

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION AND GENERAL STRAIN THEORIES TO ANALYZE SUICIDE BOMBING IN INDONESIA

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Abstrak

Pengeboman bunuh diri yang dilakukan di sebuah masjid yang berada di Markas Kepolisian Resort Kota Cirebon yang sedang digunakan untuk sholat jumat pada tanggal 21 April 2011 adalah pola pengeboman yang baru pertama di Indonesia. Sebelumnya pengeboman bunuh diri dilakukan tidak di masjid, atau pengeboman di masjid tapi tidak dengan menewaskan pelaku. Walaupun pertama, namun jika dikaitkan dengan pengeboman yang lain yang pernah muncul di Indonesia, pengeboman masjid di Cirebon terdapat kesamaan. Kesamaan ini dapat dilihat dari hubungan antar pelaku dan latar belakang organisasi yang diikuti pelaku. Untuk mengkaji kesamaan tersebut, tulisan ini menggunakan teori *differential association* dan general strain. Tujuan dari paper ini adalah untuk memahami tentang teori *differential association* dan general strain sehingga dapat menganalisa pengeboman masjid di Cirebon tersebut dari sisi kriminologi.

Kata Kunci: terorisme, bom bunuh diri, diferensial asosiasi dan teori ketegangan umum.

Abstract

On Friday 21st April 2011, Indonesia was shocked by a suicide bombing in a police mosque in Cirebon, West Java Indonesia. The bombing exploded just before the Friday prayer began. Historically, although suicide bombings or mosque bombing have occurred elsewhere, the suicide mosque bombing in Cirebon was the first time this had occurred in Indonesia. There are similarities between the Cirebon bombing and other bombings occurring in Indonesia. First, there is a similar relationship among the suspects. Second, the suspects were all involved in organizations that have hard-line Islamic ideology. The aim of this paper is to understand the differential association and general strain theories in the light of the new form suicide bombing that occurred in Indonesia. This paper will be argued that differential association theory is an appropriate approach to explain the cause of the suicide bombing related to the relationship among suspects. Similarly, general strain theory is a suitable approach to explain the cause of the terrorism in Indonesia.

KeyWords: terrorism, suicide bombing, differential association and general strain theories.

Introduction

Indonesia has suffered from several major terrors since the Bali bombing in 2002. The Bali bombing II in 2005 and JW Marriot-Ritz Carlton Hotels bombing in 2009 followed as major suicide bombings in Indonesian history. These terrible crimes have forced the Indonesian Police Department to have extra concern for protecting Indo-

nesian security. Indonesia police then successfully arrested and brought the perpetrators before criminal courts. As a result, the court sentenced some of the perpetrators with capital punishments. However, suicide terror seems to be never ending in Indonesia. On Friday 21st April 2011, Indonesia was shocked by a suicide bombing in a police mosque in Cirebon, West Java Indonesia. The

bombing exploded just before the Friday prayer began. The bomber stepped forward to a second row of the congregation in the mosque, and then he opened his jacket to explode the bomb. The first row was occupied by police officers including the Cirebon Police Chief. The blast injured 30 people and killed the bomber. Through DNA tests, Police confirmed that the bombing was conducted by Muhammad Syarif, 31 year old local resident.

Police investigated the genuine motives and related suspects. Initial investigation focused on examining Syarif's last activities. Previously, Syarif had been reported frequently to be involved in activities of the hard-line Movement against Illegal Sects and Non-Believers (GAPAS).¹ Syarif was also known to be involved at demonstrations against karaoke bars and rallies against Ahmadiyah.² Moreover, Police reported that Syarif allegedly pledged allegiance, known as *baiat*, to Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), a hard-line Muslim group.³ Subsequently, the police arrested several suspects, including Basuki, Syarif's younger brother and Arif Budiman, Syarif's colleague.⁴ Police indicate that they have more plans to attack military and police stations.⁵

Historically, although suicide bombings or mosque bombing have occurred elsewhere, the suicide mosque bombing in Cirebon was the first time this had occurred in Indonesia. The modus operandi of this suicide bombing by attacking against the police was unique. The Cirebon bombing was apparently directed to attack police when they gathered in the mosque. In contrast, the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005, was addressed to restaurant and club guests. In other words, the Cirebon Bombing's targets were police officers and a mosque, whereas the Bali bombing's targets were civilians and public places.

