



## If You Lose Your Goat: Public perceptions of police in Indonesia

Sharyn Graham Davies

John Buttle

Adrianus Meliala

Author contact: [sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz](mailto:sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz)

Sharyn Graham Davies is Associate Professor in the Department of Social Sciences at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand. Sharyn is author of *Sex and Sexuality in Indonesia* (2014), *Gender Diversity in Indonesia* (2011), *Challenging Gender Norms* (2007). She can be contacted at [sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz](mailto:sharyn.davies@aut.ac.nz).

John Buttle is Senior Lecture in the Department of Social Sciences at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand. John has written on the use of force and ethical policing. He can be contacted at [john.buttle@aut.ac.nz](mailto:john.buttle@aut.ac.nz).

Adrianus Meliala is Professor of Criminology at the University of Indonesia and has recently been appointed a Commissioner of Police Complaints. He can be contacted at [adrianus.meliala@ui.ac.id](mailto:adrianus.meliala@ui.ac.id)

### Abstract

While internationally there is a large body of quantitative work examining public perceptions of police, there is less in the way of qualitative, particularly anthropological, studies (Garriott, 2013). Moreover, as most studies are based in Western democratic nations with a strong rule of law, it is not surprising that findings have shown overall positive public perceptions of police. The case of Indonesia is different. The little quantitative work undertaken on public perceptions of police indicate extremely low levels of public trust and confidence (Muradi, 2014). This present study is thus unique in offering a qualitative analysis of a jurisdiction where public opinion is not favourably disposed towards the police. Drawing on ethnographic data collected between 2008 and 2013, this article critically explores what Indonesians think of their police service, and what they want from their police service in the future. The findings indicate that while people loath police corruption, eradicating corruption is not cited as a top priority. Furthermore, while people express a desire to have a police force that can deter, investigate, and solve crime, these factors do not dominate thinking. Rather, people form judgements of police based primarily on how they, or people they know, are treated by police, sentiments encapsulated in notions of procedural justice policing (Tyler, 1990). It is well-established that public support is essential to effective policing (Murphy & Cherney, 2012), and as such taking into account public desire for a respectful police force above a focus on outcome based policing will significantly aid police reform projects in Indonesia.

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## Introduction

The strength of this study lies in the complex in-depth nature of the qualitative approach to research and the examination, for the first time, of public perceptions of police in Indonesia. From a traditional standpoint, the majority of research into public perceptions of police has been conducted using quantitative methodologies. For instance, in their early comprehensive review of quantitative research conducted in the United States (US), Flanagan and Vaughn (1995) showed that public attitudes were generally supportive of police. Surveys of public attitudes towards police in England and Wales have also produced similarly positive results (Crisp, 1990; Sims & Myhill, 2001). A recent public attitude survey conducted by the Metropolitan Police (2013) shows a typical level of trust that citizens of England and Wales put in their police service. Public confidence in the police was measured by asking the following question: 'Taking everything into account how good a job do you think the police in this area are doing?' Of Londoners that answered this question, 67 per cent indicated confidence in the police.

There are, however, serious limitations to this type of simplistic quantitative analysis. For instance, Morgan and Newburn (1997) offer an insightful critique of quantitative measures of public trust in the police. They note that even well designed public opinion surveys are not a sophisticated means of measuring citizens' views about the police. Public opinion surveys ask discrete questions that require specific answers, which seldom explore the complex dynamics involved regarding reasons respondents made a particular choice. For example, as Morgan and Newburn (1997) note, a respondent has the ability to indicate support for police but once they tick the box there is no opportunity to explain why they made that decision, or to clarify which factors would lead to them withdrawing that support. Therefore, public opinion surveys provide a means of measuring the amount of trust the public may have in police but a more flexible qualitative approach has the possibility of revealing reasons for such choices.

An example of the richness produced through qualitative studies concerning citizen perceptions of police can be seen in the work of Loader and Mulcahy (2003) in England and Wales. Using qualitative interviews, Loader and Mulcahy identified five public sensibilities towards the police: "Defenders of the faith" who offer whole hearted support to the police; "The disenchanting" who offer low support to the police; "Atheists" who offer only grudging respect to the police; "Agnostics" who are aware of police fallibility but are largely indifferent to them; and "The hopeful" who are guarded but believe in the possibility of building better relations with the police. The work of Loader and Mulcahy demonstrates that people show varied support for the police and for different reasons, thus providing a nuanced understanding of public thinking about police. Notably, this qualitative study of public perceptions of police was conducted in the United Kingdom, a society where the rule of law is long standing and the legitimacy of the police is fairly robust. This cultural context raises interesting questions about applying a qualitative approach to studying public perceptions of police in a jurisdiction with weak judicial systems, poor policing outcomes, and indeed an absence of societal expectations of police utility.

