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The Paradox of Network: Bonding Social Capital and Criminal Behavior in Criminology Theses

Merve Reyhan BAYGELDİ

Dr, Polis Akademisi Başkanlığı, Güvenlik Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Suç Araştırmaları,

mervereyhan.baygeldi@pa.edu.tr, ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2935-2723

Abstract

This study analyzes 101 master's and doctoral theses published between 2016 and 2024 in the ProQuest database, examining how Putnam's concept of bonding social capital is conceptualized and linked to criminal behavior within criminology literature. Using a Python-supported automated qualitative method, the research integrates thematic content analysis, frequency analysis, and contextual coding. Findings reveal a nuanced, dual impact of bonding social capital: while strong in-group ties can promote pro-social norms and reduce delinquency at the micro level, they may also foster deviant subcultures and facilitate organized crime. The study highlights how the effects of social capital vary across settings and scales, offering key insights into its ambivalent role in the context of crime.

Keywords: Putnam, bonding social capital, criminal behaviors, criminology, thematic analysis

1. Introduction

Social capital theory offers a robust explanatory framework for understanding how trust and cooperation arising from interpersonal relationships influence social order. Although initially appearing abstract, theorists like Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) have conceptualized social capital as a concrete element of social structure. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as the sum of current or potential resources derived from durable networks of relationships among individuals or groups, emphasizing its role in reproducing class power and privileges. Coleman (1988), on the

other hand, conceptualizes social capital as a set of elements such as trust, norms, and information sharing that exist within a particular social structure and facilitate individual actions. These perspectives illustrate that social relations are not merely "pleasant side-effects," but tangible forms of capital shaping even economic and legal processes. Indeed, Putnam (1993), in his seminal study on regional governments in Italy, demonstrated that strong civil societal networks and trust (i.e., high social capital) significantly enhance the effectiveness of state institutions and the quality of democratic governance. Social capital can strengthen the link between state authority and society by facilitating the enforcement of social norms; however, under different conditions, it may also foster informal structures developing independently of the state. This multifaceted impact necessitates a meticulous examination of social capital in the context of crime and social order.

The 2010s and 2020s witnessed global trends that have compelled a reassessment of the relationship between social capital, crime, and the state. Primarily, the global wave of social insecurity has been widely discussed in the literature. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted in 2019, today, "people are losing faith in political institutions, polarization is rising, and populist politics is on the ascendancy" (cited in Flew, 2021, p.145). Extensive surveys from recent years indicate a decline in trust toward governments, media, and experts across many countries (Edelman, 2020; Gallup, 2019). Reflecting this crisis of trust, citizens are shifting from generalized trust toward particularized trust, preferring reliance on familiar, narrow circles rather than trusting unknown individuals or institutions (Uslaner, 2002; Flew, 2021). This shift impacts the structure of social capital, reinforcing binding capital within smaller, homogeneous networks while weakening broader social integration. Populist politicians exploit this trust vacuum, positioning themselves as the "voice of the people" and deepening social polarization with anti-elite rhetoric (Mudde, 2017; Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Consequently, increasing ideological and social polarization reduces bridging social capital, weakening dialogue and empathy among different groups. Regarding crime, heightened polarization and reduced institutional trust may diminish society's willingness to cooperate with law enforcement and even normalize social conflict and violence. Indeed, the street protests and unrest seen from Latin America to Europe throughout the 2010s have been interpreted not only as manifestations of economic hardship but also as reflections of institutional distrust (Flew, 2021, pp.198-205). Even the global COVID-19 pandemic highlighted consequences of the trust crisis; phenomena such as conspiracy theories and vaccine hesitancy indicated weakened trust in governments and scientific expertise (Flew, 2021).

These developments underscore the macro-level significance of trust dynamics in evaluating social capital's impact on crime and order.

