

Measuring, Managing, and Enhancing Procedural Justice in Policing: Promise and Pitfalls

**NACOLE Academic Symposium
April 22, 2016**

Robert E. Worden, Ph.D. Sarah J. McLean, Ph.D.

The John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety, Inc.

Questions

- If measures of procedural justice in police-citizen encounters are incorporated into management accountability systems, what will managers do with the information?
 - Does performance in procedural justice terms improve?
- Are survey-based measures valid reflections of officers' behavior?

Research Sites

- Syracuse, NY
 - City of 145,000
 - Department of approximately 450 sworn
 - No extraordinary history or climate of misconduct or police-community tension
- Schenectady, NY
 - City of 66,000
 - Department of approximately 160 sworn
 - Subject of DOJ pattern-or-practice investigation 2001-2012
 - Mayor publicly discussed disbanding agency in 2009

Methods

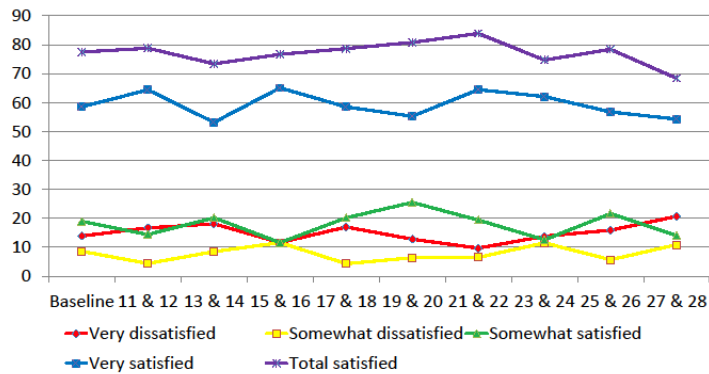
- Police Services Survey
 - People with police contact through calls for service, stops, or arrest
 - 100 per city per month over 18 months
 - Summarized at monthly Compstat meetings
- Patrol Interviews
 - Officers and supervisors at 2 points in time
- “Armchair” Observation
 - SSO of police-citizen encounters based on video & audio recordings in Schenectady

Citizens' Judgments

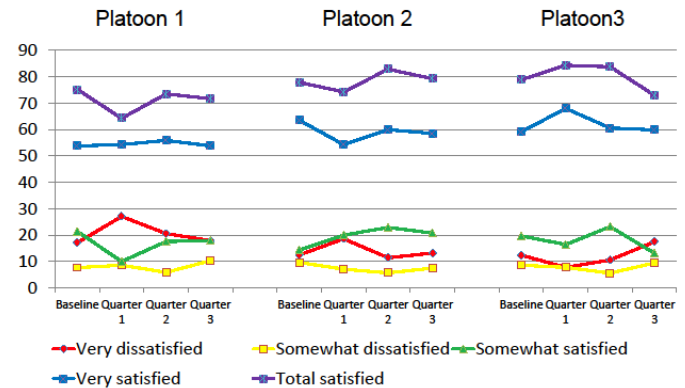
- The police ...
 - treated me with dignity and respect
 - considered my views
 - tried hard to do the right thing
 - made their decision based on facts
 - respected my rights
 - paid attention to what I had to say
 - explained their actions
 - were very/somewhat [un]fair
 - were very/somewhat [im]polite