The National Police of the Republic of Indonesia (Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia), referred to colloquially as Polri, is a good example of a police force struggling to gain legitimacy after a long period of being sutured to an oppressive state mechanism. Total personnel numbers today are in excess of 400, 000, making it the fourth largest force in the world; women constitute a very small percentage of police officers, though, at around 3.7 percent (Interpol, 2014). Moreover, policewomen mostly engage in peripheral policing (Davies, Meliala, & Buttle, 2013b). Despite its gross size, there is little scholarly work on policing in Indonesia, with limited English language sources (Buttle, Davies, & Meliala, under review; Davies, Meliala, & Buttle, 2013a; Davies et al., 2013b; International Crisis Group, 2001, 2004, 2012; Meliala, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b; Muradi, 2014; Prasetyo et al., 2005; Rahmawati & Azca, 2006; Stasch, 2001; Villaveces-Izquierdo, 2010) or Bahasa Indonesia sources (Bhakti, 2004; Dajoh & Ismail, 1997; Djamin, 1999; Markas Besar Kepolisian Republik Indonesia, 1999). There is some work on Indonesia's security sector (Jansen, 2008; Kingsley, 2010; Kristiansen & Trijono, 2005) but more research, both qualitative and quantitative, needs to be undertaken to develop understandings of this key institution.

Meliala (2001b) indicates that the Indonesian police first came into being just after the Declaration of Independence in 1945. The police were formed to help the Indonesian army fight against Dutch and Japanese occupations during the period of 1945-1948. Moves were made ensuring that the police were neutral and removed from political influence, and they enjoyed operational and administrative autonomy with equal status to the armed forces. After Suharto's regime took power in 1966 the police were amalgamated with the armed forces. By 1968, Polri were little more than a paramilitary wing of the armed forces that suppressed dissent against Suharto's regime. As is often the case, a police force organized along military lines perceives the public as an enemy and utilizes more brutal and often fatal forms of extra-legal violence (Jefferson, 1990). Such actions cause the public to mistrust police. Even the presence of paramilitary equipment can have a negative impact on the public perception of police (Buttle, 2003).

Since the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, Polri have undergone a number of reforms. Meliala (2001b) indicates that in 1999 the police were separated from the military and greater autonomy from political influence was restored. This move was helped by a decentralization of state governance to local administrations (Djani, 2009), which resulted in greater autonomy for provincial policing and loosened state control over the police (Stein & Lambang, 2005). However, Polri would often abuse their power and were perceived by the public as untrustworthy (Meliala, 2002b). As a means of promoting police legitimacy in the eyes of the public, Meliala (2001a) advocated the notion of sensitivity in policing and suggested that there were three dimensions to police sensitivity: individual police officers needed to be sensitive in their interactions with the public; police culture needed to change and promote sensitivity towards the public; and Polri organizational dynamics needed to promote a sensitive approach to policing. Meliala advocated a community-orientated approach to policing in Indonesia.



With support from international donors such as Japan, the US, Australia and to a lesser degree New Zealand, Polri moved away from the paramilitary understanding of law enforcement towards a community-policing model (Prasetyo et al., 2005). It is clear that effective policing requires the cooperation of citizens (Alpert, Dunham, & Piquero, 1998) and community policing is a model geared to develop public support (Hawdon & Ryan, 2003). As such, effective community policing needs to build positive public perceptions and develop police trustworthiness (Hawdon, 2008; Stoutland, 2001). The move towards community policing was a considerable improvement in comparison to how the country was policed by the military during the Suharto regime. However, evidence of how successfully the police have adopted a community orientated approach to policing is ambiguous.

Studies in Indonesia highlight the potential for community policing (Meliala, 2001a, 2001b), and even tentatively support its effectiveness, especially when dealing with regional conflict (Braithwaite, Braithwaite, Cookson, & Dunn, 2010; Prasetyo et al., 2005). Unfortunately, community policing depends on the good will of the public, and poor police performance has eroded community support for Polri (Meliala, 2002a). Indeed, police corruption and the extra-legal use of violence are seen as notable barriers to reforms in Indonesia (International Crisis Group, 2012). Such barriers also mean that people are less likely to proffer the type of assistance needed for effective law enforcement (Pino & Johnson, 2011). A recent quantitative public opinion survey indicates that public trust in Polri's performance is far below the 67 percent level indicated in London, for instance (Metropolitan Police, 2013). In 2011, a poll conducted by the police, found that only 33.4 percent of Indonesian respondents replied with a positive attitude towards Polri (Kepala Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia, 2012). When considering the limits of current reforms and planning for future changes in policing, a comprehensive understanding of public perceptions of police in Indonesia is crucial. Such an undertaking is best achieved by a flexible qualitative approach to studying public perceptions, allowing respondents freedom to generate answers to what is a complex social phenomenon.