Urbanization practices and economic inequalities also notably transform the social capital-crime relationship. Throughout the 2010s and 2020s, the spread of urban poverty to suburbs and increasing spatial segregation became prominent in many countries. Particularly, impoverished neighborhoods emerging on the outskirts of major metropolises, exemplified by French banlieues, generate areas characterized by intense bonding capital yet isolated from mainstream society (Wacquant, 2008). While neighborhood and kinship ties provide crucial survival networks, they simultaneously foster environments marked by social exclusion and stigma (Wacquant, 2008, 2010). High unemployment, inadequate public services, and tense police relationships undermine the legitimacy of state authority in such peripheral communities, giving rise to informal structures. For instance, youths in Paris suburbs or abandoned inner cities in the U.S. may resort to criminal organizations for alternative status and economic opportunities when excluded from mainstream economies. This scenario exemplifies how social capital's nature can reverse: dense networks and solidarity may transform into gang allegiance, fueling youth criminality. Recent studies highlight how youths detached from institutions like family and schools gravitate toward peer groups that reinforce criminal tendencies through binding but harmful relationships (Hoffmann & Dufur, 2018). Migration movements similarly alter social capital dynamics globally. Increasing refugee and immigrant influxes throughout the 2010s created new challenges for both migrant communities and host societies. Migrants often rely heavily on bonding social capital—support from their ethnic/religious communities—to overcome integration difficulties (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Although vital for immediate needs like housing and employment, such close-knit networks may hinder long-term integration with host societies. Recent research from New Zealand showed migrants in densely populated immigrant areas invest more in bonding than bridging activities, yet those with higher bridging capital attain better employment and integration outcomes (Roskruge & Poot, 2024). This underscores the importance of open networks for community integration and crime prevention, as closed networks risk deepening social divides, fostering misunderstandings, and exacerbating tensions.

Finally, digital divides in the digital age introduce new dimensions to social capital. While the internet and social media overcome geographical distances, creating new social networks and

virtual communities, they also promote closed-loop forms of social capital via echo chambers where people interact only with those sharing similar views (Sunstein, 2017). The digital divide further marginalizes disadvantaged populations, exacerbating their economic and social exclusion and increasing risks of crime and violence. However, appropriately used digital platforms can also strengthen bridging capital, enabling community safety and solidarity groups online, providing new crime-fighting opportunities (Virtanen, 2020). Thus, the interactions between social capital, state-society relations, and crime in our current decades are reshaped by globalization, urbanization, and digitalization.

This article aims to critically analyze social capital theory, especially from the perspective of bonding social capital, at the intersection of state and crime. Based on the outlined theoretical framework and contemporary trends, this study systematically analyzes 101 master's and doctoral theses published in the ProQuest database between 2016 and 2024. These theses represent contemporary academic research examining social capital's relation to crime, violence, security, and justice across various countries and contexts. Through thematic and comparative content analysis, the study identifies trends and contradictions in the last decade's literature, offering original theoretical and practical contributions.

This paper bridges gaps by synthesizing extensive contemporary studies, capturing the transformations of social capital during the turbulent 2010s and 2020s. It reinterprets classic theoretical frameworks (Putnam, Bourdieu, Coleman, Portes) in dialogue with current realities (populism, digitalization, migration), addressing critical questions about social capital's role in crime prevention and societal integration. Consequently, it offers comprehensive insights into the complex relationships among bonding social capital, state authority, crime dynamics, and social cohesion, providing valuable guidance for policymakers aiming to enhance social trust and effectively combat crime.

2. Literature Review

Social capital refers to the resources individuals and groups obtain through social networks, trust relationships, and norms of reciprocity. Initially conceptualized by theorists such as James Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu, the concept gained widespread recognition through the work of Robert Putnam. Putnam (2000) distinguishes two primary forms of social capital: bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital represents the tight-knit connections within homogenous groups,

such as family, close friends, or communities sharing similar characteristics, serving as a "social superglue" that reinforces group solidarity. These strong ties enhance mutual support and cooperation, enabling members to "get by" (Putnam, 2000: 20). However, bonding ties may also foster inward-looking trust and exclusive identities, resulting in attitudes that are distant or exclusionary towards outsiders. Conversely, bridging social capital involves weaker but broader connections between diverse groups or socio-demographic categories, functioning like a "WD-40 lubricant" that facilitates societal cohesion. Generally, bridging social capital is seen as critical for social integration and collective benefits, while bonding capital is viewed as powerful yet potentially double-edged, influential primarily within restricted circles (Putnam, 2000: 20-22, 395-396; Portes, 1998).

2.1. Strong Social Ties and Crime Prevention

The literature in sociology and criminology has long emphasized that robust social bonds help individuals refrain from criminal behavior. Hirschi's classical social bond theory (1969) suggests that youths who are strongly connected to their families, schools, and conventional society have reduced tendencies toward crime. Hirschi argues that a youth's strong attachment to parents, sense of responsibility towards school and future, and belief in societal norms constitute primary mechanisms motivating them to avoid criminal activities. Most delinquent youths typically exhibit weak bonds with conventional society, indicating a lack of informal social control that leads to the uninhibited expression of natural impulses and thus crime (Pratt et al., 2011). This perspective underscores the critical role of attachment to institutions like family, school, and employment in crime prevention. Similarly, Sampson and Laub's life-course theory demonstrates that individuals who engage in crime during youth can desist from criminal behaviors upon forming strong adult attachments, such as marriage, stable employment, or military service (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Their findings illustrate that bonding social capital can provide "second chances" later in life, emphasizing its rehabilitative potential.