Examples of Monthly Feedback

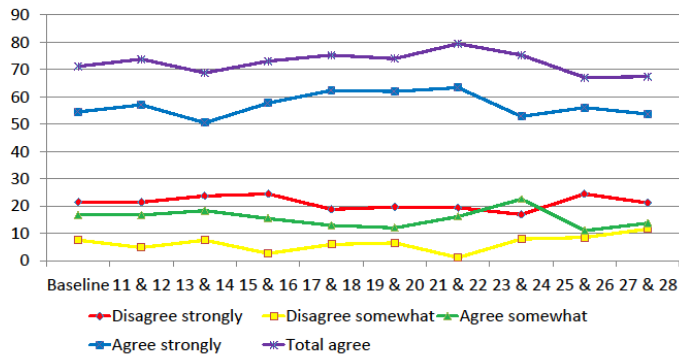
Satisfaction with Treatment by Police



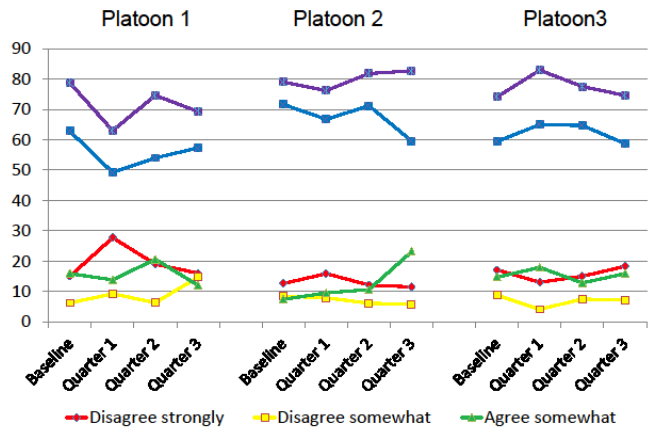
Satisfaction with Treatment by Police



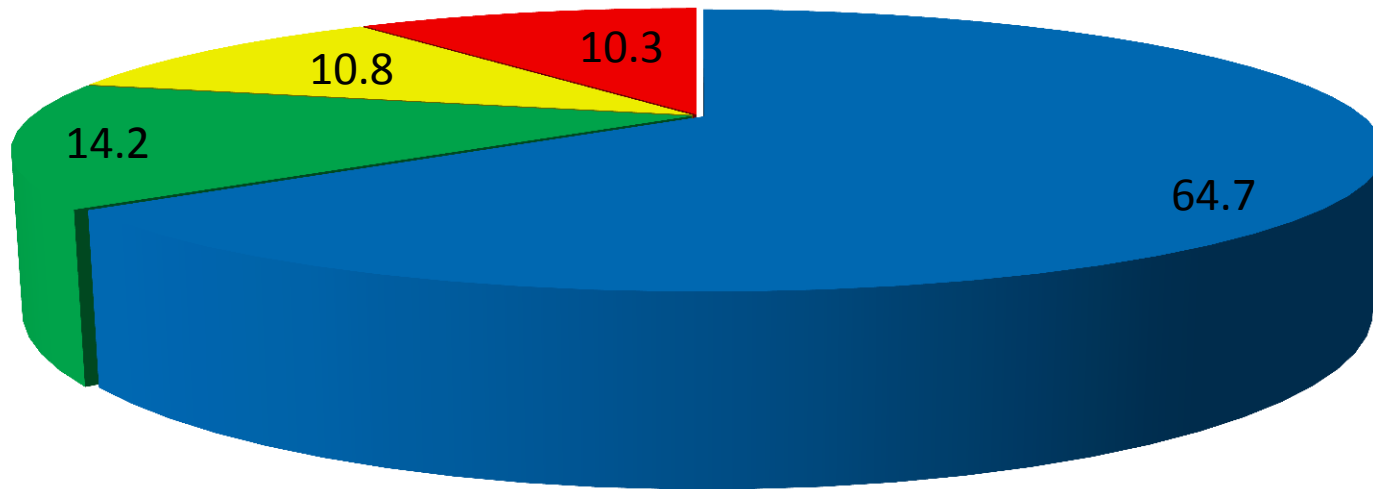
Police Considered My Views



Police Made Their Decision Based on Facts



Subjective Procedural Justice

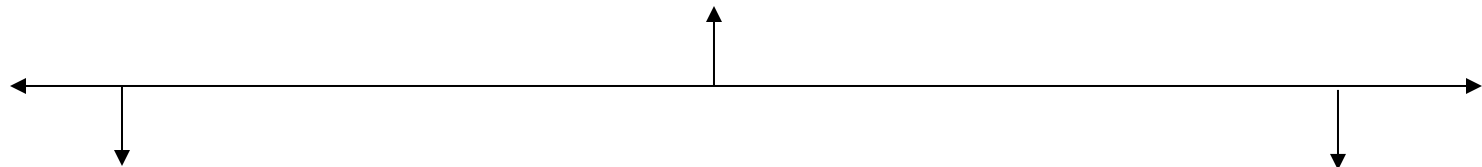


■ Most favorable ■ Favorable ■ Unfavorable ■ Most unfavorable

The Management Continuum

Intermittent attention

- Occasional mention at roll call - the *what* but not *why*
 - “Watch your tone out there”
 - “Try” to think about customer service “if possible”
 - “Don’t swear if you don’t have to”