### Methods and aims of the study

This article takes as its starting point the proposition that without community engagement police reform in Indonesia will continue to fail. Therefore, it is important to investigate public perceptions of the police in a way that allows for the complexity of differing views and opinions to be expressed. As such, in this article we utilize a qualitative approach to answering the question 'how do Indonesian citizens in Lombok perceive the police?' Lombok is an island in the Indonesian archipelago just to the east of Bali. Lombok has a population of around three million people, most of whom are Muslim. Lombok is an excellent place in which to gauge perceptions of police due to it being demographically similar to Indonesia at large. Lombok was also selected due to the first author's existing research connections in the province. In this article we explore what people said when specifically asked, in a safe space, about police. This article draws on 17 informal, open-ended interviews conducted in Indonesia in 2011. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia by a trained research assistant. Use of a research assistant facilitated data collection, and also created an additional degree of separation between the authors and the interviewees. Interviews were conducted one-on-one in places people felt comfortable: at small food stalls over a bowl of noodles; at a coffee stand; on a bench in the shade; watching local youth play soccer. Opportunistic sampling took place and the sample makes no claims to represent Indonesia's population on the whole. The research assistant introduced himself as such, and said that he was collecting data on public perceptions of the police for a book. Interviewees were paid Rp20,000 (US\$5) for their time, which was anywhere from 30 minutes to one hour. Interviews were not recorded, but notes were taken and the research assistant and first author met shortly after each interview to expand on the notes, discuss the interview, and translate data into English. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were asked including: what do you think of police?; what experiences, if any, have you had with police?; what do you think the police should be like?; and what would you do if you were Police Chief? Five women and 12 men were interviewed, with ages ranging from 18 to 62. The mean age was 34 and all participants were Muslim. One woman had graduated from university, one woman had a diploma and of the rest, four had finished senior high school, eight had finished junior high school, and one had finished primary school. Two respondents did not report their educational attainment. Once the interviews were complete, a thematic approach was used to code the data, and significant reoccurring themes were analysed and developed into the framework of this article. Elsewhere Davies (2011) discusses methodology in greater depth.

The remainder of the article is divided into five sections. The first section explores what people think of police in Indonesia. The second section examines people's recollections of experiences they have had, either directly or vicariously, with police. The third section recounts what people think their police service should be like, while the fourth section analyses responses given when people were asked what they would do if they were made Police Chief. The findings are analysed in the closing discussion section of the article.

### What people think of the police

Kalau kehilangan kambing jangan panggil polisi karena anda akan kehilangan sapi!  
(If you lose your goat, don't call the police or you will also lose your cow!)

During discussion with a number of Indonesians about police, a man in his mid-fifties made the above comment, implying there is no point contacting Indonesian police – if a crime occurs police probably will not be able to solve it, and you will have to pay them regardless. This view of police ineffectiveness and corruption is common in Indonesia. It was interesting, then, that when asked to state four words describing police, the first two words that 15 of 17 participants gave were positive, including:

good (*bagus*); very good (*bagus sekali*); sweet tempered (*ramah*); prestigious (*wibawa*); protective (*mengayomi*); friendly (especially policewomen); and polite (*sopan*, notably only in reference to policewomen).

However, the last two words people gave were negative:



unprofessional (*tidak profesional*); not prestigious (*tidak berwibawa*); money hungry (*mata duitan*); not decisive (*tidak tegas*); violating regulations (*melanggar regulasi*); unfair (*tidak adil*); biased (*pandang bulu*); greedy (*rakus*); rude (*kasar*); arrogant (*arogan*); and cheating (*membodohi, memeras*).

When asked to elaborate on what they think of police in Indonesia, all but two of 17 people initially responded by saying something positive. In one interview, a middle-aged man named Salim noted, 'We all feel very safe in our village and this is because of the great performance of police officers.' A woman named Sari recounted that, 'In the village where I live we have a Babinkamtibmas (a village-based, non-commissioned police officer), and his presence makes everyone feel very safe (*aman*).' Pak Gus, a 52-year-old Muslim man, talked fondly of a police officer who worked in his area, recounting how the officer was extremely polite and refused to take bribes for doing his job. As a result of not taking bribes, this officer was so poor that he could not afford a motorbike, and so did his job by travelling on public transport.

Of the 15 who initially praised police, all but one quickly went on to add a 'but.' For instance, Rachman, a 26-year-old man initially responded positively before offering a critique: 'In general, I am proud of the police because without police there will be no security or order. But there are a lot of things wrong with the police.' Idham, a Muslim man, similarly asserted, 'The police force is very good ... The only thing is that the traffic police are very bad.'

Why did people respond with an initial positive reaction when asked about police but then almost invariably move to a critical stance? There may be two key reasons. First, people may have started their response positively for strategic reasons. In interviews, people might be wary of someone asking questions about the police. Having established themselves as a compliant and supportive citizen, they may then feel able to add that perhaps the police could do better. Second, people may have responded initially positively because they genuinely feel that the Indonesian police do some good in keeping their society safe and orderly. Indeed, people often voice sympathy with police. People see underage youth recklessly driving motorbikes, with no helmets, and under-resourced police trying to enforce the law. Some people personally know police officers and hear first-hand accounts of how hard police work and how dedicated they are to making Indonesia a better place. They also know that to get accepted into the police force candidates have to pay large sums of money; people have some sympathy with police trying to recoup this unofficial fee through bribes (International Crisis Group, 2012). In our research, we met many officers committed to community development and to providing their society with a safe and secure environment. So it is not without reason that people make initially positive comments about the police. It is important not to lose sight, then, of the many caring and committed officers in Polri who go to great lengths to serve society. However, it is notable that this support for the police does not run deeply in the imaginations of participants.

While people may think that overall Indonesian police do a good job, and they have sympathy with police, when questioned further it becomes clear that this perception is not deeply ingrained and that the police have a lot of work to do to create public good will. The most substantive comments were made when discussions moved to negative perceptions of the police. Indeed, speaking with Indonesians, it becomes clear that there is wide acknowledgement of systemic problems within Polri. When asked her views on police, Wulan, a 39-year-old woman, argued that while on the whole police did a decent job, a few rogue officers ruin Polri's reputation:

For the most part the police are very good and because of the police our country is safe. But what gives the police a bad image in society is *oknum* (rogue cops) who violate the law, which police, especially, should not do. Some police even use drugs and some are easy to pay off.

