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Presentation title: Criminal career in rural America: An identity network perspective

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With two waves of interview and survey data on identity and social networks possessed by formerly and currently incarcerated people in the United States, we show that criminal identity approached with social network analysis concepts and measures provides needed theoretical and empirical support and innovation to the study of criminal behavior proposed by social learning theory. SNA also bridges the study of crime via criminal identity in the urban and rural America by taking population size into consideration. That is, from a spatial perspective, urban and rural areas, due to their various population sizes, demonstrate different social interaction patterns that impact criminal identity and thus behavior. Gender by race groups (i.e. white male, white female, minority male, and minority female) often resort to crime related with the characteristics of their ego centric networks for similar and different reasons. Gender roles and the marginalization of minority groups are vital to these similarities and differences among the gender by race groups. The poorer and more patriarchal rural areas impose even more on women and minority groups regarding their criminality and contact with the criminal justice system, compared with urban areas. We show evidence that inequality and culture shape ego centric and societal level networks, which leads to crime.