However, there are similarities between the Cirebon bombing and other bombing occurring

in Indonesia. First, there is a similar relationship among the suspects. In the Cirebon bombing, Basuki was Syarif's brother and Budiman was his colleague. Similarly, in the Bali bombing, Amrozi and Ali Gufron were brothers and Imam Samudara was their colleague.⁶ Second, the suspects were all involved in organizations that have hard-line Islamic ideology. All arrested suspects related to the Cirebon bombing have been indicated by police as involved in *Tauhid Wal Jihad*. Likewise, police believed that the three Bali bombers were involved in *Jamaah Islamiah*. An analysis of these features, therefore, apparently needs to be conducted in order to understand the causes of the bombings, and then a main part of the solution will hopefully be found to address this problem.

A variety of theories have been offered to explain criminal behavior, such as terrorism. In this paper differential association and general strain theories will be used to analyse the Cirebon bombing case. Both theories are appropriate with respect to the two significant characteristics of the case above. The differential association argues that a person commits crime because of influence from his or her experiences during social interactions, whereas the general strain theory maintains that criminal behavior results from personal pressure or strain.

The aim of this paper is to understand the differential association and general strain theories in the light of the new form suicide bombing that has occurred in Indonesia. This paper will initially explain the emergent contexts and general features of the differential association theory. Then it will analyse the theory by identifying the strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, this paper then explains the emergent contexts and general features of the general strain theory and analyse the theory by identifying the strengths and weaknesses. Discussions on both theories will be related to the Cirebon

1 International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, *Suicide Bombing at the Police Mosque in Cirebon, Indonesia*, <http://www.pvtr.org/pdf/RegionalAnalysis/SouthEastAsia/SpotReport-CirebonMosqueBombing.pdf>, accessed on 20 April 2011.

2 Time, *Indonesia's Rash of 'Do-It-Yourself Jihad'*, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2065850,00.html>, accessed on 20 April 2011.

3 The Jakarta Post, *Police to study Cirebon bomber's 'baiat'*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/05/20/police-study-cirebon-bombers-%E2%80%98baiat%E2%80%99.html>, accessed on 20 April 2011.

4 The Jakarta Herald, *Police Arrest 2 More Suspects in Cirebon Bombing*, <http://thejakartaherald.com/police-arrest-2-more-suspects-in-cirebon-bombing/>, accessed on 20 April 2011.

5 Cirebon group planned to target military, police: Official, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/05/20/cirebon-group-planned-target-military-police-official.html>, accessed on 20 April 2011.

6 ABC, *The Suspects*, http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2003/20030210_bali_confessions/suspects.htm, accessed on 20 April 2011.

bombing in order to identify its causes. It will be argued that differential association theory is an appropriate approach to explain the cause of the suicide bombing related to the relationship among suspects. Similarly, general strain theory is a suitable approach to explain the cause of the terrorism in Indonesia. The reasons for both contentions will be explained in further discussion.

This paper discuss about:

1. How did association among syarif and other suspects increase the likelihood of becoming terrorists?
2. What sort of strain that influence syarif to commit suicide bombing?
3. Why do those strains increase the likelihood of suicide bombing?

Analyze

Differential Association Theory

Before the theory of differential association was developed, criminologists explained that crime occurs because of multiple factors, such as social class, broken homes, age, sex, race, urban and rural area, and mental disorders.⁷ Differential association theory, subsequently, appeared to explain why these various agents were related to crime and how they affect an individual's likelihood of pursuing criminal on non criminal actions.⁸ Criminologists who maintain this theory believe that socialization experiences mainly influence a person to commit a crime or not. The criminologist who developed differential association theory was Edwin Hardin Sutherland (1883-1950).