Jero, a 48-year-old Muslim man, had similar thoughts:

There are some *oknum* who sometimes behave inappropriately. For instance, they commit a crime and this makes society sick because police officers shouldn't do that because their role is to protect society and set a good example.

Aisha, a 37-year-old university graduate, expressed disappointment in police:

For the most part the police are good. But from time to time the society feels very disappointed (*sangat kecewa*). It is all because of some *oknum* who have no morals (*moralitas*). As a result they do something that is contrary to the regulations. Some of them are easy to bribe (*disuap*). No wonder people say KUHP! You know KUHP is the acronym for Kitab Undang Undang Hukum Pidana (The Criminal Code), but people joke that the translation should be '*kasih uang, habis perkara*' (pay up, problem solved).

The idea of *oknum*, also translatable as dirty cop, links to the rotten apple theory of police deviance (Sherman, 1974), and is predicated on the notion of individual police officers acting in a corrupt manner independent of organizational support. However, research has shown that police corruption at any level may indicate widespread corruption at other levels of the organization (Keppeler, Sluder, & Alpert, 1998). Therefore the rotten apple theory has been largely discredited (Caldero & Crank, 2011; Newburn, 1999; Punch, 2000; Punch & Gilmour, 2010), and is now more a justification used to exonerate police – and it is used in many jurisdictions when corruption is discovered (Newburn, 1999) – than an accepted theory of police corruption.

The problems besetting Polri are, of course, far more systemic than a few rogue cops, which the above three narratives suggest. The majority of participants see Polri being similar to Gerber and Mendelson's theory of predatory policing which is '... where police activities are mainly [not to say exclusively] devoted to the personal enrichment and self-preservation of the police themselves rather than the protection of the public or the systematic repression of subordinating groups' (2008, p. 2). This predatory policing occurs when there is widespread corruption and the police serve their own interests rather than that of governing elites. For Sari, a 32-year-old Muslim woman, police are indeed money hungry:

The police are good because they protect our society. But some of them do not want to work if there is no money (*duit*), or at least cigarettes. Without these things they will serve us very slowly. They are money hungry (*mata duitan*).

For Bambang, police are so money hungry that they intervene even when unwelcome:

Even if we sort out a disagreement ourselves, like a traffic accident, police will still intervene because they want to make money out of it. If there is a power failure and the traffic lights don't work then the police never help, but if there is a police raid (*razia polisi*), then suddenly the police have new found energy (*baru semangat*).



When asked what they think about the police, 15 of the 17 interviewed recounted stories specifically involving traffic police (Polisi Lalu Lintas). Santi, a 36-year-old Muslim woman, revealed:

The only thing that is really disappointing is the traffic police. I have heard from many people that the traffic police don't protect people at all. All they do is look for money. So if public perception is like that, there must be something that has made people disappointed (*sangat kecewa*). What is it?

For Maman, an 18-year-old high school graduate, the traffic police tarnish the reputation of the rest of Polri: 'The most annoying thing is the traffic police. Even by charging someone just Rp10,000 (US\$1), they lose their authority/prestige (*wibawa*).' People did not always mind paying police a bribe, especially if it meant they did not have to go to court, but what particularly angered many was the bartering of the bribe, as Suparman, a 39-year-old Muslim man, noted:

The problem is the traffic police, they always charge us but there is no exact amount of money that we have to pay. It's ridiculous when they charge people Rp200,000 (US\$40) or maybe even more, but if we say we don't have that much, they say just pay Rp100,000 (US\$20). It's cheaper to go to court really because then it's only Rp45,000 (US\$9).

This transactional culture, combined with the special favours extended to the wealthy, create feelings of contempt for police. We see this contempt in a narrative from Rachman, a 26-year-old Muslim man, who argues that the law should not be for sale:

If the police work professionally then there will be a set fine for not having a licence or registration so how can it be like a market place (*transaksi jual beli*)? At the moment the law can be bought (*hukum bisa dibeli*) and that's not good. And what's more, when police try and charge us, well if we flatter (*merayu*) them they might reduce the amount to whatever we have on us, or even just cigarettes. I have a cop friend and if he stops a woman and she flirts with him he won't give her a ticket. And what really makes me mad is that the rich can afford to buy themselves out of any problem. Look at Gayus Tambunan. He stole more than a trillion rupiah from our society. He was arrested and jailed but he could still travel around (*berkeliraran*) and go to Bali. He must have paid the police officer who is in charge of his prison cell block. I hope in the future the image of the police will improve.

This section explored perceptions of police in Indonesia. People are often initially positive about the work of police, acknowledging the difficulties police face and recognizing that many officers work hard to keep their communities safe. Yet all participants were critical of the police. While some people thought that there were just a few rogue cops tarnishing the reputation of the entire police service, a notion that has been dismissed by a large body of research (Caldero & Crank, 2011; Keppeler et al., 1998; Newburn, 1999; Punch, 2000; Punch & Gilmour, 2010), others believed that there is a predatory culture of money-motivated policing (Gerber & Mendelson, 2008) driven by police needing to repay academy entrance fees and wanting to get rich, both through bribing citizens and by letting the rich off serious offenses if paid enough money. On what experience are people forming these opinions of police?

