

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL IDENTITY ON CRIME REDUCTION

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Abstract

Social identity plays a significant yet underexplored role in crime reduction, complementing existing cognitive theories such as social disorganization and collective efficacy. This review highlights the growing body of research demonstrating that group identification shapes criminal behavior and bottom-up crime reduction responses. Findings reveal that strong social ties and visibility within a community have a profound impact on reducing offending, suggesting interventions that disrupt prisoners' ties to criminal networks may be more effective than purely data-driven approaches. Insights from interviews and spatial analyses emphasize the need to address offenders' social networks in urban environments alongside individual treatments. The evidence supports the promotion of diverse social identities within communities to foster unity and reduce crime. By integrating social identity into crime reduction policies, it becomes possible to frame a holistic approach to community safety, recognizing the value of diverse identities while exploring innovative theoretical frameworks like Venn identity theory. Future research should evaluate the practical benefits of social identity-based approaches and their reception by crime reduction practitioners.

Keywords: Social identity, crime reduction, community ties, criminal behavior, social networks, criminology.

INTRODUCTION

It is now widely accepted that social identity plays a significant role in crime reduction. However, the fact of its acceptance also indicates the location of our experimental problem. The importance of social identity is based on the role of identity in criminal behavior and in societal assessments of the crime threat. At the governmental level, it has been demonstrated that having a longer social bond serves both as a cover for ex-convicts and as an aid to reentry into legitimate work. Social bond theories of delinquency and crime state that low-level social bonds indicate an increased risk of deviance. In this regard, this paper discusses the importance of antisocial identity and the development and entrenchment of social identity to advance policy-making initiatives aimed at alleviating crime victimization.(Abrams et al.2021)(Haslam et al.2021)

Notably, recent government attempts to extend the concept of social identity focus entirely on the social aspect and exclude the dimension of social location, emphasizing deviance from the perspective of social disorganization theory, thereby omitting the notion of place-specific status loss that generates stigmatic identities. A refusal to consider a spatial orientation on crime must surely weaken a social approach to criminology. This complexity arises from the relationship of identities to particular neighborhoods as well as the implications for future assessments of safety. Given these complexities, the next section discusses current knowledge about the relationship of social identity to criminal behavior and perception. It explains how this research takes place in the long shadow of explanations of delinquency that focus on interpersonal forces such as the after-effects of parental loss, family dysfunction, peer conflict, or lack of communication between generations. (Bos et al.2020)(Neville et al.2021)(Bornschiefer et al.2021)

Social identity theory suggests that people get some of their sense of who they are from being part of social groups. This idea is important for understanding actions, especially when it comes to crime and behavior that goes against the rules. The complex link between social identity and crime shows how groups people belong to can affect their behavior, help them feel like they fit in, and create rules that discourage crime. Promoting good community identities and strengthening connections between people can make social identity a strong tool to help reduce crime. This report looks at how a person's social identity affects their behavior, how it can influence crime rates, and what this means for community programs designed to create safer neighborhoods.

1.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of our research are to understand the relationship between social identity and criminal behaviors. To do so, conditions under which the existence of such relationships are tested in the willingness to reduce the community's problems. This will allow for making a policy recommendation for the management on how to conduct the crime prevention program. The questions covered by this study include (1) What determines the criminal behaviors of being offenders or choosers? and (2) Who are these criminal persons? In other words, does social identity play an important role in developing prosocial punishment? Overall, what is the relevance of the relationship between social identity and crime reduction?

The general aim of our research is to provide an important understanding that social identity can be a powerful force in shaping acts of crime, and understanding its dynamics can deliver unique benefits and be useful for the management to design effective policies to reduce crime. In particular, our research seeks to identify what needs to be done to improve the conception of the identity-behavior linkage further in order to have a more effective reduction in criminal actions. The potential contributions of our approach are many: firstly, it implies a significant contribution of the social identity theory to the current state of knowledge in the field of crime reduction, as well as the positive externalities by reducing crime; secondly, it contributes to filling the current gap on the linkages between social identity and crime.