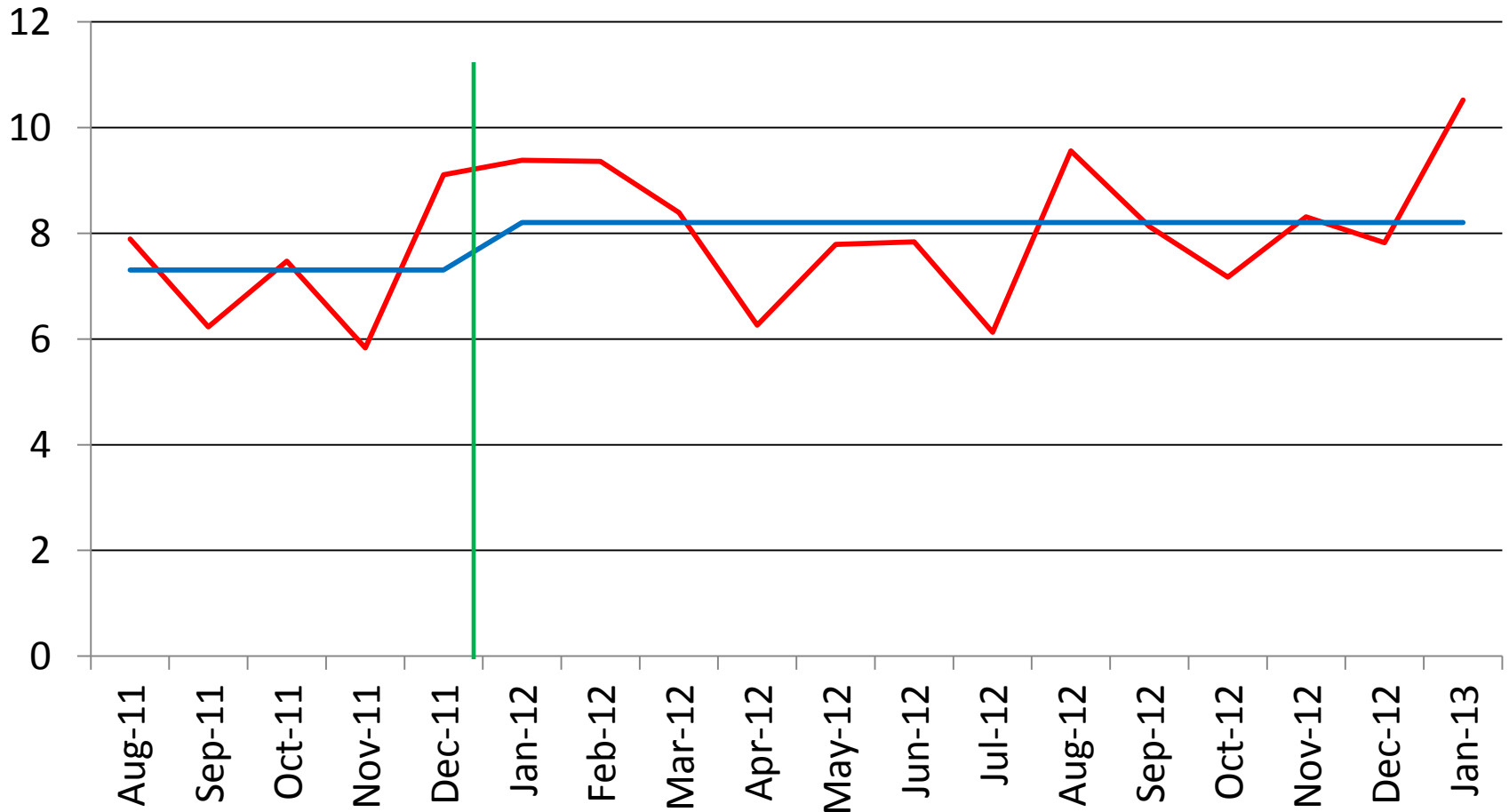
No attention/resistance

- No mention made to subordinate officers
- Supervisors undermined command staff expectations
 - “Officer safety is the goal, not customer service”