### Experiences with police

In our series of interviews in Lombok, 13 out of 17 people recounted direct personal dealings with police; the other four had family members who had direct contact. One of the people, Santi, who had no direct engagement with police said, 'Alhamdulillah (Praise God), I have had no dealings with the police. If everyone carries the right documentation then the police will not charge you.' Of the 13 direct experiences mentioned, 12 were for traffic offenses. One of these was actually a pleasant experience, as shared by Bambang, a 26-year-old man:

It was night time, about 9pm and I was riding my motorbike with a friend and we drove the wrong way on the road (*melanggar jalur*). As a result there was a cop who drove a car and stopped in front of us. When he stopped, of course we were shocked and we thought the cop would get mad. But when he got out he asked where we were headed and we said we were going to our friend's house. The cop asked why we crossed the road the wrong way and he told us we were not allowed to do that. The cop then said make sure next time you don't do it again. He was a very senior cop and he just gave us a warning and we were really happy with that. So I do hope other police officers can be like him.

All of the other experiences participants had were with traffic police and these experiences were unpleasant and resulted in a fine, either paid as a bribe or formally at the police station or the court. It is not surprising that the majority of police-citizen interactions are with traffic police considering this type of policing brings all sections of the public into contact with police (Blais & Dupont, 2005). Maman's experience is typical of such interactions in Indonesia, especially in the bartering of the fine:

Yes, I have had experience with the police. The traffic police stopped me to check my driver's license and registration, which weren't valid, and I wasn't wearing a helmet. They asked for Rp50,000 (US\$10) but I told a white lie (*berbohong untuk kebaikan*) and said I only had Rp10,000 (US\$2). Then they said 'OK, that's enough for morning coffee.' Imagine! It's really unprofessional. The police should be more decisive (*tegas*) in handling cases. For instance, the traffic police, if they really want to charge the people, then charge the people. Don't cheat or extort (*memeras*) money from people.

While Maman is annoyed at the bartering of the fine, he thinks it is acceptable to drive an unlicensed bike and wear no helmet. Sari also had experiences with traffic police and here recounts something that happened to her brother:

Two months ago my younger brother was charged as he did not have a driver's license. The police officer asked for Rp500,000 (US\$100). My brother didn't have that amount so the cop said 'How about Rp100,000 (US\$20)?' It just seems that these rogue cops (*oknum*) charge people according to what they can pay. But if people aren't educated the police can easily cheat them (*membodohi*) them. If you are ignorant you might just pay the police. Eventually, we decided not to pay the cop but take a traffic ticket and two weeks later went to the court and he only had to pay Rp45,000 (US\$9).

For both Maman and Sari the most annoying part of their interaction with police was not that they had to pay a fine – indeed Sari found the court quick and cheap in comparison. The most distasteful aspect of the interaction was that police bartered with them. One wonders if citizens knew they could go to court and just pay Rp45,000, would they persist in



haggling with police? Interestingly, all participants acknowledged that they were in the wrong when pulled over by police, suggesting they thought a bribe was fair; but a just bribe that was applied equally to all. In dealing with traffic offenses, issues of racism often came to ahead, as Sari recounts:

The [Hindu] police will see a Hindu on their way to pray, and they have a head dress on so no helmet, and they will not charge them. But that same cop will charge every Muslim without a helmet. I once saw a women being disrespected by a cop in front of daughter and she yelled at the cop: 'Why don't you arrest all those Hindu people there without helmets? You just arrest Muslims. Do you want SARA (race) riots to start again?'

There is an extensive body of research indicating differential attitudes expressed between police and ethnic minorities (Crisp, 1990; Flanagan & Vaughn, 1995; Sims & Myhill, 2001). Such research has shown that ethnic minorities exhibit greater mistrust of the police than citizens from the dominant culture (Murphy & Cherney, 2012). According to Waddington (1999), police enforce the boundaries of cultural respectability and therefore those from non-dominant cultures frequently come into contact with police and are often considered 'police property.' In the above quote, Sari reflects on the ways in which racism come into play in Lombok, with police being less punitively minded in respect to citizens of the same religion. Interestingly, while Hindu Indonesians are a minority in Lombok, anecdotal evidence (which is all that is available given a lack of statistical data) indicates that Hindus are over represented in Lombok's police force. Part of the reason for this seems to be officers moving to Lombok from Bali, where a majority of people are Hindu.

Dealing with traffic police certainly dominates people's discussion of their experiences with police. Indeed, the only person to mention direct dealings with police for non-traffic related reasons was Pak Tedi, a 62-year-old village leader:

In 2008, there was a fight between employees. At first, we wanted to solve the problem through kinship but then the victim's side (*pihak korban*) wanted to take legal action through the police. But after the witness statement (BAP, *berita acara pemeriksaan*, literally 'minutes of investigation') was sent to the attorney we asked the police officer to cancel the charges. The police officer then asked for an exorbitant case cancellation fee (*uang pembatalan kasus*) of Rp 600,000 (US\$60). Well we had to pay it but what was that fee for? It's really unfair.