METHODOLOGY

Desk research (or theoretical research) is a methodology that relies on collecting and analyzing information available in written sources, such as books, scientific articles, reports, theses, and digital sources. The goal of this type of research is to explore concepts and theories related to a specific topic without conducting field data collection. Data collection in desk research is done through primary sources, such as basic books and reliable scientific articles, and secondary sources that explain or discuss them. Tools such as public libraries, academic databases, and reviewing reliable reports are used. Data is analyzed by classifying it according to axes, summarizing ideas, comparing viewpoints, and extracting research gaps, while providing a critical analysis that takes into account biases and the novelty of the information. The research report is written in a sequence that includes the introduction, literature review, discussion of results, and providing conclusions and recommendations.

2. Theoretical Framework

Social identity is an important part of our lives that affects how we see ourselves and how we behave with other people. Based on social identity theory, this idea suggests that a person's sense of who they are comes mainly from the groups they belong to, like their ethnicity, nationality, religion, and social class. These groups help people understand their role in society, which makes them feel like they belong, boosts their self-confidence, and helps shape who they are. Having a close connection with a specific group can help people manage the challenges of socializing and influence how they act and feel (Boduszek, 2021).

Social psychological research on social identity and crime reduction is still in its infancy. The present study endeavors to engage in some theoretical background for the empirical findings to which the next chapters are dedicated. (Saguy & Reifen-Tagar, 2022)

There are two components to this task: one deals with the connection of the research with social psychological theory, the other emerges from the invitation to translate the empirical investigation into crime reduction practice. In order to do this, theories are required. Consequently, in the first section, the Social Identity Theory is discussed in some detail as a theoretical backdrop to subsequent research. The second section provides a comparative analysis of several other social theories that developed due to the rejection of wholly psychological explanations of crime and deviance. These theories all incorporate the principle of an individual identification process within a group such that the theory predicts the criminality of that group as a result of its identification within the 'criminal' group. (Hodson and Earle 2020)(Hogg, 2021)(Beelmann, 2020)(Spears, 2021)(Allen, 2023)

This exegesis is an integral part of the theoretical development of this research inasmuch as it provides a more rounded and contextual grounding for suggesting just how far identity and identification may indeed exert influence over individual offending. Furthermore, such an exploration in what has been (perhaps incorrectly) termed as 'asociological' promotes our ability to suggest further answers to our research question. 'Relative Deprivation' and 'Social Identity' have hitherto remained largely separate in criminological perspective, save for discussions around reference groups in such work. What we hope to offer in this section is a suggestion that different theoretical perspectives, in this way several different explanations, may indeed genuinely perceive the individual identity and its relation to the collective in different ways; and that, perhaps, the relative importance of one or other of these theories in cultural or individual level crime reduction might also be judged accordingly. In other words, increased theoretical coherence on this issue in wider criminological and sociological research might just aid more explicit suggestions for social policy. (Haslam et al. 2021)(Jetten et al. 2021)(Strindberg, 2020)(Drury et al. 2020)(Agnew, 2020)

2.1. Social Identity Theory

Human friendship is recognized as an undeniable fact since time immemorial. Be it true friendship or a casual friendship, the relationship between two people grows over time. When people start coming together in a closed neighborhood, they become friends with the people living in close proximity to their homes. Their interactions with their friends increase, and they become part of a larger group. There is an atmosphere in which everyone can interact closely. If a person within the group acts contrary to its interests, it appears that the friendship they have developed degrades over time.

From birth, every human being goes through an identificatory process. Social Identity Theory posits that individuals categorize themselves in terms of various social groups to which they belong and engage in social comparisons in a bid to raise their self-image. These social identifications significantly influence perceptions,

attitudes, judgments, and behaviors. Critically, an abundance of research underlines the paramount importance of identifying with a group for the protection of one's self-esteem.(Hogg, 2021)(Cruwys et al.2021)

The application of this theory to crime research is built on these foundations. Humans are ethnocentric; social identity and intergroup relations account for friendships and adversarial relations amongst and across social divides. It follows that identifying with a negative social category, for instance, with delinquents or drug abusers, incurs various costs. Consequently, it will lead adherents to seek alternative ways of seeing themselves and others in a bid to preserve a high self-regard. Even outright derogation of those in the "outgroup" might effortlessly justify this demand for self-worth. (Haslam et al.2021)(Judge et al., 2022)