Regular attention/support

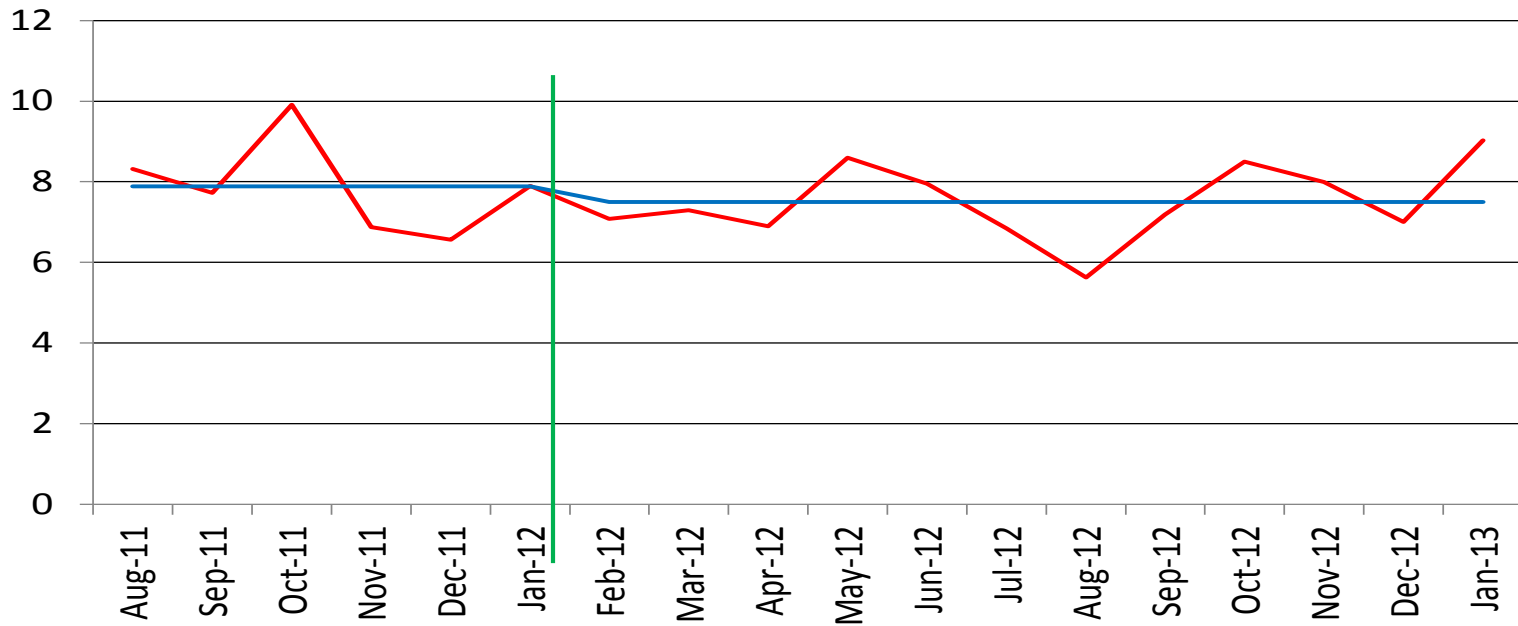
- Regular emphasis at roll call - the *what* and *why*
 - “Don’t use jargon, explain what you are doing. It makes people feel better which makes your job easier.”
- Shared monthly Compstat presentations
- Supervisors responded to calls and gave feedback on quality of the interaction/completed Service Quality Control Reports

