

Private police in the Netherlands:

The social impact on society and police

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Abstract

Over the last decades there has been an increase of the private security sector in the Netherlands as well as in other western countries. These developments have an impact on the public and can have consequences for how the police and government are perceived. Therefore, this study will look into how private police is perceived and how this is affected by trust in the Dutch National Police. The current study found that previous direct experiences and media reporting seem to have an influence on trust in the police. Furthermore, the participants were negative about the concept of private police, but were more positive about the idea of collaboration between private and public police. Research about private police is rather unexplored in the Netherlands, which is why this study can be considered a valuable exploration of the topic.

Content

Abstract	2
Introduction	5
History of private security	5
Positioning of the police and private police	6
Conceptualizations of trust	7
Trust and organisations.	9
Antecedents of vertical trust.....	9
Dynamics of safety domain.....	10
Current study	11
Methods	12
Participants and design.....	12
Procedure.....	14
Measures.....	14
General safety feelings.	14
Affective and cognitive trust in the police	15
Trust propensity.....	16
Perception of private police.....	16
Indirect previous experiences.....	16
Direct previous experiences.	17
Results	17
Antecedents of trust.....	19

Private police	19
Additional analyses	21
Discussion	21
Limitations and future research	25
Acknowledgements	27
References	28
Appendix 1: Questionnaire.....	33
General feelings of safety and trust propensity	33
Trust in the police.....	33
Concept of private police	35
Direct previous experiences	37
Indirect previous experiences	38

Introduction

Over the last decades there has been a growth of the private security sector in the Netherlands as well as in other western countries (Van Steden & Nalla, 2010). For example, the number of private security personnel in the Netherlands tripled in thirty years' time, which indicates an increasing demand for this type of security. In England this development has even led to the commencement of a form of private police (My Local Bobby, 2019). These developments could have consequences for how the public perceives the government and the police as a component of that. For instance, civilians could think that the government is not capable of assuring safety and security in society. Earlier research on this topic suggests that private security can indeed have an impact on perceptions about the government and society as a whole (Van Steden et al., 2010; Saarikkomäki, 2018). An important aspect of how the government and its different subdivisions are perceived is through trust (van den Bos, 2011). Research has indicated that trust in the government and, more specifically, the police can be influenced by factors such as previous experiences and (social) media (Dowler & Zawilski, 2007; Jackson & Bradford, 2010). When civilians are doubtful about trusting the police, they can possibly search for alternatives to safeguard their own security. Therefore, in this study the impact of a new type of private police will be considered with regard to trust in the public police and aspects related to this trust, such as previous experiences and (social) media. In this chapter, firstly, some historical background about the development regarding private security will be provided. Secondly, theoretical constructs about trust in the police and antecedents of trust will be explained. Finally, the aim and design of the current study will be explored.

History of private security

After the Second World War ended, private security started to grow quite rapidly, caused by different societal developments. First, the composition of public places has massively changed, because private property has become more public, such as shopping

malls, sports stadiums, and other recreational and amusement facilities (Stenning, 2000). Second, social control, both formal as informal, has declined over the last decades (De Waard & Van Steden, 2012). This decline is caused by a shift of jobs that have changed or do no longer exist, such as a milkman (Jones & Newburn, 2002). Because of the gaps that were created due to these changes, other, rather commercial, parties could enter the safety domain. So, new dynamics caused a new design of the safety domain.

Moreover, police forces throughout Europe have encountered an increasing demand on their capacity (Jones & Newburn, 2002). Also, police forces have been dealing with shortage in capacity, decreasing number of applicants, and financial cuts (McCoy, 2017). Related to this, there is uncertainty about their effectiveness in sheltering society from crime (Bayley & Shearing, 1996). In the UK especially this led to an increase in private security officers, and more specifically this led to a form of private police called “My local bobby” (MLB). This force offers different services, ranging from surveillance around citizens’ homes once a day towards involvement in prosecution (My Local Bobby, 2019). In the Netherlands, there are a few companies (e.g., Securitas, Alert Group, Gloseco) that offer comparable services as MLB, but they are rather small and only active in particular, wealthier regions.

Positioning of the police and private police

The commencement of a new type of security party, such as MLB, can affect how civilians perceive the government. For one, safety can be considered a task for which the governmental institutions are responsible (Vandormael, 2018). However, private security companies gain more control and power. As a result, the monopoly of policing tasks, such as criminal investigations, no longer belongs exclusively to the governments (Van Steden & Nalla, 2010; Ruddell, Thomas, & Patten, 2011). Through this shift in the function of the police and the appearance of other parties, perceptions of civilians in terms of bases of trust in the police can be influenced. For instance, because of the appearance and necessity of such

parties, civilians can perceive the police as no longer capable, which could decrease trust. On the other hand, because of this shift, police can focus more on other tasks, which can influence the way their performance is perceived in a positive way. This could increase trust of the public. As such, the introduction of a new party in the safety domain can influence trust in the police.

Conceptualizations of trust

An important aspect of perceiving the performance of a person or an organization is the aspect of trust (van den Bos, 2011). One of the definitions of trust – supported and used by many scholars – is as follows: “*a willingness to accept vulnerability based upon beliefs about the trustee’s ability and character and the emotional bond between the trustor and the trustee*” (Dunn, Ruedy, & Schweitzer, 2012, p. 3). However, the discussion around this definition and conceptualization of trust is still an active one. Some scholars have argued that trust is a behavioral intention (e.g., Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998; McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998), and others have suggested that trust is dependent on personal characteristics (e.g., McKnight et al., 1998; Butler & Cantrell, 1984). So, trust can be dependent from both context as personality. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) have combined these aspects into the integrative model of trust, where the personal characteristic is of influence on behavioral intentions.