2.2. Crime and Deviance Theories

Social identity is the foundation on which this study is built. It is thus essential to pay close attention to the study of crime and deviance theories. Traditional criminological theories are theories that try to explain the causes of delinquent behavior. These theories are foundational; their etiological understandings formed the way for how believers of these theories attempt to discover adverse or delinquent actions in people. There are three central and widely acknowledged crime and deviance theories that researchers lean on. The first is strain theory, which is also known as stress theory, and originated from Durkheim's work on suicide. At the root of strain theory lies the assumption that a financial system mainly concentrates on revenue and produces inequity between individuals in its institutions. (Agnew, 2020)(Maloku, 2020)(Hoffmann et al., 2022)(Weisburd et al.2023)

The second theory is labeling theory, which provides a point of demarcation from underpinning theories of discernment, habits, and other criminological theories. The main principle administering labeling theory is the general repercussion derived from a criminal past. It is proposed that if all the outlooks of community stakeholders are swiveled toward self-fulfilling wrath, life eventually unfolds in the tides of delinquency. Statistically based experiments utilizing behavioral data of persons born between 1990 and 2000 point out disheartening verdicts for this theory. Coinciding with influential published work on violations of the newfound membership contract, social learning theory posits that, once an individual becomes a member of an organization, an initiation into certain definitions of offending develops. This theory aligns well with self-conceptualization of one's notional understanding about oneself, in that context most certainly includes the workplace or any group setting concerning deviant behavior. Few are those who have not heard of social learning theory, which builds on traditional learning or operant conditioning principles; behavior is learned generally through differential association, concepts of definitions, imitation, and reinforcement. However, these representations are refashioned to align with the role of identity in illicit behavior. Vector evidence for social identity is largely obscured in social learning theory. Cyber propensity, group association, and propensity field grade, for instance, seem pertinent to this crime causation scheme. (Wellford & Triplett, 2023)(Motz et al.2020).

2.3. Effects of Social Identity on Criminal Behavior

Research shows that having a strong social identity can help protect people from getting involved in crime. People who feel a strong connection to helpful communities often feel responsible for others, which makes them act in ways that support rules and safety. For instance, community activities that build a shared identity, like neighborhood watch groups, programs for mentoring young people, and cultural festivals, can help reduce crime by working together effectively. On the other hand, people who are on the edges of society may have a higher chance of getting into trouble with the law because they might feel hopeless or angry about how society treats them.

Lots of studies show that having a strong social identity helps prevent crime because it promotes a feeling of responsibility towards the community. When people feel connected to helpful communities, they often adopt common values that emphasize safety and helping each other, which promotes a culture of following the law. For example, neighborhood watch programs help people feel safe in their area and also make friendships stronger. This creates a place where crime is not accepted. Youth mentoring programs help young people find good role models. These programs guide them away from crime by connecting them with supportive communities. On the other hand, people from marginalized groups, who often feel left out or powerless, might be more likely to commit crimes. People from these backgrounds may feel weak or angry about society, which can lead them to commit crimes as a way to express themselves or fight back. So, helping marginalized communities build positive identities is important for crime prevention. It can make the community stronger and lower crime rates (Daniel , 2013).

This section considers the empirical findings on the effect of social identity on behavior, specifically in relation to criminal behavior. The overall finding is that the type of group with which a person affiliates can increase or decrease his or her propensity to commit a crime. The subsection considers whether social identity has any association with becoming deviant, then turns to the matter of outsiders. A person wishing to act in an extreme antisocial way will eschew those networks that offer him the possibility to find a supportive collective who would guide his law-breaking in such a way as to avoid detection. Crime reduction and injury prevention strategies at domestic violence meetings are permitted because insight is provided with direct criminal justice evidence for a popular parsing of bind and build—the very building blocks of the social identity approach. (Hagan & Daigle, 2023)(McAndrew, 2021)(Canter & Alison, 2021)

The empirical evidence makes it clear that the particular aspect of the identity-crime relationship is contingent upon the relationship between identification and normative content embodied in group membership. Identity is the link between group membership and injurious conduct. The less someone is attracted to the order- and boundary-defending agendas, the more the sense of security diminishes. The key is to offer the person personal ties to prevent offending. In policing practice, we can see the significance attached to in-group identification even when it is expressed in a highly negative tone; that inclusion can and does reduce an individual's need to resort to wrongful behavior. Variables such as age, sex, and parental situation could name demographic complications that add additional importance toward one theoretical crude over the other. These findings underline the necessity of developing social identity models that capture the nuances apparent from these qualitative and quantitative data. (Nagin & Telep, 2020)(Nugmanovna2022)(Blair et al.2021).