Pak Tedi's experience is one of disempowerment – he felt he had no option but to pay this fee, which equates to half a month's salary for a civil servant. He also notes his preference for a restorative form of justice (Acciaioli, 2002), although once the victim had called the police this option was removed. Experiences such as Pak Tedi's form strong negative impressions of police, which we also saw occurring in the previous section.

Part of the reason for the negative impression of police extends from what people expect of police. For instance, while politeness was rarely mentioned in response to questions about what people think of police, when people were asked about personal experiences with police, politeness was of key concern. For instance, Rachman reveals that, 'They have to use polite language because there are a lot of police who, when we try to protest, just ask 'Do you want to teach me? Who do you think you are (*Mau mengajar saya? Lu kira lu siapa*). This is very rude.' Rachman elaborates on the importance of politeness when relating a direct experience he had with police:

Yes, I have had to deal with the police. Once when I was going back to my home town I was stopped by the traffic police (*polantas, polisi lalu lintas*). I realized my registration was expired and that the motorbike had no mirrors. I went to sit at the police post to wait but the officer said, 'Do not sit there; it's not a public place.' Because he said that so rudely, I didn't accept it and said, 'In what way do you protect society? You are not professional (*tidak profesional*).' And the officer said, 'I don't care. Do you want to teach me? I already have a law degree (*saya sudah S1-Hukum*).' We had a long quarrel (*cekcok*) then and I decided to go to court. I was really disappointed in that officer. Why didn't he talk politely to me? Even if it is not a public place and I can't sit there, then he should have still talked to me politely (*sopan*). You can imagine when I had that long quarrel with the officer that all the people around were looking at me and wondering what was going on. And I swore (*sumpah serapah*) because I was incredibly mad.

What can we take from these insights into people's experiences with police in Indonesia? Dealings with traffic police are common and are almost the only dealings anyone in Lombok has with police, a situation that occurs elsewhere in the world (Blais & Dupont, 2005). For most people, this engagement with police is not positive. Interestingly, what underpins these negative opinions is not that people have to pay a fine, or even the dislike of associated blatant corruption – bribery and corruption are perhaps so ingrained in Indonesian society that the public tolerates the inevitability of having to offer a bribe. Rather, the particular focus of the negative responses is the fact that the bribes are unregulated and negotiable. Such reactions make one wonder if the implementation of a set bribe would improve public perceptions of police. Further research in this area is needed.

### What should the police service be like?

Having explored public perceptions of police, and people's experiences with police, we turn now to look at what people in Indonesia want their police service to be like. When asked specifically about the role of a police service, a common response was that Indonesian police should protect (*mengayomi*) society by providing order and security. Order and security is known by the acronym *kamtibmas* (*keamanan dan ketertiban masyarakat*, literally, safety and order for society). For Aisha, a university graduate, '*Kamtibmas* is needed for all members of society so there is no anxiety (*keresahan*), and so people don't take the law into their own hands (*main hakim sendiri*).' If there is order and security, then for Santi, a 36-year-old woman, 'This means that we will all feel happy and safe from danger and worry and this will mean that the police have done their job well.'

In performing their role as protectors of society, there is a general understanding that police needed to work in partnership with society (Meliala, 2001a). For Maman, a high-school graduate, 'Police should protect society and have a close relationship with citizens.' Indeed having a close relationship with society is part of the policing mantra, as Pak Tedi, a village leader, notes, 'The police must embrace their own slogan (*semboyan*), which is for the police to be a partner of society (*polisi adalah mitra masyarakat*).' Superman also acknowledged the importance of partnership: 'It will take time for



the police to improve their performance and there must be encouragement from members of society. The only way that *kamtibmas* will be achieved is if both sides work together.' Bambang, a 26-year-old Muslim man, additionally stressed the importance of partnership and acknowledged the time it will take for this to develop:

The police should be the partner of society. All police officers, with no exception, should have a close relationship with society. If police can have a close relationship with society, I believe this will be a good way to improve the police image. But, of course, this is not as easy as simply turning over one's hand (*tidak semudah membalik telapak tangan*).

In facilitating a partnership, people exhort police to be good role models. For Aisha, it is through setting a good example and educating the public about laws, that society will come to work with police:

Their role is absolutely to protect (*mengayomi*). They should also set a good example. If police set a good example, I believe society will obey them. They should also practice socialisation (*sosialisasi*, e.g. teach people).

As part of being good role models, many people believe that police should take the time to educate the public. Rather than just issuing fines for traffic infringements, Pak Tedi argues that police need to make people aware of the rules:

Police should protect and teach society so people know not to violate the laws. People don't know about the laws, especially about traffic rules, so police should socialise them.

Pak Salim, a 48-year-old Muslim man, asserts:

Well, so far so good I guess. But the traffic police just charge people. When we drive on the wrong side of the road they don't let us explain ourselves. When we drive on the wrong side of the road, we don't do it intentionally. Maybe we don't see the traffic sign or perhaps the sign is covered by a tree or something. Do the police really want to protect society? If they do then they should not charge people straight away. They should at least give a warning and tell us not to do that again.

While for people like Pak Tedi and Pak Salim education is clearly important in fostering a good relationship between society and police, many people stopped by traffic police acknowledge they are in the wrong; most people know they must wear a helmet when riding a motorbike for instance. Nevertheless, the desire for police to take on board this notion of socialisation is strong and it links well with the work of Tyler and colleagues who show that procedurally justice policing – that is police being fair, just, and explaining their decisions – can significantly enhance police legitimacy (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Tyler & Lind, 1992).