According to this integrative model of trust, the process of trusting is influenced by three “bases of trust” or “trusting beliefs”: ability, benevolence and integrity (Colquitt, Scott, & Jeffrey, 2007; Mayer et al., 1995). Ability entails the perception that the trustee is capable of following up on the promise or act, according to the trustor (i.e., if the trustee “can do”). Then, benevolence is the belief that the trustee has the right intentions for the trustor (i.e., if the trustee “wants to do”). The third base of integrity is about the perception that the trustee will stand by certain norms and values or principles the trustor finds acceptable (i.e., if the

trustee “will do”). These three principles form the base for putting trust in another person, however it is not quite clear to what extent these principles have an individual influence on general trust (Colquitt et al., 2007).

The bases of trust mentioned above can be linked to two different dimensions of trust, being cognitive and emotional trust (Lewis et al., 1985). These two dimensions have been named differently throughout years of research but the constructs remain consistent, being based on social-relational aspects on the one hand and cognition on the other (McAllister, 1995; Earle, 2010). Cognition-based trust is mainly focused on the perceived ability and integrity of the trustee, whereas the affective-based trust is primarily influenced by the perceived benevolence of the trustee (Dunn et al., 2012). The base of the cognitive dimension was considered to be “more superficial and less special” than the affective dimension (Johnson-George & Rempel, 1982, p. 1316). More recent research still underlines this statement by stating that affective trust is so strong that it can shield against logical bases of cognitive trust (Brimbal, Kleinman, Oleszkiewicz, & Meissner, 2019).

Also, it differs amongst people how willing they are in terms of trusting other people according to the integrative model of trust (Mayer et al., 1995; Rotter, 1967). This is caused by a trait also referred to as the trustor’s propensity (Mayer et al., 1995). The concept of trust propensity is developed through the idea that trust is also determined by dispositional aspects of a person (Kee & Knox, 1970). Colquitt et al. (2007) showed that this trust propensity has an influence on trust whether other bases of trust are present or not. This would mean that individual characteristics can be very determinative whether a person trusts others easily or not. So, according to the model of Mayer and colleagues (1995), trust propensity and the perception of the three bases of trust will determine whether a person or organisation will be trusted by someone.

Trust and organisations. Furthermore, Van den Bos (2011) described two different forms of trust in terms of trust in people or trust in people and organizations linked to the government. Trust in other people is called horizontal trust, and is connected to personal relationships and encounters throughout society. Trust in people and organizations linked to the government is called vertical trust, because this is about trusting relationships between civilians and the government. Although the latter has been researched less than the first, it can be assumed that the psychological assumptions of these types of trust, as described earlier, are not fundamentally different from each other (van den Bos, 2011). However, this assumption needs to be researched more. Vertical trust that people have in the government can play out in one of three ways: people do not trust the government, people do trust the government, and people do not know whether they trust the government. If people do not know whether they trust the government, it is likely they will base their general trust on previous encounters with people or organizations related to the government (van den Bos, Wilke, & Lind, 1998). This would mean that, if people are unsure whether to trust the government or not, either negative or positive experiences with representatives of the government are of great influence on whether an individual decides to trust the government or not.

Antecedents of vertical trust. In general, the police are an important part of the government, especially because they are very present and visible in society. Because of their visibility in society and their contact with civilians on a daily basis, it could be suggested that trust in the police is vulnerable (Jackson & Bradford, 2010). As explained above, if people do not know whether to trust the government or not, they will base their trust on previous experiences they had with representatives of the government. This would mean that interaction between police and civilians can have an impact on how they are perceived as an organization, and as a part of the government.

So, previous experiences can play an important role in trusting the police, however this contact can be either direct or indirect. For example, through consumption of information via newspapers, TV and social media, the public can be in contact with the police. Public knowledge about crime and justice is mostly derived from media consumption (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1987; Surette, 2007; Dowler & Zawilski, 2007). Dowler et al. (2007) found that when negative news about discrimination and misconduct within the police was frequently consumed by a person, he or she believes that discrimination and misconduct within the police happens more frequently – especially minorities – than people who consume this news less. This would mean that people who follow the media on a frequent base can be influenced by the tone of this reporting.

Furthermore, nowadays a lot of police departments use social media to stay in contact with the public. On one hand this can be a good thing because they can choose what they want to share with the public and this way stimulate positive reporting about themselves. On the other hand, use of social network sites (SNS) is negatively associated to people's propensity to trust the police (Sabatini & Sarracino, 2019). So, this too can influence people's decision to trust or not. However, more research is needed on antecedents of trust in the police, such as the role of (social) media and direct previous experiences. Therefore the following research question will be looked into in the current study:

Q1: What are the antecedents of trust in the police and how are they of influence on trust in the police?