Subjective Procedural Justice over Time



Schenectady

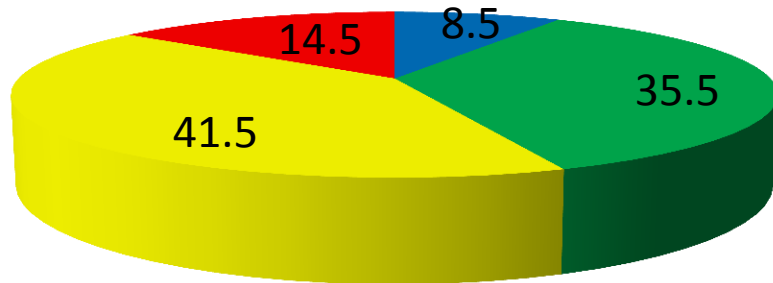
Subjective Procedural Justice over Time



Syracuse

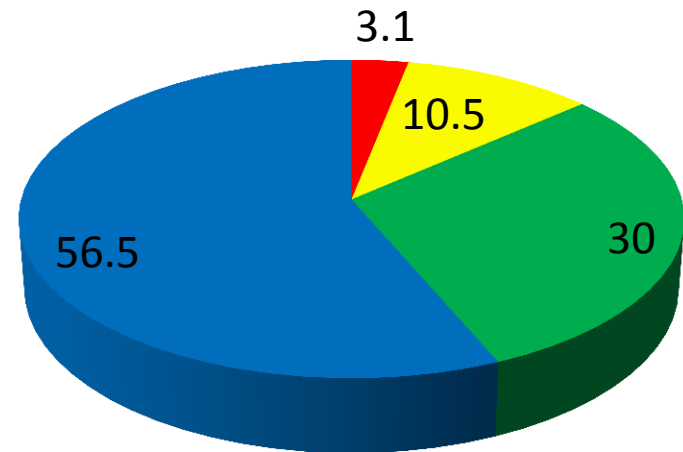
Overt Procedural Justice

Procedural Justice



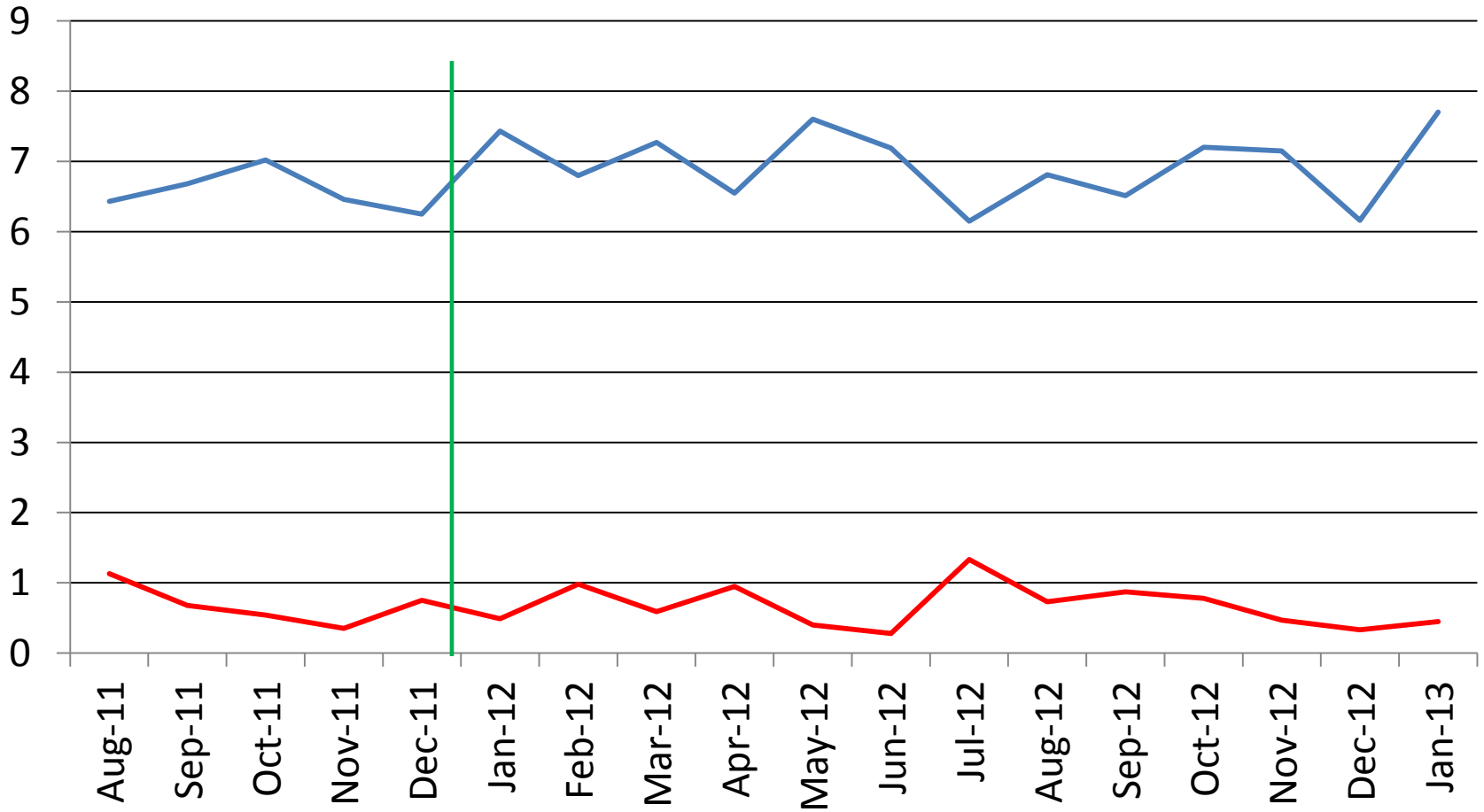
■ Very high ■ High ■ Moderate ■ Low

Procedural Injustice

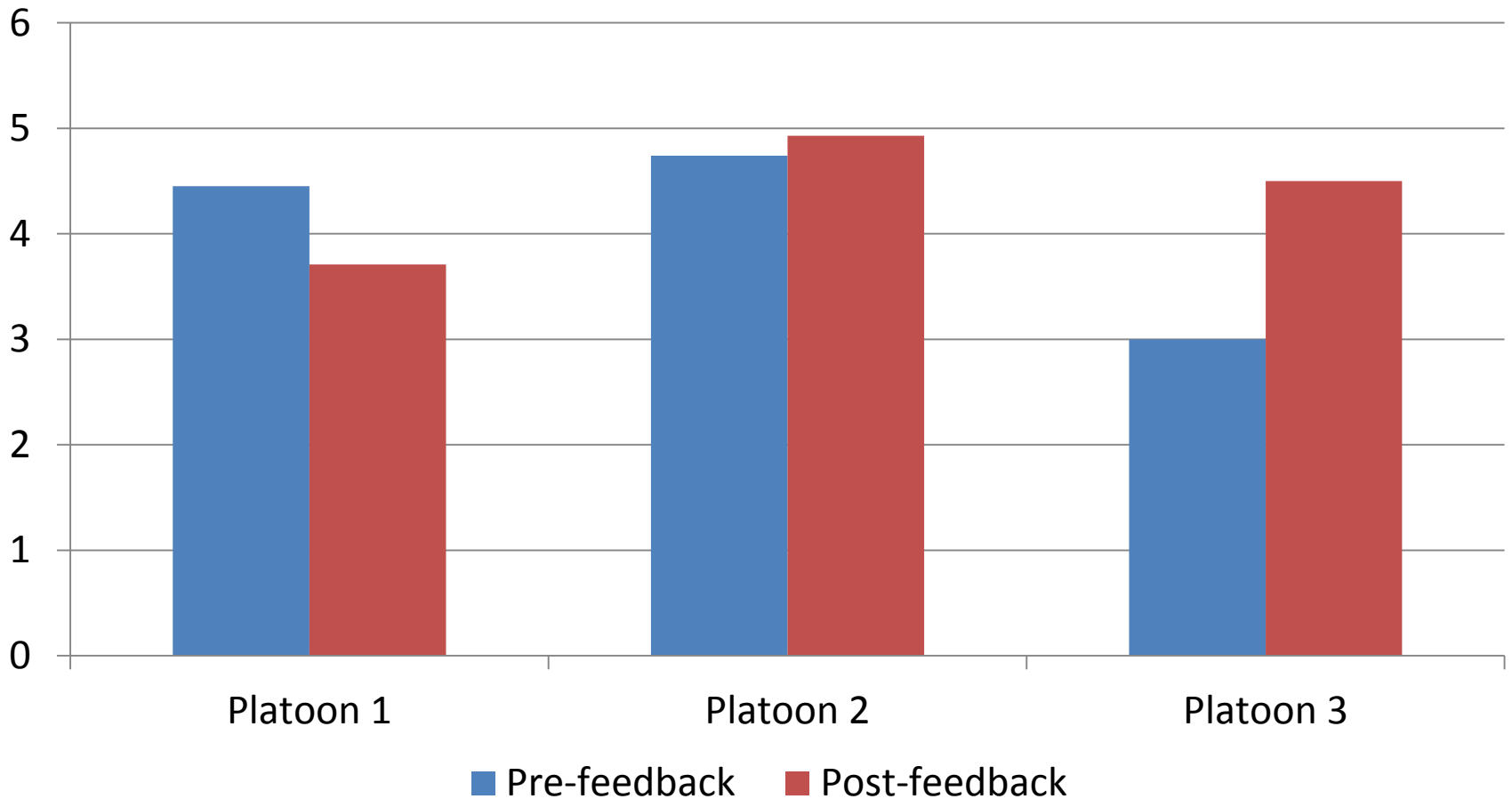


■ High ■ Moderate ■ Low ■ None

Overt Procedural (In)Justice over Time



Changes in Overt Procedural Justice



Conclusions

- In organizations like police departments, what gets measured may not get managed
 - Structures – such as Compstat – may be loosely coupled with practice
 - Process-based policing is subject to interpretation by officers & supervisors
- Needle of public trust is difficult to move
 - Baseline levels of subjective and overt procedural justice are high
 - Citizens' judgments are not strongly affected by officers' behavior