Politeness (*sopan*) is a quality that many people in Indonesia mention when imaging what an ideal police service should look like. For instance, Wulan, a 39-year-old Muslim woman, noted that, 'Police should be polite, especially traffic police. I have seen some traffic police who are not polite at all when they stop people.' As we see in many of the statements in this article, police lack of politeness is the primary shortcoming mentioned in citizen commentary.

A final aspect that a majority of participants commented on was their wish that money-motivated policing be eradicated.

This comment concerned not so much a wish that bribery disappear, but that police assist both rich and poor people in need, and that personal wealth did not enable people to act with impunity. Such sentiments are reflected by Idham when he notes that, 'They need to protect us and teach us about rules and how to behave, and set a good example. They also have to be unbiased and not just favour the rich.' By favouring the rich, Idham is suggesting that those who can afford to pay will be let off for an offence, or that officers will only take on cases if the victim can pay. For Sari, the police should fully commit to their role of protecting society without thinking of payment:

The police should protect (*mengayomi*) society, and help society in respect to public order and be responsive to people if they need help. They should work heart and soul (*bekerja sepenuh hati*), without expecting any reward.

We have seen here the expression of seven key themes related to what people in Indonesia want from their police service. Police should: protect society by providing order and security; facilitate a partnership with society; be good role models; educate citizens about laws; be polite; and eradicate money-motivated policing. The question now becomes how can Indonesia's police force embody such ideals?

### If I were police chief

To find out how people thought police could achieve these ideals, they were asked what they would do if they were made police chief. Drawing specifically on 17 interviews with randomly selected members of the public in Lombok in 2011, we see three broad recommendations for improvement: fair and transparent recruitment processes; regulation of fines; and increasing professional conduct.

When asked what he would do were he suddenly made police chief, Pak Tedi, a 62-year-old Muslim village leader, summed up the thoughts of many when he said he would ensure that only quality candidates became police officers: In my opinion, if we want a better police service, then human resources must be improved. If a person is qualified, and if they pass the test, then they can become police officers (*petugas polisi*). But if they don't pass, then they shouldn't become officers, no matter how much they pay in bribes. The police service shouldn't accept bribes (*uang tambahan*) to let in unsuitable people. Because people buy their way into the police service, well, it's no wonder the public perception of police is so negative.

Pak Tedi draws here not just on anecdotal, but also personal, experience. He has two family members in the police service. His brother-in-law, who is now in charge of a police station in Kalimantan, was able to attend the police academy and graduate as an officer without paying any type of bribe. Pak Tedi's nephew, however, had to pay Rp10 million (US\$1000), almost as much as a civil servant's annual salary, to a senior officer before being accepted into the service. This money was paid into the senior officer's private bank account. Pak Tedi believes that paying a fee to get accepted into the police service is not of itself a problem. Indeed, Pak Tedi commented that, 'If someone wants to go to university they have to pay, so it's not unreasonable that if you want to get a job as a police officer you must also pay a fee.' What Pak Tedi sees as unacceptable is forcing excellent candidates, who pass the requisite exams and fitness tests, to pay prohibitive fees, which not infrequently reach Rp100 million (US\$10,000), into someone's private bank account. For Pak Tedi, and many other Indonesians, fair and transparent recruitment policies would improve the police's public image.



Another comment people made in terms of how they would improve the police if they were made police chief concerns the regulation of bribes. Surprisingly, people were not necessarily annoyed that they had to pay bribes to the police if they infringed the law. Rather, what angered people was the ambiguous pricing of bribes, as Fitri, as 22-year-old university graduate, explains:

Before charging people, police need to show us the official amount to be paid for that particular violation. It is ridiculous that police say you must pay Rp200,000 (US\$40), and then go down to Rp100,000 (US\$20), and then down to Rp50,000 (US\$10) when they realise that person doesn't have any money. But people must also insist on going to court rather than paying the fine on the spot. Most importantly, police should not negotiate with people who break that law.

Firti's narrative exhorts empowerment and encourages people to demand an official infringement notice and to then proceed to court. She acknowledges, though, that for many Indonesians court is an intimidating place: 'Ordinary people hear the word 'court' and they believe they have already lost, even before the battle begins' (*orang awam dengar pengadilan sudah takut, ibarat kalah sebelum perang*). Indonesia's judicial system is highly flawed and it is no wonder that people worry that if they go to court they will have to pay an exorbitant sum, and that they may even end up in prison. For many people, it appears safer, cheaper, and quicker to pay a bribe to the police on the spot. Police are cognizant of this fear and play on this to try and exhort as much money from perpetrators as possible. Ideally, police reform would involve a public awareness campaign that lets people know the fee for a basic traffic infringement, such as not wearing a helmet (in 2013 this is Rp45,000 (US\$9)), and that by going to court this is all they will have to pay, and that they will not go to prison. But even if police could implement a 'fixed bribe', and 'not negotiate with those who break the law,' public opinion of the police would likely improve.