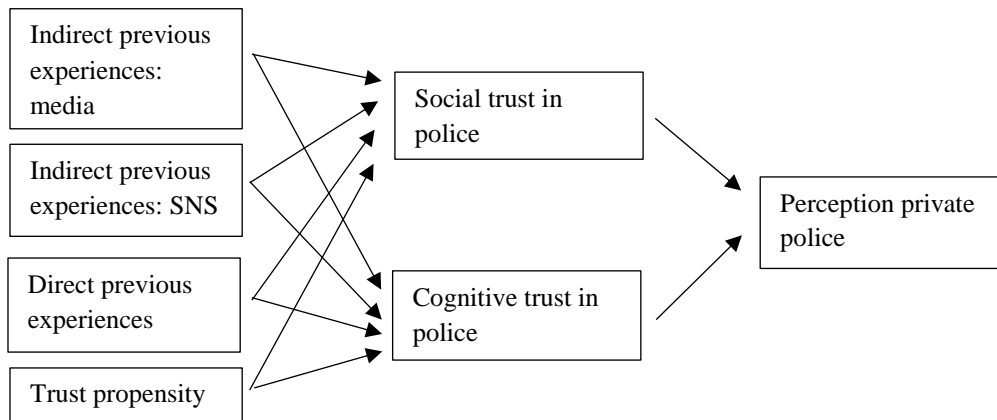
Dynamics of safety domain. Recent research looked into people's perceptions – in the Netherlands more specifically – regarding private security and the police. For example, Van Steden and Nalla (2010) found in their study about perceptions of police and private security guards that over three-quarter of the participants were positive about these two forces working together. The researchers hereby hint on a possible sound relationship and

cooperation between the two forces that could appeal to citizens. Furthermore, participants did not see private security guards as substitutes for police officers (Van Steden & Nalla, 2010). In addition, especially young people have more trust in the police than in private security guards, partially caused by the feeling that private security guards exceed their rights and act unreasonably (Saarikkomäki, 2018). In the current study, a focus will be on the effect of a new type of security partner entering the safety domain. Therefore, the next research question is formulated:

Q2: How do people perceive a new type of private police and what is the role of trust in the police with regard to the public's perception?

Current study

The current study focuses on antecedents of trust in the police and the role of trust in the police with regard to a new security partner. In the conceptual model (see figure 1), all variables that can be of influence on aspects of trust in the police and on the perception of private police are depicted. Firstly, there are four antecedents distinguished from theory that can be of influence on different components of trust in the police. The antecedents considered in the model are indirect previous experiences both through general media as through social media, direct previous experiences and trust propensity. Secondly, the two components of trust that can be influenced by these antecedents are social and cognitive trust. Lastly, these components of trust can then be of influence on how people perceive the private police. In the next chapter, more information will be provided about the design and process of the study.

Figure 1*Conceptual model trust in police*

Methods

Participants and design

For this study, participants were recruited via three different platforms. First of all, students were recruited via the SONA system of the University of Twente. Second, customers of a company in the Netherlands – comparable to MLB – were contacted and invited to participate in the current study.¹ Third, social media network sites were used to recruit participants as well. In total, there were 118 responses collected, but 14 of these responses were empty. So, only 104 participants filled out the questionnaire, either partially or completely. Even though some participants did not fill out every question in the survey, the answers they did fill out were taken into the analyses, because no deviations were established. So, this is the cause for varying numbers of data used for the different analyses.

There were more women ($N=65$) included in the study than men ($N=33$), and the mean age of all participants was 35.43 ($SD=16.69$). Furthermore 88 participants had the Dutch nationality, 8 were German, 1 was French and 1 was Malian. Highest level of education

¹ Due to privacy reasons the name of this organization is not included in this report.

differed, there were participants who had finished pre-vocational secondary education ($N=7$), senior general secondary education and pre-university education ($N=35$), secondary vocational education ($N=15$), higher professional and university education ($N=36$), and university master or doctorate ($N=5$). Participants had varying occupations, there were students ($N=40$), employed people ($N=49$), unemployed people ($N=2$), volunteers ($N=1$), incapacitated ($N=1$) and retired people ($N=5$) in this study. The average year income of the participants was between €20.000 and €30.000, ranging from under €10.000 to over €60.000.

There were two different conditions with regard to the order in which the questions were presented. The aim for using different conditions was to check if there would be a difference in how people describe general feelings of safety and trust in the police if they would first read about the concept of private police in comparison with reading about it later on. So, in one condition participants answered question about the public police and general safety feeling first and then read about private police, and in the other condition this was the other way around. Participants were equally distributed over the different conditions ($N_1=47$, $N_2=53$). To analyze possible differences between the conditions, an independent T-test with trust in police and general feelings of safety as dependent variables and the conditions as the independent variable was performed. No significant differences were found for trust in the police between the condition who first answered general questions ($M = 3.58$; $SD = 0.57$) and the condition who was introduced to the concept first ($M = 3.50$; $SD = 0.54$), $t(98) = 0.63$, $p = .528$. With regard to general feelings of safety, no significant differences were found between both conditions as well ($M = 4.04$; $SD = 0.60$; $M = 3.93$; $SD = 0.68$), $t(97) = 0.86$, $p = .390$. Because no differences were found, the results of both conditions were merged and participants were considered as one group.

