

EDITORIAL

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation, is 86 percent Muslim—and the largest Islamic country. Ethnically the country is highly diverse, with over 580 languages and dialects—but only 13 have more than one million speakers. Among the main ethnic groups are Javanese, Sundanese, Batakese, Indonesian (Malay) and Madurese. Although more than 85 percent of the Indonesian population is Muslim, Indonesia is not a religion-based state. Indonesia's ideology is Pancasila (five principles) which are: belief in the one and only God; just and civilized humanity; the unity of Indonesia; deliberation for consensus; and social justice for all of Indonesia's people. Pancasila stresses that Indonesia is neither a secular nor religious-based state. The Constitution provides for all persons the right to worship according to his or her own religion or belief.

Obviously, one of the most important challenges facing Indonesian societies is the increase in ethnic (as well as religious) and social heterogeneity. How do people respond to ethnic and social differences? What types of inter-group attitudes do they construct?

This editorial will highlight the problem of inter-group attitudes in Indonesia by utilizing the work of Putnam (2007) distinguishing three theories on the effect of diversity on social connections, which lead to contradictory expectations for inter-group attitudes: contact, conflict and constrict theories.

According to the contact theory, ethnic and religious diversity give people an opportunity to contact and interact with other groups. Considerable research has shown that greater inter-group contact corresponds with lower prejudice, as the inter-group contact might diminish the in-group/out-group distinction and enhance out-group solidarity (cf. Tajfel 1982). According to Allport (1979, 261-281), only contact between groups under optimal conditions will effectively reduce out-group prejudice. He argues that positive effects of contact occur only in situations marked by four key

conditions: equal group status within the situation; common goals; inter-group cooperation; and the support of authorities, laws, or customs. People belonging to a majority status groups are less likely to contact the members of other groups. In contrast, those belonging to a minority group typically create more opportunities for contact with members of other groups. When people have more contact with members of other groups, they have more opportunities to overcome their initial hesitation and ignorance. Tausch et al. (2008) found inter-group anxiety as a mediating variable between inter-group contact and prejudice. Accordingly, contact is associated with reduced anxiety, and that anxiety mediates the relationship between contact and prejudice. Pettigrew and Trop (2006, 954-955) observed that contact-prejudice relationships vary significantly in relation to the societal status of the groups involved. The relationship between contact and prejudice tends to be weaker in the minority status groups than among the members of majority groups. This is based on the fact that differences in status group may stimulate members of minority and majority groups to differ in their perceptions of their inter-group relationships and their definitions of their relations between their groups. Sterkens and Yusuf (2015) found that different levels of the relative group size are a determinant predictor of inter-group contact. People belonging to a minority group are more likely to have contact with members of other groups. From the perspective of contact theory, the more people have contact with members of other groups, the more their initial ignorance and misperceptions are challenged and reduced. People with a ethno-religio-centric attitude will always strive for a positive self-image primarily by attempting to identify with the groups they evaluate positively, and reduce identification with groups they evaluate negatively. The more contact people have with others, the more they are able to evaluate others positively and the more they trust the others. Misztal (1996) defines trust as a social mechanism that encourages the establishment

of cooperation within society. In the process of cooperation, people relate to each other and then construct expectations and beliefs about each other. This can be called an exchange relationship where there is an effort to reconcile our needs with the needs of others and to build mutual expectations in daily negotiations/interaction. Trust is a set of expectations shared by those in an exchange, and different types of exchange can be defined according to the level of trust present within the relationship. As trust and connections with others are built and strengthened, “uncertainty” will diminish. In a more concrete way, Putnam (2000) explains that trust can be generated through people’s involvement in associations and networks of civic engagement. Norms of reciprocity form that eventually generate trust; then social capital can be realized.

Moreover, Putnam (2007) describes the potential negative influence of differing ethnic and religious identifications in the so-called ‘conflict theory’. According to conflict theory, diversity increases out-group distrust and in-group solidarity. Accordingly, the more contact there is between groups, the more individuals will stick to their own identity. For this theory, ethnic and religious diversity and out-group solidarity are negatively correlated. According to social identity theory, people have a fundamental need to perceive their own in-group as superior to other groups. One of the main mechanisms is through the process of categorization, which leads to group identification (cf. Tajfel 1982). Conflict theory, in many aspects, is related to contestation between different groups. Diversity actually fosters competition between majority groups and minority groups over scarce resources. As a result, competition between groups fosters solidarity within a specific group, and hostility between groups. According to the conflict theory, ethnic and religious diversity have an impact of feelings of threat and uncertainty.

Putnam (2007) argues that constrict theory proposes that diversity encourages people to withdraw from social life. Even though none of the previous research project has supported this theory, but we will involve the constrict theory, partly

to examine another possibility of the effects of diversity from the previous contradictory theories (contact and conflict theories). According to Putnam (2007, 149), ethnic and religious diversity might trigger social isolation and foster people to recede from social life, or as he formulates it “[...] pull in like a turtle”. Unlike the contact theory that presumes that diversity enhances out-group solidarity, and conflict theory proposes that diversity reduces out-group solidarity. In constrict theory, diversity may actually reduce both in-group and out-group solidarity. This argument is based on an assumption that in-group and out-group attitudes are not necessarily reciprocally related in response to diversity, but they can vary independently. They can be positively correlated (as for the contact theory) or negatively correlated (as for the constrict theory). (MY)

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