The crime-preventive role of social ties has also been examined at the community level. Drawing from classic social disorganization theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942), Sampson and Groves (1989) found lower crime rates in neighborhoods characterized by dense friendship networks, high neighborhood interaction, and active participation in local organizations. Structural disadvantages (e.g., poverty, migration mobility, family disruption) weaken local social ties, diminishing

collective social control capacity and thereby increasing crime. Furthering this idea, Sampson and colleagues introduced the concept of collective efficacy, defined as neighborhood residents' capacity and willingness to intervene voluntarily for common good and order, built upon mutual trust and solidarity (Sampson et al., 1997). Empirical studies in Chicago involving 343 neighborhoods revealed significantly lower violent crime rates in areas with higher neighborly trust and mutual supervision (Sampson et al., 1997). Such findings underscore the deterrent effect of community-based informal control. Moreover, neighborhoods with high collective efficacy exhibit less tolerance for criminal activities and display stronger collective reactions against crime (Sampson, 1993). On a macro level, comparative studies by Rosenfeld, Messner, and Baumer (2001) have shown that societies lacking social capital—marked by low trust and civic engagement—have higher homicide rates, while regions with strong social capital experience significantly lower rates. However, high crime rates can also erode social capital, perpetuating fear and distrust among residents and weakening collective action capabilities (Buonanno et al., 2009; Rosenfeld et al., 2001).

In summary, various theoretical frameworks and empirical studies highlight bonding social capital as a protective factor against crime at both individual and community levels. Micro-level bonds (family, school, workplace) and mezzo-macro-level social ties (neighborhood networks, local institutions) exert similar deterrent effects, primarily through informal social control mechanisms and normative pressure. Individuals may avoid crime due to fear of losing respect within close circles, while community norms serve as natural restraints on potential deviant behavior.

2.2. The Dark Side of Bonding Social Capital: Risks and Crime-Promoting Dynamics

The literature also acknowledges that social capital, particularly bonding social capital, can have negative consequences (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Alejandro Portes (1998) identifies four adverse effects labeled as the "dark side": (1) exclusion—strong in-group ties may foster exclusionary attitudes, limiting opportunities for outsiders; (2) excessive demands and obligations—norms of reciprocity may impose burdensome demands on successful members by relatives and acquaintances; (3) restriction of individual freedoms—tight-knit groups can enforce rigid normative pressures that punish innovation or deviation; and (4) downward leveling norms—especially prevalent in disadvantaged groups, norms may discourage individuals from surpassing group standards, perpetuating generational disadvantage.

Numerous examples illustrate exclusionary dynamics. Portes (1998) and Waldinger (1995) note how ethnic or religious communities and professional guilds can monopolize resources through dense social capital, systematically excluding outsiders. Similarly, Putnam (2000) highlights how intense bonding within communities can lead to harmful sectarianism and ethnocentrism, intensifying societal polarization. Normative pressure within strong communities may uphold social order but also severely restrict individual freedom, stifling innovation and personal initiative (Nee & Nee, 1986; Geertz, 1972).

The most striking examples occur in contexts where bonding social capital facilitates organized crime. Mafia families and street gangs exemplify intense internal loyalty and trust, which facilitate organized criminal activities (Putnam et al., 1994). Such groups leverage strong in-group solidarity to conduct illicit operations effectively, making betrayal difficult and severely punished. These dynamics illustrate Portes' (1998) assertion that identical social ties can serve both public goods and harms.

Loïc Wacquant (1998) critically views social capital in disadvantaged contexts, describing "negative social capital" arising from structural marginalization, limited opportunities, and institutional abandonment in impoverished urban areas. Strong internal networks in such settings offer temporary support but ultimately isolate residents from broader societal opportunities and protections, perpetuating poverty and crime cycles.

Despite these risks, the literature broadly concurs that social capital's "good" or "bad" outcomes depend heavily on its application and context. Portes (1998) emphasizes the inherent duality of social ties, suggesting that normative pressure and strong attachments can either support conventional norms or facilitate antisocial behaviors, including organized crime or radicalization (Agnew, 2014). Thus, bonding social capital functions both as a protective shield and, when misused, as a dangerous instrument.