Procedure

Participants received an anonymous link where they were able to access the survey (see Appendix 1). First, they had to fill in an informed consent form, before starting the questionnaire. As such, their rights were explained which they had to agree to in order to start. When the survey started, participants were asked to fill out multiple questions about their safety perceptions and their perceptions of the Dutch police in general. After answering the first questions, they had to read a short introduction to the concept of private police. Here was explained what the concept of private police entails exactly, elaborate enough to fully understand the concept. For instance, it stated that people can take a subscription to this service, ranging from basic to premium, where security guards can frequently observe the customers' houses or even support them with criminal investigations when necessary. After having read this description, they had to fill out multiple questions about how they perceived this concept in general. For half of the participants this order was the other way around, so first they read about the private police and then they answered questions about trust in the police and safety perceptions. Next, opinions about previous experiences with the police were asked. This entailed if and how many encounters they have had with police, what type of encounters, and if these experiences were rather positive or negative. Then, they had to fill out their demographics, which were quite elaborate. At the end of the survey, there was a possibility to note questions or remarks, after which they were thanked for participating. This study was approved by the ethical committee of the Faculty of Behavioral, Management and Social Sciences of the University of Twente.

Measures

General safety feelings. The perceptions of the participants regarding feelings of general safety in the Netherlands were measured by five items, of which three items of the Dutch Safety Monitor (CBS, 2019), more specifically questions regarding safety experience,

were used and two items were created. The three items from the Dutch Safety Monitor were altered slightly in a textual way to fit the form of the questionnaire for this study ('I do not have any problems with walking the street', 'I feel safe in my neighborhood', 'I think the chance of becoming a victim anytime shortly is low'). In the Dutch Safety Monitor these questions are used in a series of other items, whereas for this study only a few were relevant. The items that were created for this study had a broader perspective than the questions from the Dutch Safety Monitor, focusing on the Netherlands instead of the neighborhood or city (e.g. 'I consider the Netherlands to be a safe country'; 'I feel safe in public'). Participants had to answer the items on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). So, the general feelings of safety scale consisted of five items ($\alpha=.89$). The average score on the five items was calculated for each participant and used in the analyses.

Affective and cognitive trust in the police. Perceptions about the police were measured by different dimensions of trust: perceptions of ability, integrity and benevolence. The first two dimensions forming cognitive trust and the latter social trust. To measure cognitive trust, seven items were either created or used from the Dutch Safety Monitor (CBS, 2019). The items in the Dutch Safety Monitor are mainly focused on willingness to report and functioning of the police. Some items of the latter were used for this study. Again, the Dutch Safety Monitor is a comprehensive questionnaire with a series of questions, so for this study only a few were used and altered slightly for the context of this study. For example, the original item 'The police respond adequately to the problems in the neighborhood' was altered in 'The police respond adequately to the problems in society'. Five items were used from the Dutch Safety Monitor, either literally or slightly altered as depicted in the example ('The police is able to offer the right protection to civilians', 'The police respond adequately to the problems in society', 'When it matters most, the police is there for civilians', 'In equal cases, the police treats every person the same', 'The police acts just').

Items that measured cognitive trust, for example, were ‘In equal cases the police treats every person the same’ and ‘The police is able to offer the right protection to civilians’. For measuring social trust four items were created, for example ‘I consider the police to be friendly’. The scales for measuring trust in the police existed of seven items for cognitive trust ($\alpha=.86$) and four items for social trust ($\alpha=.73$). For the analyses involving one of these variables, a new variable was created with the average score on these 5-point scale items.

Trust propensity. For establishing trust, trust propensity can be of influence. Therefore, one item was added to the general safety questions, being ‘I easily trust other people’. This item could be answered through 5 options ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. This trust propensity score was included in all the analyses as a controlling variable.

Perception of private police. For measuring how people perceived the concept of private police 10 items were created. The items measured both the opinion about private police as the willingness to make use of it. Participants had to answer the items on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items differed from more general statements (e.g., ‘The Netherlands need a concept like this’) to rather personal ones (e.g., ‘I need this concept in my life’). For the analyses, average scores on opinion about private police of 6 items ($\alpha=.94$) and willingness to use private police of 4 items ($\alpha=.92$) were calculated and together they formed the score for perception of private police ($\alpha=.94$). As a secondary measure, one open question was added about how much money participants were willing to pay for the concept on a monthly base.

Indirect previous experiences. There were two types of indirect previous experiences distinguished in this study, namely information consumption via media and SNS. Both of these variables were measured through questions concerning frequency (e.g., ‘In general, how often do you read or hear anything about the police on TV or in newspapers?’) and experience

(e.g., ‘What do you think about what is written about the police on social network sites?’) of the consumption of information via media and SNS. The average score on the question regarding how participants perceived the reporting (ranging on a 5-point scale from very negative to very positive) was used as measure for either experience through social media or experience through media. In other words, the variables social media and media indicate if people perceive the reporting rather positive or negative. When participants answered they did not make use of SNS, they were not shown the questions about the contact via SNS.

Direct previous experiences. Lastly, previous experiences with the police were measured in terms of frequency and experiences as well. 3 questions were created to measure the quantity of the direct previous encounters with the police and how they experienced these. Quantity was measured by the question ‘How many times did you have direct contact with the police in the last 12 months?’. Then, to measure the experience they had, the question ‘How would you describe this contact in general?’ was asked with 5 possible answers ranging from ‘very negative’ to ‘very positive’. Participants who filled out the sixth option ‘I do not know’ were excluded from this analysis. The scores on how they rated the contact were averaged and computed into the variable direct previous experiences and indicates whether people perceived the direct contact with the police as positive or negative.