In 1939, Sutherland's theory of differential association was first expressed in his book, *Principle of Criminology*. Sutherland's theory is argued to be is "one of the best known and most systematic and influential of the interpersonal theory"⁹ or

"one of the dominant theories of crime",¹⁰ and "instrumental in bringing the perspective of sociology to the forefront of criminology"¹¹. Sutherland argued that criminality is not inherited, but it is learned via interpersonal communication and social interaction with intimate groups or primary groups (including family and friends).¹² He postulated that a person commits criminal acts because he or she has learned "definitions" (rationalization and attitudes) favorable to violations of law in "excess" of the definitions unfavorable to violation of law.¹³ In the other words, association with others who are engaged with criminal behavior will increase the likelihood of becoming delinquent and the probability of remaining so.¹⁴

This theory is presented in the nine propositions, namely:

1. Criminal behavior is learned.
2. Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other person in a process of communication.
3. The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups.
4. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes simple and the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes.
5. The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable.
6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of the law.
7. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.

7 Francis T. Cullen and Robert Agnew, *Criminological Theory*, Roxbury Publishing Company, Los Angeles, 1999, p. 82.

8 Daniel J. Curran and Claire M. Renzetti, *Theories of Crime*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 2001, p. 135.

9 R. Martin, R. J. Mutchnick and W. T. Austin, *Criminological Thought*, Macmillan, New York, 1990, p. 155.

10 Cullen and Agnew, *Op.Cit*, p.82.

11 R. L. Matsueda, *The Current Stage Of Differential Association Theory*, Crime and Delinquency, Volume 34, 1988, p. 277.

12 Curran and Renzetti, *Op.Cit*, p.137.

13 Ronald L. Akers and Christine S. Sellers, *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, And Application*, Roxbury Publishing, Los Angeles, 2004, p. 82.

14 Douglas A. Smith and Robert Brame, *On The Initiation And Continuation Of Delinquency*, Criminology, Volume 32, 1994, p. 610.

8. The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning.
9. While criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those needs and values, since non-criminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values.

The process of social interaction stated in the sixth proposition is the core or heart of this theory and the process of social interaction is where the name of differential association came from.¹⁵

Furthermore, Sutherland underlines that associations vary in frequency, duration, priority and intensity. It means that frequent associations are more impact people's behavior rather than those that arise infrequently. Similarly, associations that occur over a long periods of time will be more influential than those occurring over a short time. Associations that also appear earlier in a person's life will have a greater influence than those that appear last. Association with people who have a prestigious position will have much greater impact than association with those who have little regard. Moreover, Sutherland asserts that because of crime as political defined, there is "the differential implementation of the law".¹⁶ People who have power will be able to determine whether a behavior is criminal or not. Therefore, association will have more weight "if a person is frequently exposed to them, over a long period of time, and from an early age and if they come from a significant person in their life".¹⁷

a.1. How Did Association Among Syarif And Other Suspects Increase The Likelihood Of Becoming Terrorists?

There are two important basic elements to understanding differential association theory, namely the content and process of learning.¹⁸ First, the content of what is learned in the inter-

action includes the technique committing crimes, attitudes, and motivations and it is a similar process involved in how an individual learns other behavior.¹⁹ Related to the suicide mosque bombing, the relationships between Syarif with Basuki as brothers and Budiman as colleague indicate that there was a frequent and a long period of communication among them. Smith and Brame believe that peers can be significant role models for the development of values and beliefs favorable to delinquency.²⁰ Therefore, during the daily interaction among Syarif, Basuki and Budiman, the motivations, rationalizations and techniques of the suicide bombing were more than likely learned. They possibly learned why suicide bombing must be conducted, how to commit it successfully and to whom it should be addressed.