3. Methodology

The primary research question of this study is, "How is bonding social capital conceptualized in criminology theses, and in what ways is its relationship to criminal behaviors articulated?" This question aims to illuminate the relationship between bonding social capital and criminal behaviors

by examining theoretical approaches, methodological practices, and thematic trends found in theses.

The secondary research question is articulated as follows: "What thematic and methodological variations are observed across different periods, geographic regions, and institutional contexts regarding the relationship between bonding social capital and criminal behaviors?" This question supports comparative analyses based on the years of publication, authors, universities, and faculties, thereby detailing similarities and differences across contexts.

3.1. Method

The theses analyzed in this study consist of 101 master's and doctoral dissertations published in the ProQuest database between 2016 and 2024, focusing explicitly on the relationship between bonding social capital and crime within criminology.

Based on detailed analyses of thesis titles and content, the studies in the sample were categorized into specific thematic groups. Forty percent of the analyzed theses were classified under family, parenting, and relational dynamics. These studies explore family structures, parent-child relationships, sibling interactions, parenting styles, and intra-family bonds in relation to criminal behaviors. Topics such as the role of parent and sibling relationships in delinquency, parental experiences within the criminal justice system, and the impact of domestic violence on children's future criminal tendencies were thoroughly examined within this thematic category. The second category, comprising 25% of the studies, focuses on peer influences and social network effects. These theses address peer influence, social support mechanisms, group interactions, and the effects of friendship circles on criminal behaviors, comparing positive and negative peer interactions and examining the role of social networks in crime emergence. The third category, constituting 20%, examines institutional structures, police-community relations, and criminal behaviors, analyzing the criminal justice system, police-offender interactions, social control mechanisms, prison practices, and their role in crime. Examples include studies on police-offender relations, prison rehabilitation processes, and the impact of deficiencies in the justice system on crime rates. Finally, 15% of theses address less commonly represented or interdisciplinary themes, including economic, cultural, digital dimensions of crime, and radicalization. These studies systematically analyze topics such as social media and radicalization, economic factors influencing crime, and gender roles related to criminal activities.

Regarding the distribution by publication period, a notable concentration of theses focused on family relationships, peer influences, and early criminality during 2016–2017. Conversely, from 2020 onwards, an increase was observed in studies focusing on the criminal justice system, institutional impacts, and digitalization's effects on criminal behaviors. This temporal distribution highlights the evolution of academic interest and methodological and theoretical shifts over time.

Institutional analysis revealed that 75% of the theses originated from U.S.-based universities, including prominent institutions such as Auburn University, University of California, Indiana University, and Florida State University. The remaining 30% were from Canada, the United Kingdom, Europe, Africa (e.g., University of Pretoria, University of Johannesburg), and certain Asian countries.

Geographically, the concept of bonding social capital demonstrates universal relevance. Theses outside the U.S. originated from Canada, Europe, Africa, and Asia, reflecting diverse cultural and geographic contexts and methodological variations in addressing the subject.

3.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through a scanning form comprising keywords related to bonding social capital from Putnam's perspective. The form was meticulously designed to comprehensively measure participants' social environments, behavioral patterns, social norms, and perceptions of criminal behaviors.

The form includes core concepts such as "trust," "reciprocity," "social cohesion," and "norms," along with essential components of social capital like social network structures, group loyalty, emotional support, interpersonal relationships, exclusion of outsiders, norm enforcement, local interaction, and criminal behaviors.

3.3. Analysis Process

Analyses were conducted using Python programming language, with quantitative analyses encompassing text extraction, metadata collection, keyword frequency, and concept analysis, and qualitative analyses involving thematic coding. Quantitative data supported qualitative analyses.

Text extraction and metadata collection were performed using the PyMuPDF (fitz) library to extract initial pages of PDF documents, retrieving thesis titles, author names, and institutional

information. Metadata were organized and stored in Excel format using openpyxl. Regular expressions were employed to search for keywords (e.g., "title," "author," "university") within texts, ensuring sanitized data for analysis.

Keyword frequency and concept analysis involved identifying occurrences of key concepts (e.g., Trust, Reciprocity, Social Cohesion) and synonymous terms within theses using PyPDF2 and re modules, with results documented in Excel via pandas DataFrame.

For qualitative content analysis and thematic coding, relevant sentences and contexts involving bonding social capital and criminal behaviors were extracted using PyMuPDF. Sentences were grouped contextually, with regular expressions identifying keyword occurrences for thematic analysis. This multilayered approach allowed comprehensive exploration of conceptual and methodological dimensions.

