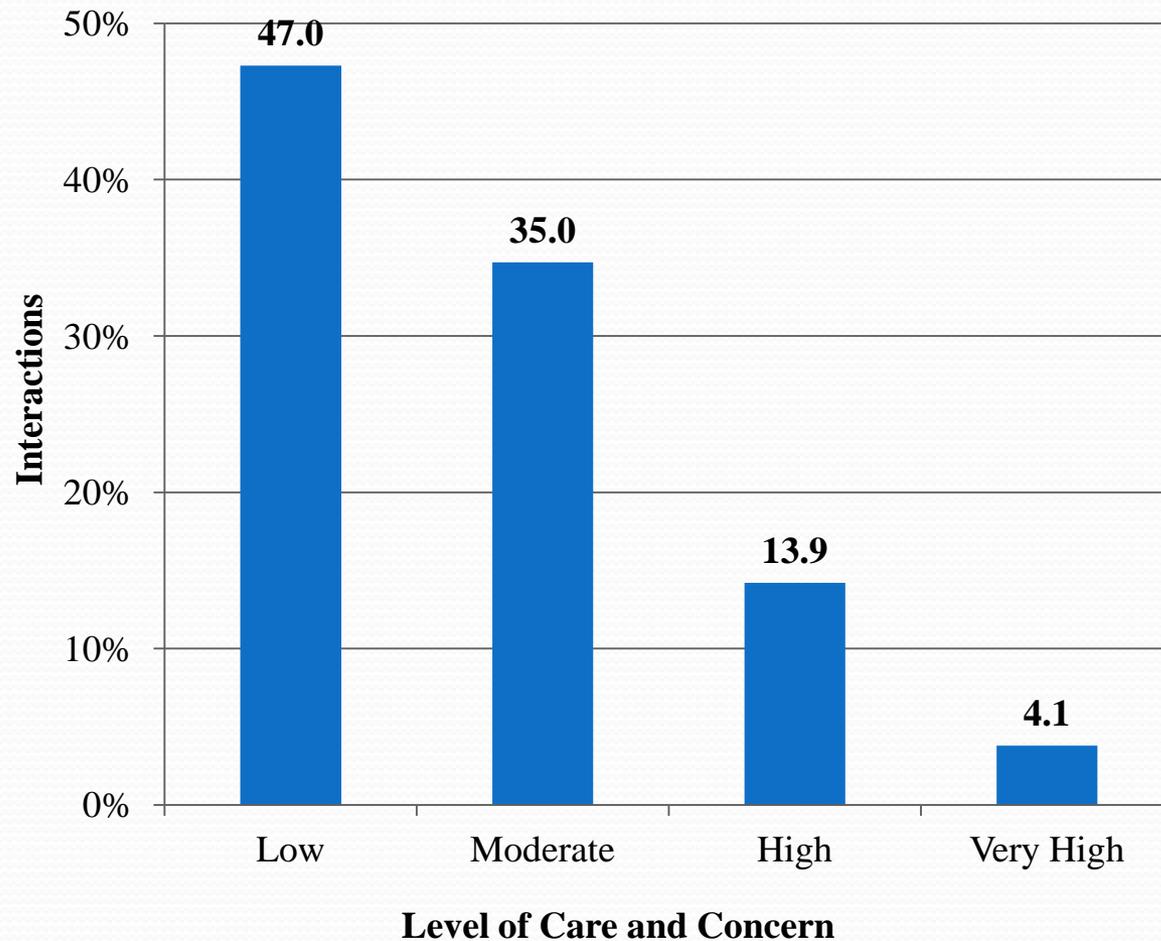
# Neutrality



# Dignity



# Trustworthy motives: care & concern



# Pattern of PJ elements: The absence of special effort

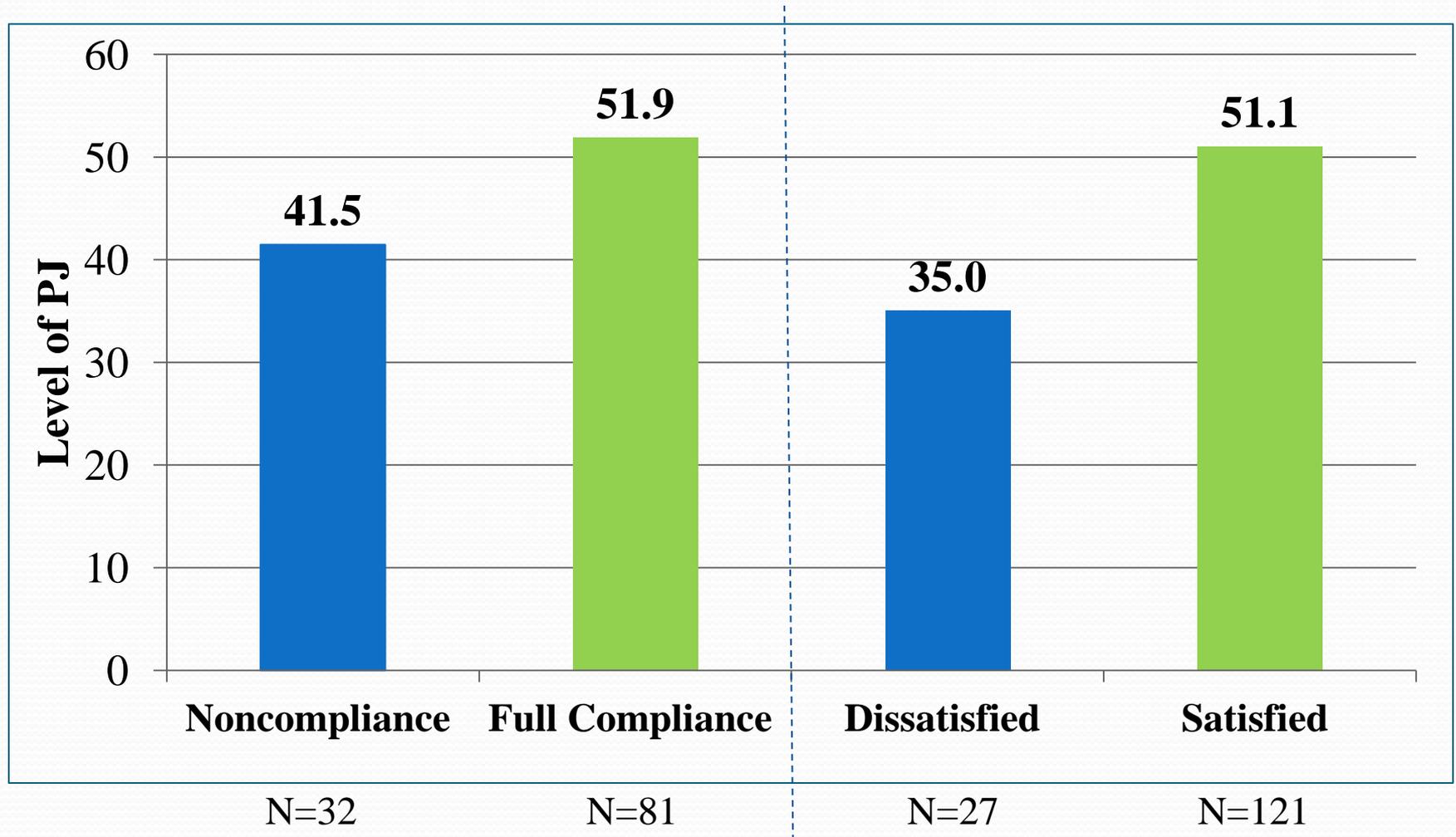
- Police rarely took actions that demonstrated hostility to the principles of procedural justice.
  - Example: Only 5% of encounters were disrespectful
  - Example: Very few outright demonstrations of bias
- Police often declined to take strong positive PJ action
  - Examples: Neutrality and Trustworthy motives
- Exception: Participation
  - Higher levels of participation were common
- *Bottom line: Everdene police were “selling” their decisions far less than they could have.*

# Procedural justice indicators

- Each sub-scale was standardized into 0-100 metric.
- All four were averaged into an overall procedural justice index.

	N	Range	Mean	Std. Dev.
Participation	301	0-100	67.7	37.6
Neutrality	301	0-100	38.1	18.6
Dignity	311	0-100	49.8	25.4
Trustworthy motives	317	0-100	25.0	18.2
Overall PJ index	293	0-100	45.2	17.8

# Procedural justice, citizen compliance and satisfaction



# Next steps

- Control for the effects of other factors
  - How rational/needful citizen is
  - Citizen's personal characteristics (age, sex, race)
  - Citizen's role (victim, suspect, witness/third party)
  - Nature of outcome police selected (e.g., punitive?)
- Whether/how to weight 4 PJ elements
- Limits to PJ's impact
  - Do its effects plateau at higher levels or continue to give good returns on the “investment?”