Second, the process in which learning takes place includes the intimate informal groups and situational contexts where learning occurs. Syarif's position as the older brother may have significantly influenced Basuki's thinking. In Java- nese culture, younger brothers must have greater respect to elders. Syarif may have a greater influence educating his brother to be favourable to the bombing. At least, there was an interaction which influences each other. Being involved in the same organisation also creates an opportunity for intensive communication. Therefore, when they were interacting each other and the interaction became intensive, they might begin to recognise the motivation and rationalization of the suicide bombing.

a.2. Strengths and Weaknesses of Differential Association Theory

Generally, researchers have found evidence to support differential association theory, and have concluded that there is a strong link between individual's associations with deviant/criminal peers and the likelihood of pursuing criminal actions.²¹ However, the most serious weakness of the differential association theory is that it will not be

15 Curran and Renzetti, *Op.Cit.*, p.137.

16 Mark M.Lanier, *Essential Criminology*, Westview Press, New York, 2009, p. 167.

17 *Ibid.*, 168.

18 *Ibid.*, 167.

19 Ian Marsh ed., *Theories of Crime*, Routledge, London, 2006, p. 112.

20 Smith and Brame, *Op.Cit.*, p.610-611.

21 Curran and Renzetti, *Op.Cit.*, p.139.

easy to be tested,²² particularly the interaction and communication processes,²³ because empirical validations are very hard to be obtained.²⁴ Donald R. Cressy critically questioned how to measure an excess of definition favourable to law violation, because the concept of “definition” was not specifically defined.²⁵ Sutherland admitted that ideally the propositions could be shown in quantitative forms and a mathematical ratio, although it may be extremely difficult. On the other hand, a popular method has been conducted as an indirect measurement to empirically test this theory.²⁶ Several questions have been exposed to emphasise that an individual has learned criminal behaviour from others who have engaged in such behaviour, such as “how many of your friends have involved in the same crime in recent time?” or “do you know A (who has been arrested for related crime)? and how do you know A?”. Similarly, the questions might ask Basuki and Budiman, such as to what extent do you think the reasons for Syarif to commit suicide bombing? or did you have frequent meetings?. These questions, therefore, may lead to the conclusion that there was a link between this personal interactions and the suicide bombing.

Furthermore, because the differential association theory was developed before the advancement of communication technology, it ignored the fact that people may learn from significant modelling and image glorified in the media.²⁷ The internet, for example, has taken a significant place in propagating extremist ideas of terrorism. More than five thousand websites have been created to disseminate Al Qaeda-influenced ideology to the entire world and their numbers are dramatically increasing every year.²⁸ Through websites people

come to understand the fundamental reasons to commit terror. The writings of the three Bali bombers, for instance, were uploaded on a particular website. A terrorist Abdul Basheer arrested in Singapore also admitted that radical ideas from the internet affected him to involve in Afghanistan mujahidin fighting.²⁹

Additionally, people can learn from another way such as through reading a book. Imam Samudra, the Bali bomber, for instance, wrote a book entitled “*Aku Melawan Teroris*” or I fight terrorists and it became a best seller in 2004. In this book, he believes that the bombing was justified by his own interpretation of Quranic verses, and he encourages every Muslim to participate in jihad against people who are attacking Islam.³⁰ He also asserts that the Indonesian government, including police and military, is a companion of the people who are attacking Islam, and thus Indonesia is worthy to be a battlefield of jihad. Police also found a similar concept of jihad in Indonesia related to the Cirebon bombing. Police have been informed that Syarif’s judgments were based on the perception that the Indonesian laws originally were made by people who are attacking Islam, and thus every person who agrees with the law is an infidel.³¹ Although, there is no evidence that Syarif had read Samudra’s book, it has been generally accepted that people can learn from a book.

Moreover, in fact, Basuki and Budiman were arrested because police believe that they knew the bombing plan and helped Syarif for preparing the crime. All of them also were involved in the same organisation. However, the essential question is why Basuki and Budiman did not commit suicide bombing or why Syarif was the first

22 *Ibid.*, 138.