Results

First, a general impression of the results will be given by means of correlations, then both research questions will be looked into. Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations among the variables in the current study. As could be expected, cognitive trust correlated in a positive way with the variables media and direct contact. So, if participants rated the reporting by media and direct experiences as positive, they showed higher levels of cognitive trust in the police. Moreover, social trust showed a positive correlation with direct previous experiences as well. Notable is that whereas media appeared

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations of demographic and study variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
<i>Demographic variables</i>																			
1. Gender	1.66	.48																	
2. Age	35.43	16.69	-.16																
3. Nationality	1.18	0.75	-.06	-.21*															
4. Education	6.03	1.18	-.15	-.08	-.05														
5. Occupation	2.35	1.33	-.14	.81**	-.25*	.05													
6. Income	3.51	2.53	-.16	.46**	-.19	.22*	.48**												
<i>Study variables</i>																			
7. Social media	3.47	0.73	.03	-.07	.12	.40**	-.11	.07											
8. Media	3.13	0.71	-.03	-.25*	.02	.22*	-.15	-.02	.26										
9. Direct contact	3.54	0.81	.06	.14	-.10	.18	.15	.10	-.08	-.06									
10. Cognitive trust	3.46	0.61	.09	-.12	-.20*	.14	-.01	-.09	.23	.31**	.42**								
11. Social Trust	3.67	0.54	.25*	.02	-.27**	.10	.04	-.07	.21	.16	.48**								
12. General Safety	3.98	0.64	-.27**	-.13	-.03	.04	-.14	.06	-.10	.28**	.09	-.02	.11						
13. Trust propensity	3.03	0.92	-.17	.13	-.05	.14	.11	-.00	.20	.06	.22	.19	.18	.26*					
14. Opinion private p.	2.45	0.94	.39**	.09	-.04	-.31**	.02	-.02	-.24	-.05	.05	.11	.08	-.13	-.18				
15. Willingness p. p.	1.76	0.78	.25*	.17	-.05	-.25*	.13	.01	-.19	.02	-.01	.19	.16	-.21*	-.15	.74**			
16. Private police	2.10	0.80	.35**	.13	-.05	-.31**	.07	-.01	-.24	-.02	.03	.15	.12	-.18	-.19	.95**	.92**		
17. Monthly fee	21.17	57.91	-.06	-.06	.13	-.01	-.12	-.06	-.22	-.05	.034	-.20	-.11	-.17	.01	.28**	.28**	.30**	

to be a correlating variable with regard to social and cognitive trust in the police, social media does not show these correlations. General safety showed a positive correlation with media reporting about the police. Even so, feelings of general safety seem to have a negative correlation with willingness to use the concept of private police.

Antecedents of trust

Then, the first part of the conceptual model was analyzed to look into the antecedents of trust and the influence they had on trust in the police. Linear regressions were performed with independent variables media, social media, direct contact and trust propensity as a controlling variable, and dependent variables social trust and cognitive trust. For social trust, the regression analysis showed that 18% of the variance was explained by the model and that the model was not a significant predictor of social trust, $F(4, 35) = 1.93, p = .127$. The variables media ($\beta = .18, p = .292$), social media ($\beta = .18, p = .311$), direct contact ($\beta = .32, p = .057$) and trust propensity ($\beta = .04, p = .805$) did not significantly contribute to the model. In case of cognitive trust, the results of the regression indicated that the model explained 27% of the variance and that the model seemed to be a significant predictor of cognitive trust, $F(4,35) = 3.29, p = .022$. Of all the variables, only media appeared to contribute significantly to the model ($\beta = .39, p = .016$). The variables social media ($\beta = .19, p = .265$), direct contact ($\beta = 0.29, p = .067$) and trust propensity ($\beta = -.22, p = .177$) did not contribute significantly to the model. So, the model of cognitive trust showed to be significant and media seemed to be of significant influence in the model.

Private police

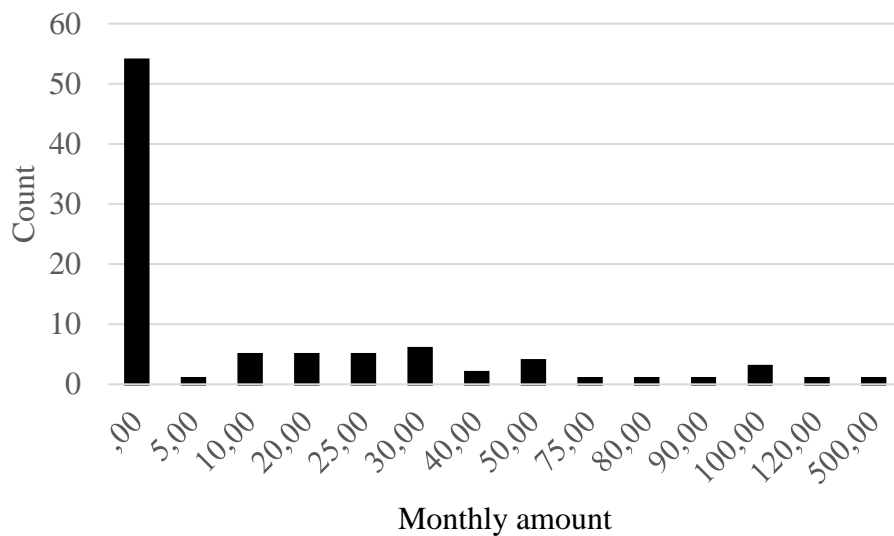
The model proposed that social and cognitive trust in the police influences the perception of private police. For this, a regression analysis with social and cognitive trust as independent variables and perception of private police as a dependent variable was performed. The results showed that only 2% of the variance was explained by the model and that the

model was not a significant predictor of perception of private police, $F(2,93) = 1.16, p = .317$. Both social trust ($\beta = .12, p < .410$) and cognitive trust ($\beta = .05, p = .756$) did not contribute significantly to the model. So, it can be concluded that trust in the police is not of influence on how people perceive a concept of private police.