3.4. Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability were ensured through three core strategies. First, content validity was secured by developing the coding schema and conceptual framework based on Putnam's definitions, guided by existing literature and expert opinions. Metadata and keyword definitions were similarly grounded in referenced literature.

Second, analysis reliability was maintained using Python-based automated data extraction and analytical codes, minimizing human error. Random manual checks validated automated processes. Furthermore, triangulation of quantitative and qualitative analyses enhanced robustness.

Lastly, repeatability was assured by documenting data collection and analysis processes comprehensively, employing Python codes to guarantee full replicability. Exception handling and data sanitization techniques were integrated to maintain data consistency and reliability.

4. Findings

The analyzed theses extensively explored relationships between social capital and criminal behaviors through detailed keyword frequency analyses of trust, reciprocity, social cohesion, network structures, emotional support, interpersonal relations, and local interactions. The frequency analyses demonstrated that while broader concepts like trust were frequently discussed, specific sub-concepts such as mutual trust were less emphasized. Similarly, the distributions of

reciprocity and social cohesion terms indicated general usage but less attention to specific sub-components. High usage frequencies of terms related to emotional support and local interactions highlighted the dynamic nature of social capital and the importance of community interactions. The diversity in terminology related to criminal behaviors indicated the multidimensional theoretical and practical approaches applied in the theses.

Figure 1: Word cloud

The analyzed theses extensively explored relationships between social capital and criminal behaviors through detailed keyword frequency analyses. Terms related to trust were highly prevalent, with "trust" appearing 943 times, alongside significant frequencies for core trust components such as "confidence" (531), "reliability" (338), and "belief" (394). However, other trust-related terms like "assurance" (44) and "dependability" (142) were less common, and "mutual trust" appeared only 14 times, while "shared trust" was absent altogether. This suggests a dominant emphasis on general trust in the literature, with limited exploration of mutual trust.

Reciprocity and Social Cohesion: In terms of reciprocity, terms like "reciprocity" (84), "mutuality" (54), and "exchange" (200) were moderately represented, whereas more specific concepts such as "mutual exchange," "quid pro quo," and "give-and-take" were not found. Regarding social cohesion, "inclusion" (627) emerged prominently, while "social cohesion" (62), "cohesion" (161), "unity" (71), and "solidarity" (216) were also extensively discussed. "Integration" (287) represented another key dimension of social cohesion, whereas terms like "community cohesion" (2), "social integration" (23), and "collective identity" (12) had significantly lower frequencies.

Norms and Social Control: The term "norms" appeared 1434 times, underscoring the centrality of normative frameworks in the literature. However, related terms such as "shared norms" (2), "common standards" (2), "shared values" (28), and "collective norms" (2) had minimal representation. "Social expectations" (32) and "social norms" (140) were moderately discussed. "Social control" (585) was notably frequent, indicating a significant focus on discussions around norms and their enforcement, though other specific terms related to norm enforcement were nearly absent.

Emotional Support and Relationships: Emotional support was significantly represented by "care," with an extraordinarily high frequency of 4760, highlighting its crucial role in bonding social capital frameworks. Other terms like "emotional support" (359), "empathy" (341), "encouragement" (256), and "compassion" (193) appeared moderately, whereas terms such as "emotional backing," "group solidarity," and "collective support" were rarely mentioned. "Relationships" was notably frequent at 8048 mentions, emphasizing its role as a fundamental building block of social capital. Terms such as "social ties" (103) and "interpersonal relationships" (94) were moderately discussed, while "interpersonal connections" (4) and "personal connections" (2) had limited usage.

Peer Solidarity and Cooperation: Terms related to peer solidarity and cooperation like "mutual aid" (110) and "cooperation" (233) were moderately represented, whereas specific terms such as "helping hand" (6) and "mutual assistance" (2) appeared infrequently, suggesting general concepts of cooperation and aid were discussed more than their specific applications.

Social Exclusion and Norm Enforcement: Terms related to social exclusion such as "marginalization" (100) and "segregation" (383) were notably present, highlighting concerns of exclusion and discrimination. Conversely, terms like "gatekeeping" (40) and "exclusivity" (12)

appeared less frequently. Apart from the term "enforcing norms" (2), other specific norm enforcement terms were absent.

Crime and Criminal Behaviors: Keywords related to crime appeared extensively, with "crime" (15272), "criminal" (10802), "delinquency" (8831), "violence" (9796), and "justice" (10185) being the most prominent. Terms such as "gang" (5146), "policing" (909), "law enforcement" (1287), and "criminal justice" (4141) were significantly discussed, underscoring the importance of criminal behaviors and justice mechanisms within studies examining the relationship between bonding social capital and crime.