When talking about improving the police, many people suggested aspects that can be included under the umbrella of increasing professional conduct. Under this umbrella fit desirable police qualities such as being a role model, fair, and a partner of society. When asked what he would do if he were made police chief, Idham, a 34-year-old man, said:

The police need to have a close relationship with society and one way they could do this is by setting a good example. For instance, when police drive on the streets, they must drive well and this will indirectly teach society to drive well too. Police also need to be professional, unbiased (*tidak pandang bulu*) and fair (*adil*). What the traffic police often do is just pick easy targets (*incaran*). The police often stop those people who look lost and confused riding their motorbikes. The police assume these people are from out-of-town and will be easy targets. This is not fair. The police need to be ready to act and they need to work with society in a partnership. A good friend is one who is always ready to help (*teman yang baik adalah teman yang selalu siap pada saat kita membutuhkannya*).

Many of these thoughts were also expressed by Aisha, a 37-year-old woman:

If I were police chief, well, I would make sure that the police carried out socialisation (*sosialisasi*) programs so that people learn about the rules of society. People do not know about traffic rules so police have to teach them and they should give people a warning first rather than just fine them straight away. But the police cannot just carry out this socialisation in hotels [i.e. at the scene of the crime]. Also, when police stop a motorbike, they should not kick the driver or chase him/her; they are not allowed to do this. They must be polite. Really, the morality (*moralitas*) of the police needs to improve so that officers do not break the law.

Idham and Aisha both want a police service that educates citizens and provides role models for society. They also want their police service to be fair and unbiased so that regardless of who you are you will be treated like everyone else. Aisha, in particular, was concerned about the morality of the police, noting that if police continue to be abusive towards the people they were supposed to be protecting, there would be no partnership between police and the public, something essential to winning public support for the police (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007).

Through the narratives of Pak Tedi, Fitri, Idham and Aisha were get a sense of what people want from their police service: fair and transparent recruitment processes; a clear and regulated system of fines; and a professional and moral police service that educates citizens and works in partnership with them rather than being abusive. While certainly people want a more effective and efficient Indonesian police service, this was not a priority to people interviewed, neither was a heavily armed force. People loath police corruption, but eradicating corruption was not cited as a top priority. Rather, people want a polite and respectful police service that protects them and works with society in partnership.

## Discussion

If the police can be honourable, then I guarantee society will respect them, not only while they are active officers, but long after they retire (Wulan, 39-year-old Muslim woman).

This qualitative study examining public perceptions of police has provided complex and nuanced understanding of how citizens perceive police in Indonesia. The included narratives bring to life survey data signifying low levels of public satisfaction with police. Interrogating public perceptions of police is important not just to understand what people mean when they express dissatisfaction with police, but qualitative insights are integral to reforms programmes wishing to move Polri away from the military influences of the Suharto period and into a community policing framework. For police reform to succeed in Indonesia, as elsewhere, there must be public trust and confidence in police, and the public must be willing to support and cooperate with police (Alpert et al., 1998; Hawdon, 2008; Hawdon & Ryan, 2003; Stoutland, 2001). Taking into account public views of how the police can achieve successful reform increases the success rate of subsequent models. While this is a small sample of people situated in one region of Indonesia at a specific time, findings provide a foundation for policy development, enabling the incorporation of public perspectives in the sculpting of an Indonesian police service.

Interviews indicate a general low level of support for Polri, and even in cases where support is proffered it is not without reservation. Where the public do indicate support is in cases where police deploy qualities of politeness and friendliness. Such support for Polri is to an extent aspirational in that exposure to good policing gives people hope for a future where police are polite and where corruption is eradicated. While a small number of participants posited the rotten apple theory of police corruption, whereby just a few rogue officers are suspected to be a problem, the majority of interviewees





understood police corruption to be systematic and pervasive, indicating belief that a majority of police are corrupt. Interestingly, participants indicated a level of tolerance, and even acceptance, of police bribery. Furthermore, when complaining about traffic stops it was accepted that bribes were required to assuage police, and people generally only complained about the amount they had to pay, rather than paying per se. Such resignation suggests that police corruption is perceived as expected and has become historically embedded within Indonesian culture. This entrenched tolerance is problematic in that it is therefore difficult to effect changes that will eradicate corruption (Oluwaniji, 2011; Paes-Machado, 2002).

While there is reason to be pessimistic about processes aimed at the eradication of police corruption, a certain amount of optimism can be taken from the reasons participants give for being dissatisfied with police. Most participants mentioned that when being bribed, police charge different prices from one person to the next. What participants wanted was an equitable rate where everyone was charged the same for any particular infringement. In other words, people wanted to be treated fairly. It is also the case that being treated politely was mentioned as one of the factors positively influencing participant's support for police, marginal though it is. The importance placed on such principles, over and above evaluations made of police effectiveness in preventing, investigating, and solving crimes, parallels findings within Western-based procedural justice research. As Murphy (2009) shows in a Western context, it is the ability of police to treat people politely, with dignity and respect, and having respect shown for rights and social status, that enhance feelings of fairness. When people in Indonesia feel they have been treated fairly, their support for police increases. Without public support, police are unable to function efficiently or effectively. Indeed, as has been well documented in criminological literature, public support for police underpins police legitimacy which in turn underpins successful policing (Tankebe & Liebling, 2013). Developing reform programs that incorporate public sentiments will thus go far in improving public support for police, and helping ensure the success of police reform efforts in Indonesia.

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