Some additional analyses were performed in order to get an impression of how the participants perceived this concept of private police. General opinions on a 5 point Likert scale were slightly below the middle of the scale ($M=2.45; SD=.94$). With regard to public and private police working closely together mean scores were significantly higher ($M =3.18; SD=1.23$). Mean scores for willingness to use the concept of private police on a 5 point Likert scale were lower ($M =1.76; SD=.78$). Participants filled out how much they were willing to pay on a monthly base and 68 out of 104 participants filled in zero or nothing (see Figure 2). The amounts of money were not equally distributed, as a majority reported not wanting to pay anything for such a service. Some participants even filled out extra comments at the end of the survey about the concept that were rather negative, such as: *“The reason I am negative about private police is because it would mean that only people with a higher income would be able to afford this, while safety should be a right for every person”*. Another participant wrote: *“Police is a part of the government that should not be privatized”*. These participants were not obliged to fill out comments and they wrote these in a text box for additional questions or remarks about the whole survey.

Figure 2

Willingness to pay for the service on a monthly base in euros



Additional analyses

Finally, independent t-tests were performed to check if participants who had more previous experiences with the police, either direct ($t(78) = 0.51, p = .615$) or indirect through media ($t(94) = 1.07, p = .286$), scored the reporting differently than people who had less of these experiences. Moreover, it was examined if people who reported to have more previous experiences scored differently on social trust ($t(96) = -0.15, p = .878$) and cognitive trust ($t(96) = -0.06, p = .952$) in the police, perception of the private police ($t(94) = -0.97, p = .336$) and safety feelings ($t(95) = 0.93, p = .353$). However, no significant results were found.

Discussion

In this study, the focus was on the antecedents of trust in the police and the perceptions of private police with regard to that trust. More specifically, it was assumed that trust propensity of a person and previous experiences either direct or indirect contact (e.g., media and social media) with the police have an influence on social and cognitive trust in the police. Media, such as TV and newspapers, appeared to have an influence on cognitive trust

in the police. Furthermore, direct contact seemed to be of influence on both social and cognitive trust, whereas social media and trust propensity did not. So, for answering the first research question about the antecedents of trust in the police, the current study indicates that media reporting is of influence on cognitive trust and direct previous contact is of influence on both social as cognitive trust in the police.

Next, it was assumed that both cognitive and social trust in the police would influence how private police would be perceived. However, both aspects of trust did not seem to have an effect on how people perceive the concept of private police, which provides an answer to the second research question. In general, participants were negative about the concept of private police and were even less positive about the willingness to use such a concept. Yet, people were positive about private and public police working closely together. An aspect however that did appear to influence the perception of private police, was general feelings of safety. This could indicate that safety feelings are more of influence on the public's perception of such a concept than trust in the police, as was looked into in this study.

So, participants did not appear to be positive about the concept of private police, because they did not rate the concept positively and some quotes even indicated people were quite negative about such a service. However, people were more positive about the idea that the two parties, being public and private police, would be working closely together. This finding is in line with previous mentioned research (Van Steden et al., 2010). They found that people were positive about security officers and the police working together. Especially, when the two forces work closely together this could be positively received by civilians. It can be expected that people perceive private police more legitimate when they are supporting the public police instead of acting on their own, instructed by individuals throughout society. So, this can be an important aspect of the dynamics of these type of new security parties entering the safety domain. It is possible that the design of collaboration between governmental and

private components in the safety domain can determine whether the public will be positive or negative about new developments. For instance, it could be that people become more positive when the private police would support the police in more quotidian tasks as patrolling rather than taking on more challenging tasks such as performing criminal investigations. More research is needed on how this collaboration could be received positively and how this collaboration would be formalized.

As was mentioned earlier, trust can be explained in terms of social and cognitive trust, which can be separated by perceived ability, integrity and benevolence (Mayer et al., 1995). The current study underlines these aspects and the role they play in trust in the police. Social trust appears to be of importance in terms of direct contact. This can be explained by the fact that perceptions of benevolence can be generated from personal contact, whereas ability and integrity can be more related to an organizations as a whole. In fact, media reporting seem to have an influence on cognitive trust. Even though reporting can be about individuals working within the police, it is often about the organization itself as well. This can be an indication of how the trust process works when it comes to the police, namely the role that individuals have versus the reputation of the organization.