Overall Evaluation: These frequency data indicate that the theses predominantly discuss bonding social capital through fundamental concepts such as "trust," "norms," and "relationships." The prominence of terms like "care" and "relationships" highlights their critical roles in interpersonal interactions and support mechanisms within social capital frameworks. Conversely, the near absence of specific terms such as "shared trust" and "mutual exchange" suggests these elements were less detailed within broader conceptualizations. The high frequency of terms related to criminal behaviors underscores their central significance in both theoretical and practical discussions. These findings suggest future research should explore specific dimensions of social capital more comprehensively (Figure 1).
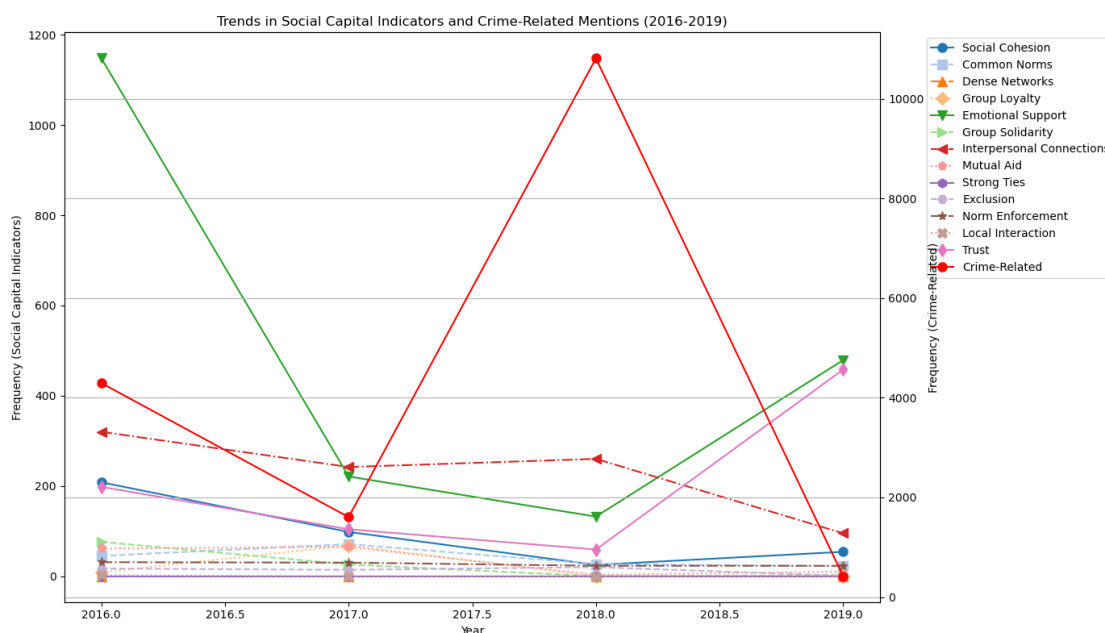

Figure 2: Themes in Theses Among Years

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4.1. Thematic Analysis

This analysis presents a comprehensive examination of bonding social capital as discussed in theses across family relationships, peer groups, gang dynamics, school environments,

neighborhood levels, and prison rehabilitation processes, including practical intervention recommendations and policy approaches.

Bonding social capital is predominantly examined through family bonds and parent-child interactions. Numerous studies, guided by Hirschi's social bond theory and similar theoretical frameworks, highlight that warm, consistent, and trust-based parent-child relationships significantly reduce youths' risk of criminal behavior. High supervision, cooperation, and emotional support in two-parent families facilitate prosocial behaviors, creating a protective barrier against crime. Conversely, weakened bonding social capital in single-parent or conflict-ridden families can expose children to environmental risks such as gangs or radical subcultures. Theses focusing on maternal incarceration and absent fathers emphasize the critical role of parental figures in children's emotional development and internalization of social norms. These findings advocate for parent training, family counseling, therapy programs, and prison-based parenting supports to strengthen familial bonds, demonstrating practical applications of bonding social capital to prevent criminal behavior.