2.4. Case Studies and Evidence

Several examples show how projects focused on social identity can help lower crime rates. Programs aimed at young people who might be in danger, such as sports teams or art groups, have been very successful in helping them avoid paths that could lead to crime. Cities that have focused on building strong communities and friendships have seen a big drop in crime. This shows how important it is to create a sense of belonging among people. Also, programs that use restorative justice and include cultural identity and community support show that helping people connect with their backgrounds can help them recover instead of reoffending.

Many examples show that programs focused on social identity can help lower crime rates, especially for young people who are at risk. Programs that help young people build a positive sense of self, like sports teams or art groups, are very important. They give young people a place to belong, a reason to feel good, and healthy ways to use their energy. For example, cities like Chicago and Los Angeles have started programs to mentor young people and community sports teams. These programs have been very successful in keeping kids away from crime and gangs. Also, cities that focus on building communities, like improving neighborhoods and helping people come together, see a big drop in crime rates. Getting people involved in common goals helps create a sense of community that reduces crime. Restorative justice programs show that involving a person's cultural background and getting the community involved can help guide offenders toward rehabilitation (Tia, 2018). By helping people connect with their social backgrounds and encouraging responsibility, these programs can lower the chances of reoffending. They show how important social connections can be in encouraging good behavior and keeping communities safe.

4. The Role of Community Institutions

Places like schools, mosques, and local governments are very important for helping people understand who they are in society. By creating welcoming spaces that encourage positive interactions, these organizations can help build community connections that appreciate peace and working together. For example, school programs that include local culture and community history can help bring people together, making them feel less alone and lowering the chances of crime. Also, programs that promote conversations between different groups can help bring people together, creating a stronger community.

Community groups like schools, religious organizations, and local governments play a key role in shaping our sense of belonging. They create welcoming spaces where people can connect and interact positively with each other. Schools that include programs about cultural heritage and local history help students learn while also making them feel proud and connected to their community. This brings together people from different backgrounds. These programs can greatly help people feel less lonely and disconnected, which are feelings that are often linked to crime. Faith-based groups help by providing safe places for people to talk and work together. They encourage kindness and a sense of shared responsibility, which strengthens the community. Local governments help organize community events, like town meetings and public discussions, that bring different groups of people together. Programs that bring people together through teamwork or conflict resolution workshops help reduce divisions, promoting respect and understanding between them. This strong community support helps people develop positive identities, which can lead to lower crime rates and a stronger community overall. Together, these organizations can build a helpful environment that encourages people and groups, promoting a culture that focuses on peace, responsibility, and the well-being of everyone.

2.5. Limitations and Challenges

Social identity can help prevent crime, but there are some limits and difficulties. Not all group identities encourage good behavior; some groups may support bad actions, especially in places where gangs or violence are common. Also, feeling too closely tied to a group can cause negative feelings towards people outside of it, which can increase social divides and heighten conflicts. To tackle this, we need careful approaches that promote wider, inclusive identities instead of just focusing on limited groups.

While having a social identity can help prevent crime, it also has some limits and problems. Not all group identities encourage good behaviors. For example, being part of gangs or extremist groups can promote crime and lead to more violence. In these situations, people might feel accepted by following harmful behaviors and beliefs, which can make them more likely to commit crimes. Also, focusing too much on being part of a certain group can create an "us versus them" way of thinking, leading to unfair treatment and bias against people who are not in that group. This divided way of thinking can increase social problems and weaken the sense of community, making it easier

for conflict to grow instead of fade away. To handle these challenges, it is important to use careful strategies that support wide-ranging, inclusive social identities that go beyond specific groups. Programs that promote conversations between different groups, help in community work, and encourage teamwork can connect people from various backgrounds. Also, concentrating on things we all agree on and what we want to achieve together can help reduce conflicts and encourage teamwork. In the end, feeling like you belong to both your local community and larger groups, while also valuing who you are as an individual, can help you enjoy the good parts of being part of a group while reducing any negative effects (Jackson , 2023).