The current study emphasizes how important contact with the public can be in terms of trusting the police. This is the case for both social and cognitive trust. Direct contact with the police influences how they are perceived in terms of benevolence, which leads to more or less trust. This is in line with earlier findings of Jackson and colleague (2010). They found that trust in the police can be very vulnerable due to their visible presence in society. The current study found that direct previous experiences is of influence on trust in the police. As was stated earlier, social trust seems to be stronger than cognitive trust (Brimbal et al., 2019). On the other hand, according to Jackson and colleague (2010) this could mean that social trust can be far more vulnerable than cognitive trust. They indicate that the type of trust that is

based on the way of acting of the police during previous encounters is far more vulnerable than general trust in the organization. This could mean that daily interactions between the police and civilians can be even more important in terms of trust than was considered before.

Surely, the introduction of private police could influence this trusting process as well, if they were to be quite visible in society. It can be expected that people would perceive the police differently when there is another force actively involved with the safety domain.

Dependent from the context and the actions of the private police, the public could perceive the general police as more or less capable. For example, when private police officers would be in the public eye concerning successfully tracking down bike thieves, this could undermine the authority of the general police, who often get criticized for not solving these cases. Because of the visibility and the importance of safety in society, trust can be fragile for both parties and can be of influence on each other.

As was mentioned, it can be assumed that the aspects of trust in other people (i.e., horizontal trust) are equal to the aspects of trust in governmental organizations (i.e., vertical trust) (van den Bos, 2011). An important finding that can influence this process, is that media reporting about the police influences cognitive trust. So, how the media depicts the police can be of great influence in regard to how public perceives and trusts the police. The nature of the police organization is repression and stepping forward in dangerous situations. Obviously, this is not without risk and there is always a chance of negative incidents. These incidents then get picked up by the media and become news for the public. However, the other side of the police organization focusing on prevention is less exciting and more difficult to identify. As such, it can be expected that incidents and negative information about the police, is spread more by the media than more positive reporting, even though this does not have to be a representation of the reality. As this study shows, this can have a great impact on how civilians perceive and

trust the police. Therefore, it could be interesting to look more into the sentiment of media reporting about the police in comparison to cognitive trust in the police.

Finally, general feelings of safety seem to be of influence on how private police is perceived, whereas trust in the police is not. Logically, people would be more open to different types of security when feeling unsafe. An example of this type of alternative security in the Netherlands is the existence of vigilantes (AD, 2019). It is not unthinkable that people who are involved with these groups are open to a form of private police as well. Obviously, these groups originate from a feeling of unsafety and then alternative options of security are explored. Although this study focused mainly on the role of trust in the police with regard to private police, it is an interesting finding that safety feelings are of influence. Therefore, it is recommended that the aspect of safety feelings are considered more in the perception of private police in future research.

Limitations and future research

In the current study, experiences with social media by and about the police were included as well. No significant results were found in terms of influence on trust, in contradiction to what was expected. Specifically because media such as newspapers and television were found to be of significant influence on cognitive trust in the police in this study, it could be expected that social media still can be of influence as well. An important aspect of the non-significant results concerning social media could be that only half of the participants filled out the questions about social media. Because the survey was set up in such a way that people did not see the questions about the police and social media if they declared not to make use of SNS, half of the participants could not answer these questions. So, it can be assumed that a rather large share of the participants is not very actively involved with social network sites or at least does not come in contact with information about the police in such a manner. Logically, as a result, this possible antecedent of trust in the police was not

looked into adequately enough in comparison to the other antecedents. However, police officers increasingly make use of social network sites to get in contact with civilians, so it is important to devote more research to this topic.

Then, for measuring different constructs new scales and items were created. Although some existing items were used from the Dutch Safety Monitor, existing scales from other studies were not used. This could have an implication on how well the actual constructs were measured. Some constructs were measured by only a few items, instead of a more comprehensive scale. It would have been more beneficial to use existing and more comprehensive scales to compare results to other studies and to generate more reliable results. Even though, reliability analyses showed positive scores, it is important to keep these limitations in mind.

For this study, participants were recruited in different ways, being the university of Twente, a private security company and the personal network of the researcher by means of social network sites. This entails that participants were not as geographically represented as would be desirable. So, participants did not represent inhabitants from the entire country, but were mainly connected to the eastern part of the country and the region of the security company. It can be imaginable that people with other incomes, other neighborhoods and other personal experiences with the police, can have different opinions about the topic of private police. For instance, participants in this study were predominantly positive about the police and appeared to trust in the police. Perhaps, in other cities and neighborhoods than were represented in this study, people could experience this in a different way. When people in a certain neighborhood are rather unsatisfied with the acting of the police due to ethnic profiling for instance, another form of policing might be received well. It can also be expected that more wealthy regions would be more positive about the concept, whereas other more poor

regions would rate it as unfair. Therefore, results of this research could have been different when being more representative for the Dutch society as a whole.

In conclusion, the current study can be considered a valuable exploration of the topic of private police, being the first study that looked into this in the Netherlands. The study generates insights in antecedents of trust in the police and more specifically the process involving media and cognitive trust in the police. Although, trust in the police appeared not to influence perceptions of private police, general feelings of safety did appear to be of influence. This is an interesting finding and one that definitely should be looked into more in future research. In general, participants were predominantly negative about the introduction of private police, which is a new and relevant insight for policymakers. As such, this study is a useful contribution to the safety and security domain in the Netherlands.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

General feelings of safety and trust propensity

De volgende stellingen gaan over hoe veilig u zich voelt in Nederland. Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de stelling.