Theses addressing peer groups and gang dynamics thoroughly explore the dual impacts of bonding social capital. Strong loyalty, solidarity, and shared identity within gangs create intense internal cohesion, yet these relationships often legitimize antisocial norms, violence, and crime. While close ties within gangs foster internal solidarity, they simultaneously reinforce norms that conflict with broader society. Conversely, other theses highlight peer mentorship and support groups as crucial mechanisms for facilitating individual rehabilitation and societal reintegration. Positive peer support groups foster trust and solidarity among prisoners or socially marginalized individuals, aiding crime desistance processes. Combatting gangs involves creating positive alternative groups (based on sports, arts, vocational training), adopting restorative approaches, and collaborating with peer leaders to transform negative bonding mechanisms (Figure 3).
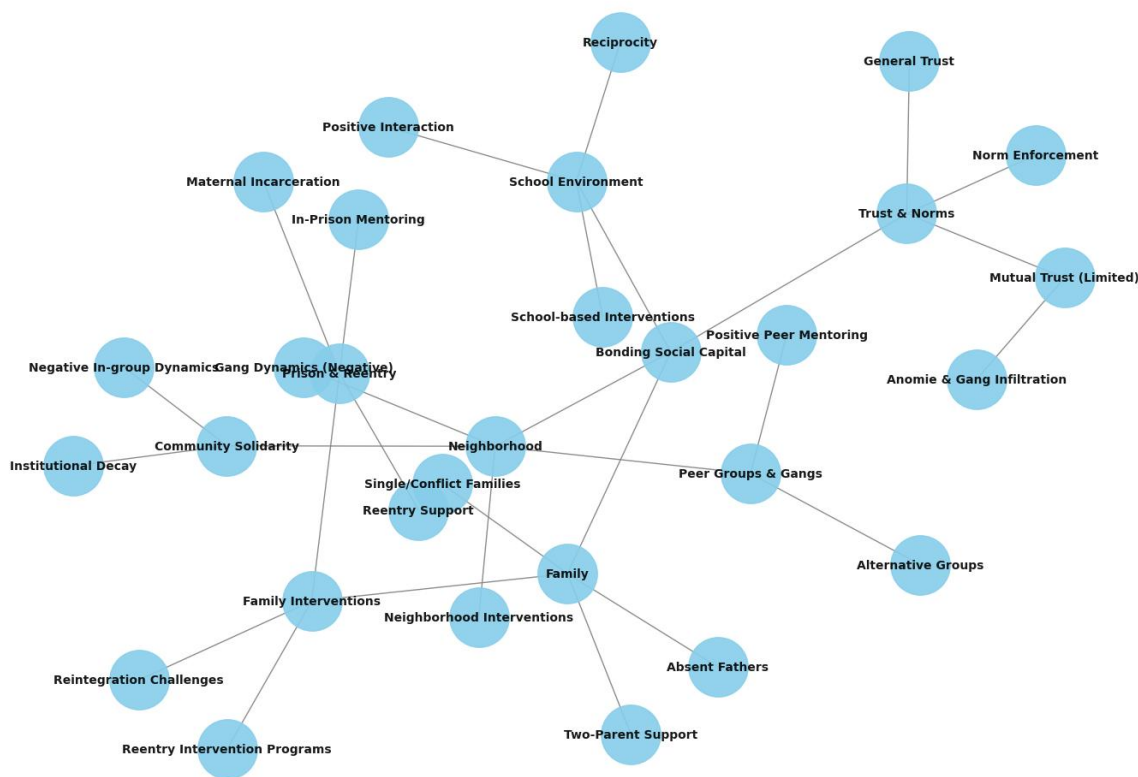
Figure 3: Theme map

The school environment represents another critical area where various dimensions of bonding social capital are examined. Thesis research has established that the school climate and student interactions play a pivotal role in shaping youths' propensities toward crime and bullying. Positive interactions among students, such as emotional support, solidarity, and peer mediation, strengthen bonding social capital, thereby contributing to a reduction in negative behaviors like bullying and aggression. However, some theses highlight that "in-group" dynamics formed by popular student groups within schools can reinforce prejudice and hate speech, leading to negative manifestations of bonding social capital. This situation underscores the importance and necessity of school-based intervention strategies—academic and social support programs, peer mentoring systems, restorative disciplinary practices, and inclusive school policies.

Analyses conducted at the neighborhood and community levels reveal how bonding social capital interacts with macro-level factors such as economic poverty, disadvantaged living conditions, and social disorganization. Theses frequently note that in disadvantaged neighborhoods, the erosion of

traditional institutions (e.g., schools, community centers, employment opportunities) often leads to norm breakdown, increased anomie, and individuals gravitating toward alternative, often gang-like, subcultures. Conversely, the same studies demonstrate that robust neighborhood relations, local volunteer organizations, and civil society initiatives can strengthen structures based on mutual aid, consequently reducing crime rates. In this context, reinforcing social services, supporting local initiatives, and collective projects are recommended as crucial policy strategies for building positive bonding social capital in disadvantaged areas.