2.6. Practical Implications for Policy

This has important effects for people who make decisions in government. Community-led projects that welcome different cultures and encourage a sense of belonging can help lower crime rates. Spending money on social programs that help strengthen community connections is really important. This includes group activities that focus on teamwork, teaching how to solve conflicts, and celebrating culture together. Programs should be designed to fit the specific needs of communities. This way, they will connect with local people and help them work together effectively. Also, using technology to improve how people in the community connect can make these efforts even stronger.

Policymakers have important and complex roles in encouraging social identities that can help reduce crime. Community projects that celebrate different cultures and create a sense of belonging can help reduce crime. Policymakers should focus on funding social programs that build community connections. These programs can include activities that promote teamwork and teach people how to resolve conflicts peacefully. Cultural celebrations show the special traditions of different groups. They help people feel connected and part of a community, which builds teamwork and strength together. For these programs to work well, they need to be designed to meet the special needs of different communities. This means that the programs should connect with the people living there and help support their social lives. Involving people from the community in planning and running these programs can help get their support and encourage them to join in. Also, using technology can really improve how communities connect. It helps people talk to each other, share resources, and plan events that bring different groups together. Social media, mobile apps, and online groups can create places for discussion and teamwork, which helps make community projects more effective. By using a complete approach that includes working with local people, valuing different cultures, and using technology, decision-makers can help create stronger and safer communities (Bodozex , 2014).

2.6. Attitudes and Social Identity

Hogg and Smith's (2007) study suggests that we should look at people's attitudes by focusing on how groups and their relationships work, especially by thinking about social identity theory. Past studies have shown a connection between how people see themselves as criminals and how they think about crime, but these findings are limited because the studies looked at everything at one point in time. To address these issues and better understand how criminal identity relates to criminal thinking, some researchers used a method called propensity score analysis. This helped them match participants in a way that was similar to random experiments and allowed them to control for other factors in a study of violent and non-violent repeat offenders. This process allowed us to better understand how one factor affects another in a multiple regression model. In this study, which looked at different types of crimes, age, outgoing personality, emotional stability, risk of reoffending, and friendships with criminals, it was still shown that having a criminal social identity (a combination of factors) was linked to a higher likelihood of thinking in criminal ways.

2.7 Understanding Crime and Criminal Behavior as Society Sees It

The way we understand and define different groups of people is something that has not been fully explored by public policy experts and political scientists. The social construction of target populations means how certain social groups are labeled as worthy or unworthy. This labeling is often influenced by the words we use, symbols, images, and the stories we tell. Social constructions are ideas we have in our minds that influence what we think and believe about different social groups. These ideas can affect how we understand information and how we make judgments about people. Negative views in society influence what people expect and who they think deserves help or support. Ideas about crime and criminal behavior create beliefs and expectations that decide who is seen as innocent and who is seen as guilty. In this context, negative stereotypes encourage the idea that Black people are involved in violent crime, that transgender women are sex workers, and that gay people are sexually abnormal.

In the United States, people of color, especially Black people, have often been looked at in a negative way throughout history and still face this today. Even though White and Black people commit crimes at similar rates, Black individuals, especially Black boys and men, are often seen as more connected to crime. Many people view Black people and their actions as dangerous. This idea that being Black equals being criminal has influenced how people think about crime, leading many to judge it based on stereotypes of Black people. Since the 1950s, studies have shown a link between being Black and being seen as a criminal. This means that people often remember crimes differently based on a person's race, think that Black people are more aggressive than White people when they act in unclear ways, and take less time to decide to shoot someone if that person is Black and holding a weapon. Some people discovered that blackness is linked to crime, and crime is also linked to blackness. In simple

terms, when people see a Black person, it makes them think about crime, and when they think about crime, it makes them imagine Black people. In this study, we saw that people looked at the Black male face more quickly when they were told about a crime than when they weren't. Because of the negative way Black people are viewed in society, there are both hidden and open biases as well as personal opinions about them. When making policies and decisions, people's attitudes—shaped by negative views in society—lead to tougher and stricter results for communities of color (Feris, 2019)