23 Gerben J. N. Bruinsma, *Differential Association Theory Reconsidered: An Extension And Its Empirical Test*, Journal of Quantitative Criminology, Volume 8 (1), 1992p. 33.

24 Robert L. Burgess, and Ronald L. Akers, *Differential Association-Reinforcement Theory of Criminal Behavior*, Social Problems, Volume 14, 1966-1967, p. 129.

25 Ronald L. Akers, *Is Differential Association/Social Learning Cultural Deviance Theory?*, Criminology, Volume 34, 1996, p. 229.

26 Curran and Renzetti, *Op.Cit.*

27 Lanier, *Op.Cit.*, p.169.

28 Jennifer Yang Hui, *The Internet in Indonesia: Development and Impact of Radical Websites*, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 33, 2010, p. 171.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

30 Muhammad Haniff Bin Hassan, *Imam Samudra’s Justification for Bali Bombing*, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, volume 30, 2007, p. 1046.

31 The Jakarta Post, *Suicide bomber said father was an ‘infidel’*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/04/19/suicide-bomber-said-father-was-%E2%80%98infidel%E2%80%99.html>, accessed on 21 April 2011.

bomber not Basuki or Budiman. Differential association theory may be difficult to deal with such questions. A developed version of the differential association theory, therefore, has been offered by Robert Burgess and Ronald Akers to overcome the limitations appearing in the theory. Generally, they argue that an individual has the ability to evaluate definitions that may influence his or her behaviour during communication in social interaction.³² Thus, they present a new version of the Sutherland's propositions:³³

1. Criminal behavior is learned according to the principle of operant conditioning.
2. Criminal behavior is learned both in nonsocial situations that are reinforcing or discriminative and through that social interaction in which the behavior of the other persons is reinforcing or discriminative for criminal behavior.
3. The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs in those groups that make up the individual's major sources of reinforcement.
4. The learning of criminal behavior (including specific techniques, attitudes, and avoidance procedure) is a function of the effective and available reinforcers and the existing reinforcement contingencies.
5. The specific class of behaviors that are learned and their frequency of occurrence are a function of the reinforcers that are effective and available and the rule or norms by which these reinforcers are applied.
6. Criminal behavior is a function of norms that are discriminative for criminal behavior, the learning of which takes place when such behavior is more highly reinforced than non criminal behavior.
7. The strength of criminal behavior is a direct function of the amount, frequency, and probability of its reinforcement. These interactions rely on norms, attitudes and orientations.

Additionally, there are some criticisms to differential association theory, namely:

1. "is defective because it omits consideration of free will,
2. is based on a psychology assuming rational deliberation,
3. ignores the role of the victim,
4. does not explain the origin of crime,
5. does not define terms such as "systematic" and "excess",
6. does not take "biological factors" into account,
7. is of little or no value to "practical men",
8. is not comprehensive enough because it is not interdisciplinary,
9. is not allied closely enough with more general sociological theory and research,
10. is too comprehensive because it applies to noncriminals, and
11. assumes that all persons have equal access to criminal and anticriminal behavior patterns."³⁴

General Strain Theory

Before the strain theory was developed, anomie theory by Emile Durkheim (1893) had explained that criminal behaviour is caused by social factor rather than biological and psychological factors. Durkheim argued that the ability of a society to regulate proper behaviour can break down during periods of rapid social change.³⁵ If there is an absence of sufficient regulation to manage behaviours about how a society can pursue its goal, this situation was called "anomie" or "normlessness". Here, anomie causes crime.

Robert K. Merton then built classic strain theory based on Durkheim's conception of anomie and introduced for the first time in his article "Social Structure and Anomie" in 1938. The difference between Durkheim and Merton was that Durkheim argues that anomie occurred during periods of change, whereas Merton believed that anomie was a permanent feature of society.³⁶ Merton's theory of anomie focused on

32 Burgess and Akers, *Op.Cit.*, p.146.

33 Lanier, *Op.Cit.*, p.171.

34 College of Criminology and Criminal Justice of the Florida State University, *Differential Association Theory*, <http://www.criminology.fsu.edu/crimtheory/sutherland.html>, accessed on 25 April 2011.