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Niet mee eens/niet mee oneens (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
Ik beschouw Nederland als een veilig land. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik voel mij veilig in het openbaar. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik heb er geen problemen mee om alleen over straat te gaan. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik voel mij veilig in mijn buurt. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik schat de kans dat ik binnenkort slachtoffer word laag in. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik vertrouw andere mensen snel. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Trust in the police

De volgende stellingen gaan over uw mening over de Nederlandse politie. Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de stelling.

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Niet mee eens/niet mee oneens (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
Ik heb een positief gevoel over de politie. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik heb vertrouwen in de politie. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De politie in Nederland functioneert goed. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De politie kan de burgers goede bescherming bieden. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De politie reageert op problemen in de maatschappij zoals zou moeten. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Als het er echt om gaat dan is de politie er voor de burger. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bij gelijke gevallen behandelt de politie iedereen gelijk. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De politie handelt rechtvaardig. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De politie is betrouwbaar. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De politie heeft juiste intenties. (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De politie heeft het beste voor met de burger. (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De politieorganisatie heeft een goed karakter. (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik beschouw de politie als aardig. (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

De politie werkt
optimaal samen met
lokale
beveiligingsinitiatieven
en andere private
partijen. (15)

Ik vertrouw de politie.
(16)

Concept of private police Stel dat er in Nederland een nieuw concept op de markt komt, namelijk private politie. U kunt een abonnement nemen op deze dienst, variërend van basic tot premium. Bij een basic abonnement komt er dagelijks een surveillant langs uw huis om te checken of alles in orde is. Als er iets aan de hand is kunt u deze surveillant opbellen en komt deze naar u toe. Als u kiest voor een meer luxe abonnement kunt u te allen tijde de locatie inzien van de surveillant en kan deze adviezen geven over de beveiliging van uzelf en uw huis. Bij een nog luxer abonnement kan de bewaker zelfs helpen met onderzoek bij bijvoorbeeld een inbraak of een ander misdrijf en kan deze u persoonlijk beveiligen. Dus u betaalt maandelijks een bedrag en in ruil daarvoor krijgt u een persoonlijke surveillant die u op verschillende manieren kan ondersteunen in uw veiligheid.

U heeft net een scenario gelezen over "private politie". Onderstaande stellingen gaan over uw mening over dit concept. Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de stelling.

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Niet mee eens/niet mee oneens (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
Mijn eerste reactie op dit concept is positief. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dit concept spreekt mij aan. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dit concept roept positieve gevoelens bij mij op. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dit concept zou een waardevolle toevoeging zijn aan de maatschappij. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nederland heeft een concept zoals dit nodig. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De Nederlandse politie en de private politie zouden nauw samen kunnen werken. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Onderstaande stellingen gaan over het gebruik van het concept. Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de stelling.

	Helemaal mee oneens (1)	Mee oneens (2)	Niet mee eens/niet mee oneens (3)	Mee eens (4)	Helemaal mee eens (5)
Ik zou gebruik willen maken van dit concept. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Als het morgen beschikbaar zou zijn, meld ik mij direct aan. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voor mij is dit concept nuttig. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ik heb dit concept nodig in mijn leven. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Hoeveel zou u maandelijks maximaal willen betalen aan een abonnement op dit concept?

Direct previous experiences Hoe vaak heeft u direct contact gehad met de politie (als slachtoffer, getuige, verdachte, burger, etc.)?

- 0 keer (1)
- Tussen de 0 en 3 keer (2)
- Tussen de 3 en 7 keer (3)
- Tussen de 7 en 10 keer (4)

- Vaker dan 10 keer (5)

Hoe vaak heeft u direct contact gehad met de politie in de afgelopen 12 maanden (als slachtoffer, getuige, verdachte, burger, etc.)?

- 0 keer (1)
- Tussen de 0 en 3 keer (2)
- Tussen de 3 en 7 keer (3)
- Tussen de 7 en 10 keer (4)
- Vaker dan 10 keer (5)

Hoe zou u dit contact in het algemeen omschrijven?

- Zeer negatief (1)
- Negatief (2)
- Niet negatief/niet positief (3)
- Positief (4)
- Zeer positief (5)

Indirect previous experiences Maakt u gebruik van sociale media zoals Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc?

- Ja (1)
- Nee (2)

Via welke sociale media volgt u de politie?

Geen (1)

Facebook (2)

Instagram (3)

LinkedIn (4)

Twitter (5)

Anders, namelijk (6) _____

Wat vindt u van wat er besproken of geschreven wordt door de politie op social media?

Zeer negatief (1)

Negatief (2)

Niet negatief/niet positief (3)

Positief (4)

Zeer positief (5)

Weet ik niet (6)

Wat vindt u van wat er besproken of geschreven wordt over de politie op social media?

- Zeer negatief (1)
- Negatief (2)
- Niet negatief/niet positief (3)
- Positief (4)
- Zeer positief (5)
- Weet ik niet (6)

Hoe vaak hoort of ziet u gemiddeld iets op TV, radio of de krant over de politie?

- Dagelijks (1)
- Drie tot vier keer in de week (2)
- Een tot twee keer per week (3)
- Drie tot vier keer per maand (4)
- Een tot twee keer per maand (5)
- Minder dan een keer per maand (6)

Wat vindt u van wat er besproken of geschreven wordt over politie op TV, radio of kranten?

- Zeer negatief (1)
- Negatief (2)
- Niet negatief/niet positief (3)
- Positief (4)
- Zeer positief (5)
- Weet ik niet (6)