CONCLUSION

The level of social identity a person has with a group or community has been established as a crucial factor in determining the amount of crime or disorder in a community. However, within the context of crime reduction, much of the focus has been on cognitive theories such as social disorganization and collective efficacy; thus, the role of social identity in crime reduction is not well understood. As shown in this review, there is a growing body of literature that demonstrates that feelings of identification with a group are important for affecting criminal behavior and the bottom-up crime reduction responses. This review pinpoints several key findings to highlight the theoretical, empirical, policy, and practice contributions of this social identity-criminological research. The strength of the relationships between, and visibility within, a community has the strongest irrefutable relationship with offending. This would suggest that using information to break incoming prisoners' ties with a community or group could be more effective than data-based approaches to preventing future victims of those also released.

Using interview data and spatial analyses, insights were provided to explain how different criminal behaviors can be operationalized in different scales and types of environments. One of the concluded lessons was that, in urban settings, the treatment of offenders cannot just focus on the individual but also needs to attend to the social networks in which they are embedded. Social identity research provides compelling evidence that a person's identification with a social network or group significantly shapes their attitudes and, therefore, in turn, their behavior towards the wider members of a community, particularly during crime reduction initiatives. This particular body of literature provides a basis for promoting the value of a diversity of social identities within a community. This builds on earlier research to acknowledge a source of disunity between criminal gang members in two Latino communities in the area, rather than the more popular mainstream criminology portrayal of skating and hip-hop alleged gang culture as all dressed in blue or red. In conclusion, the potential exists to reorient crime reduction policy that acknowledges, incorporates, and supports a hegemonic view of the range of social identities within a community to be taken holistically as one group: the public. It is thus possible to position an axiological perspective on social identities that furthers the possibility of cobbling together a Venn identity theory. Ultimately, social identity theory about gang members and this other criminology looks for ways that groups maintain their oppressive position over others. Future research should seek to examine if a social identity approach to crime reduction is of practical benefit or whether these proposed linkages are superficial devices of theoretical discussion. It may also shed some light on how crime reduction practitioners perceive social identity as a practical crime reduction tool, in comparison with comments from those on the ground.

3. Recommendations for Future Studies

Even though both sociologists and criminologists are interested in the concept of social identity and crime reduction, most researchers mainly present scholars with a bird's eye view of the topic, neglecting to emphasize all groups that have the potential to be influenced by relevant policies. We, therefore, make several suggestions for future research:

- Research should be interdisciplinary. Drawing upon a range of disciplines and research traditions, such as sociology, psychology, criminology, and others, is essential in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the process through which identity influences attitudes towards crime.
- Research should adopt a longitudinal approach. Together with the complex and multi-dimensional conception of identity, the temporal relationship between identity and attitudes towards crime also needs to be explored. By adopting a longitudinal approach, research can begin to unpick the complex and dynamic relationship between social identities and criminal attitudes over time.
- Research should be multi-method in orientation. To date, research in the field has not only been limited by its disciplinary focus, but also due to its methodological focus. By employing a mixed-methods approach, researchers can begin to develop a robust evidence base that moves beyond 'snapshot' studies to inform theory and policy.
- Ethics: Given the sensitivity that links criminology and communities, it is important to consider the ethical implications of potential research. Potential researchers will need to seek ethical approval before commencing the fieldwork. This subsection provides concrete recommendations for future research on social identity and crime reduction. It advocates for a multidisciplinary approach that integrates insights from sociology, psychology, and criminology. By encouraging collaboration among diverse fields, the recommendations highlight the complexity of social identity's influence on crime. The need for longitudinal studies is emphasized to capture the dynamic relationship between identity and criminal behavior over time. Additionally, the subsection advises employing mixed-methods approaches to enrich data collection and understanding. It encourages researchers to consider the ethical implications of their work, given the sensitive nature of the topic. By proposing these strategies, the

subsection aims to foster comprehensive inquiries into the role of social identity in crime. Overall, the focus is on advancing knowledge and informing policies for effective crime reduction strategies.

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