35 Suzette Cote, *Criminological theories: bridging the past to the future*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2002, p. 96.

36 Charis E. Kubrin, Thomas D. Stucky, and Marvin D. Krohn, *Researching Theories Of Crime And Deviance*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009, p. 107.

explaining why societies with monetary success tend to have higher crime rates than others. The theory also explains why there are higher rate of crime amongst the socially disadvantaged.³⁷ It had been indicated that societies emphasising monetary success as the main goal, lack to emphasise legitimate norms for achieving the main goal, such as education and hard work.³⁸ Thus, anomie was created during such situation.

Criminologist Robert Agnew has developed a new version of strain theory, where the theory argues that strain is not only from economic matters but also from other sources.³⁹ This theory then points to additional source of strain.⁴⁰ Agnew argues that crime and delinquency are an adaptation to stress, wherever the stress originally comes from. Agnew then expands the definition of stress or strain and specifies more precisely the relationship between strain and delinquency rather than the earlier theory.⁴¹ Agnew suggests three major types of strain, namely:⁴²

1. Strain as the failure to achieve positively valued goals.
In this type, Agnew identifies three subtypes. The first subtype is the traditional concept of strain as the disjunction between aspirations and expectation. This strain is typically measured in terms of monetary goal, where an individual in a lower class usually desire inmonetary success, but he or she is prevented from achieving this via legitimate ways.⁴³ However, Agnew's theory has been criticized because "(1) unable to explain the extensive nature of middle-class delinquency; (2) neglect goal other than monetary success/ middle-class status; (3) neglect barriers to goal achievement other than social class; and (4) do not fully specify why only some

stained individuals turn to delinquency"; and the most strong criticism is the limitation of empirical support.⁴⁴ However, Agnew argues that this type may produce less strain because aspirations are lofty and idealistic.⁴⁵

The second subtype is a disjunction between expectation and actual achievements. Strain occurs when an individual's achievement or reward is not as they expected. Finally, the third subtype is strain resulting from a disjunction between what an individual's view as a fair outcome and actual outcome. If an individual experiences imbalance between income and outcome, it would result in personal distress.

2. Strain as the removal of positively valued stimuli from the individual.
This source of strain mainly refers to personal experiences with stressful life events, such as the loss of a girlfriend or boyfriend or other great worth people, being fire from a job or moving to a new neighbourhood or school.
3. Strain as the presentation of negative stimuli.
This type refers to another sort of stressful life events that refers to a personal confrontation with negative action by others, such as experiencing abuse, accident or neglect. Insufficient power to deal with the negative stimulus by an individual, will create greater strain on the individual.

Agnew believes that these different of strain can trigger negative affective (emotions) states, such as anger, disappointment, depression and fear,⁴⁶ and anger is the most critical emotional reaction.⁴⁷ Anger affects an individual in some ways which are conducive to criminal behaviour, such as creating a desire for revenge and energizing an individual for action.⁴⁸ Therefore, general strain

37 Akers and Sellers, *Op.Cit*, p.164.

38 Cullen and Agnew, *Op.Cit*, p.117.

39 Kubrin, Stucky and Krohn, *Op.Cit*, p.111.

40 Cullen and Agnew, *Op.Cit*, p.120.

41 Curran and Renzetti, *Op.Cit*, p.130.

42 Robert Agnew, *Foundation For A General Strain Theory Of Crime And Delinquency*, Criminology, Volume 30 (1), 1992, p. 51-59.

43 Cote, *Op.Cit*, p.114.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 114-115.

45 Curran and Renzetti, *Op.Cit*, p.131.

46 Kubrin, Stucky and Krohn, *Op.Cit*, p.120.

47 Agnew, *Op.Cit*, p.59.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

theory basically explains that an increase in strain would lead to greater negative emotions, which might then lead to an increase of crime.