Prison and post-incarceration rehabilitation processes are also critical arenas for discussing bonding social capital. Theses repeatedly emphasize that peer mentoring and support groups within prisons facilitate inmates' detachment from crime, aiding their adaptation to new social norms and significantly supporting reintegration into society. In the reentry phase, factors such as family support, employment opportunities, housing availability, and regular social service follow-up are identified as vital for reestablishing social bonds, critically influencing crime reduction. Expanding post-release mentoring programs, enhancing coordination between governmental and non-governmental organizations, and integrating holistic rehabilitation approaches are among the primary recommended strategies to maximize the positive functions of bonding social capital.

Trust, reciprocity, and norm enforcement stand out as foundational elements of bonding social capital across all these contexts. Theses highlight trust as a central component in relationships ranging from family and peer groups to gangs, neighborhoods, and even enclosed spaces like prisons. High-trust environments facilitate adherence to social norms, whereas low-trust situations reinforce negative norms and exacerbate social divisions. Similarly, reciprocity and solidarity rapidly develop among disadvantaged groups; however, theses note these relationships can yield negative outcomes if not supported by healthy boundaries and normative regulations. This observation illustrates the dual nature of bonding social capital as both protective and risk-enhancing, necessitating careful evaluation of both aspects.

The thematic analysis of theses comprehensively illustrates the multilayered structure of bonding social capital and its dual effects on criminal behaviors. Trust and support in family relations, loyalty within peer groups and gang dynamics, positive interactions in school environments, norm breakdown in disadvantaged neighborhoods, local solidarity networks, and post-incarceration reintegration processes demonstrate bonding social capital's potential both to prevent and foster

criminal behavior. This thematic analysis also extensively outlines policy and intervention recommendations, including family support programs, peer mentoring systems, school-based interventions, community-level solidarity projects, and holistic post-incarceration rehabilitation models, as primary strategies to enhance positive bonding social capital and minimize its negative impacts.

Beyond reflecting existing literature, this study also identifies potential new directions for future research. Conducting in-depth fieldwork on the impacts of factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, immigration status on bonding social capital; the implications of digital peer groups and online communities on criminal behavior; and how economic factors, particularly income and employment policies, shape local bonding levels will facilitate the development of novel theoretical and practical approaches. Comprehensive intervention strategies that provide concrete guidance for academia, policymakers, and practitioners are crucial for better understanding the relationship between social capital and criminal behaviors and devising effective solutions.

Conclusion and Discussion

This research has extensively conceptualized the reciprocal relationship between bonding social capital and criminal behavior through Robert Putnam's social capital theory. Putnam (2000) describes bonding social capital as "inward-looking networks that reinforce homogeneity and exclusionary identities," contrasting with bridging social capital, which consists of "outward-looking connections linking diverse individuals." The 101 theses examined affirm this dual theoretical framework. Strong family and kinship ties, intense friendships, and closed community affiliations serve to mitigate criminal behaviors through intra-group solidarity and mutual oversight mechanisms. Conversely, the results highlight bonding social capital as a potential "double-edged sword," capable of promoting criminal behaviors when excessively concentrated and exclusionary, fostering blind conformity to in-group norms and distrust toward outsiders. This situation aligns with Putnam's theory, indicating that intensely inward-oriented capital can engender cliquishness, nepotism, or violent values rather than societal benefits.

The synthesized results indicate that crime rates increase when bonding social capital dominates and bridging capital is insufficient. This finding underscores that bonding capital's dual criminal-reducing and criminal-enhancing effects are contextually determined. Thus, our theoretical contribution reinterprets Putnam's conceptualization within criminology, synthesizing the

conditional and bidirectional impacts of bonding social capital. These findings align with literature highlighting social capital's "dark side," illustrating that excessive bonding capital can lead to negative outcomes like ghettoization, gang formation, or extreme group loyalty.

Methodologically, thematically, and geographically, this study provides significant and original contributions to the literature by integrating diverse research methodologies, thematic depth, and extensive geographic comparisons. This comprehensive approach fills existing gaps in the literature, offering nuanced, context-sensitive conclusions about the relationship between bonding social capital and crime.

Ultimately, the results confirm the central role social capital plays in crime dynamics: the quality of social bonds can be one of the strongest protective factors against criminal involvement or, if misdirected, serve as a catalyst for crime. Hence, balanced and inclusive development of bonding social capital remains crucial for building safer and more cohesive societies.

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