Kubrin et al. offer several following summarises to expose the differences of concepts among Durkheim's anomie theory, Merton's classic strain theory and Agnew's general strain theory:⁴⁹

Anomie theory:

1. Societies characterized by overemphasis on goals for economic success over conventional means should have higher crime rates.
2. Societies with universal success goals and nonuniversal opportunities to achieve then will have higher crime rates.
3. Crime rates will be higher when the economy dominates over other institutions.
4. Societies where the market determines individual success or failure will have higher crime rates.

Classic strain theory:

1. Socioeconomic class and crime are inversely related.
2. A gap between one's aspirations/goals and expectations will lead to strain
3. Perception of blocked opportunities will be positively related to crime.
4. Dissatisfaction with one's current monetary situation will be related to crime.

General strain theory:

1. People experiencing negative live events will experience negative affective states and as a result will be more likely to engage in crime.
2. Groups with higher level of strain and fewer resources for coping will have higher crime rates.

There are two different approaches to identify and measure strain in an individual's life, namely subjective and objective approaches. The

subjective approach is exposing questions to an individual "whether they dislike the way that they are being treated", whereas the objective approach is exposing questions to an individual related to questions about pre-determined causes of strain.⁵⁰ It must be noted that every individual has different reaction and subjective view on different types of strain.⁵¹

Strain and differential association theories are both sociological theories, where they explain delinquency in terms of the individual's social relationships. However, Agnew argues that strain and differential association distinct in their focus on causes of crime. First, strain theory argues that people are "pressured into delinquency by the negative affective states, most notably anger and related emotions, that often result from negative relationships", whereas differential association theory argues that adolescent commits crime because "group forces lead the adolescent to view delinquency as a desirable or at least justifiable form of behaviour under certain circumstances".⁵²

b.1. Strengths and Weaknesses of Strain Theory

Compared previous strain theory, Agnew's general theory is "more complex and multifaceted".⁵³ Curran and Renzetti argue that, with respect to the general strain theory as a new theory, it requires considerably more empirical testing, particularly at racial and ethnic differences.⁵⁴ However, this theory focuses on an individual's experiences in any class and race and thus it is not tied only to class and race differences in criminal behavior.⁵⁵

In addition, Curran and Renzetti assert that strain theory has wide appeal because of two reasons. First, the theory has interdisciplinary approach, as drawing on literature from sociology, psychology and other fields. The theory also has as ability to incorporate notions from

49 Kubrin, Stucky and Krohn, *Op.Cit*, p.111.

50 College of Criminology and Criminal Justice of the Florida State University, *Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory*, <http://www.criminology.fsu.edu/crimtheory/agnew.htm>, accessed on 23 April 2011.

51 *Ibid*.

52 Agnew, *Op.Cit*, p.51-59.

53 Curran and Renzetti, *Op.Cit*, p.131.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

55 Akers and Sellers, *Op.Cit*, p.164.

other popular criminological perspectives, such as social learning and control theories.⁵⁶

Recently, Agnew has applied the general strain theory on terrorism. In his article, Agnew argues that some people engage terrorist organisations and commit terrorism because they experience “collective strains”, namely strains are high in magnitude, with civilians affected; unjust; and inflicted by significantly more powerful others.⁵⁷ He believes that “these collective strains increase the likelihood of terrorism because they increase negative emotions, reduce social control, reduce the ability to copethrough legal and military channels, foster the social learning of terrorism, and contribute to a collective orientation and response”.⁵⁸ Although, Agnew, asserts that “only a small percentage of collective strains increase the likelihood of terrorism”,⁵⁹ the Cirebon bombing, may be appropriately explained in the light of this theory.

b.2. What Sort Of Strain That Influence Syarif To Commit Suicide Bombing?

Agnew further explains that strains are high in magnitude because they involve acts which cause a high degree of harm, such as death, serious physical and sexual assault and dispossession.⁶⁰ There is evidence to support this statement related to the Cirebon bombing. Police announced that Syarif was a suspect in the murder of a military officer which occurred not long before the bombing.⁶¹ It means that Syarif apparently had a strain just before he became the bomber.

Moreover, Agnew indicates that strains in terrorism because of unjust from external agents. Collective strain is more likely deemed as unjust

if “the strain is seen as undeserved”.⁶² Police have been informed that Syarif’s judgments were based on the perception that the Indonesian laws were originally made by people who are attacking Islam.⁶³ The laws were used to judge the Bali bombers. On the other hand, mostly Indonesian terrorists believe that Indonesia should implement sharia law or God-given law.⁶⁴ Therefore, they deem that the Bali bombers should be prosecuted under sharia law instead. It can be seen that Syarif believed that unjustness had occurred in Indonesia, particularly when other terrorist were judged under “infidel” laws.

Furthermore, Agnew assert that collective strain result from inflicting by significantly more powerful others, such as religion.⁶⁵ Terrorists committing terrors in the name of particular religion mostly believe that it was divine command.⁶⁶ They believe that their religions have encouraged them to perform religious orders, and thus they deserve a reward from God. Thus, it seems that strain may come from a strong desire to perform divine commands.

b.3. Why Do Those Strains Increase The Likelihood Of Suicide Bombing?

It has been explained above that strains lead to strong negative emotional states and traits, including anger, where they are conducive to terrorism.⁶⁷ These emotions create a strong desire for revenge. The Cirebon bombing was committed against police apparently as the revenge because police have brought other terrorist to prosecute under “infidel” laws. The bombing committed when the police gathered in the mosque also indicates that it was expected to inflict mass negative

56 Curran and Renzetti, *Op.Cit*, p.131

57 Robert Agnew, *A General Strain Theory Of Terrorism*, Theoretical Criminology, Volume 14, 2010, p. 132.

58 *Ibid*.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

60 Agnew *Op.Cit*, p.136.

61 The Jakarta Post, *Suicide bomber crime record considered by police*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/04/20/suicide-bomber-crime-record-considered-police.html>, accessed on 21 April 2011.

62 Agnew, *Op.Cit*, p.138.

63 The Jakarta Post, *Suicide bomber said father was an ‘infidel’*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/04/19/suicide-bomber-said-father-was-%E2%80%98infidel%E2%80%99.html>, accessed on 22 April 2011.

64 Sidney Jones, *Briefing for the New President: The Terrorist Threat in Indonesia and Southeast Asia*, The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Volume 618, 2008, p. 74.

65 Agnew, *Op.Cit*, p.139.

66 Hassan, *Op.Cit*, p. 1043.

67 Agnew, *Op.Cit*, p.140.

effects.⁶⁸ In addition, Syarif committed the suicide bombing apparently to expect a reward from God, because he had performed the divine command.

Conclusion

In conclusion, despite there is no a theory can perfectly explain every feature of crime and criminal behaviour, differential association and strain theories seem appropriate approaches to explain the cause of the suicide bombing in Indonesia. Differential association argues that an individual learns criminal behavior during communication in social interaction. Closer relationships between an individual and others would lead to the greater likelihood of pursuing criminal actions. The relation between Syarif and Basuki as brother, and between Syarif and Budiman as colleague, and particularly the involvement in the same organization seem as

indications that such associations would increase the likelihood of becoming terrorists.

Moreover, general strain theory argues that an individual commits crime because of personal level psychological pressure or strain on personal experiences. Agnew claims that terrorism creates collective strains and that these strains are high in magnitude, unjust and inflicted by significantly more powerful others.

The strains lead to strong negative emotions, such as anger, and these emotions are conducive to terrorism. In Indonesian, collective strains appear in the context that terrorism may involve other crimes such as murder, terrorists mostly believes that unjust was established because sharia law is not be implemented, and they commit terrors to perform divine command.

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