

**The Great Smoky Mountains Study
of Rural Aging (GSMS-RA)**
**A Data Source to Study
Rural America**

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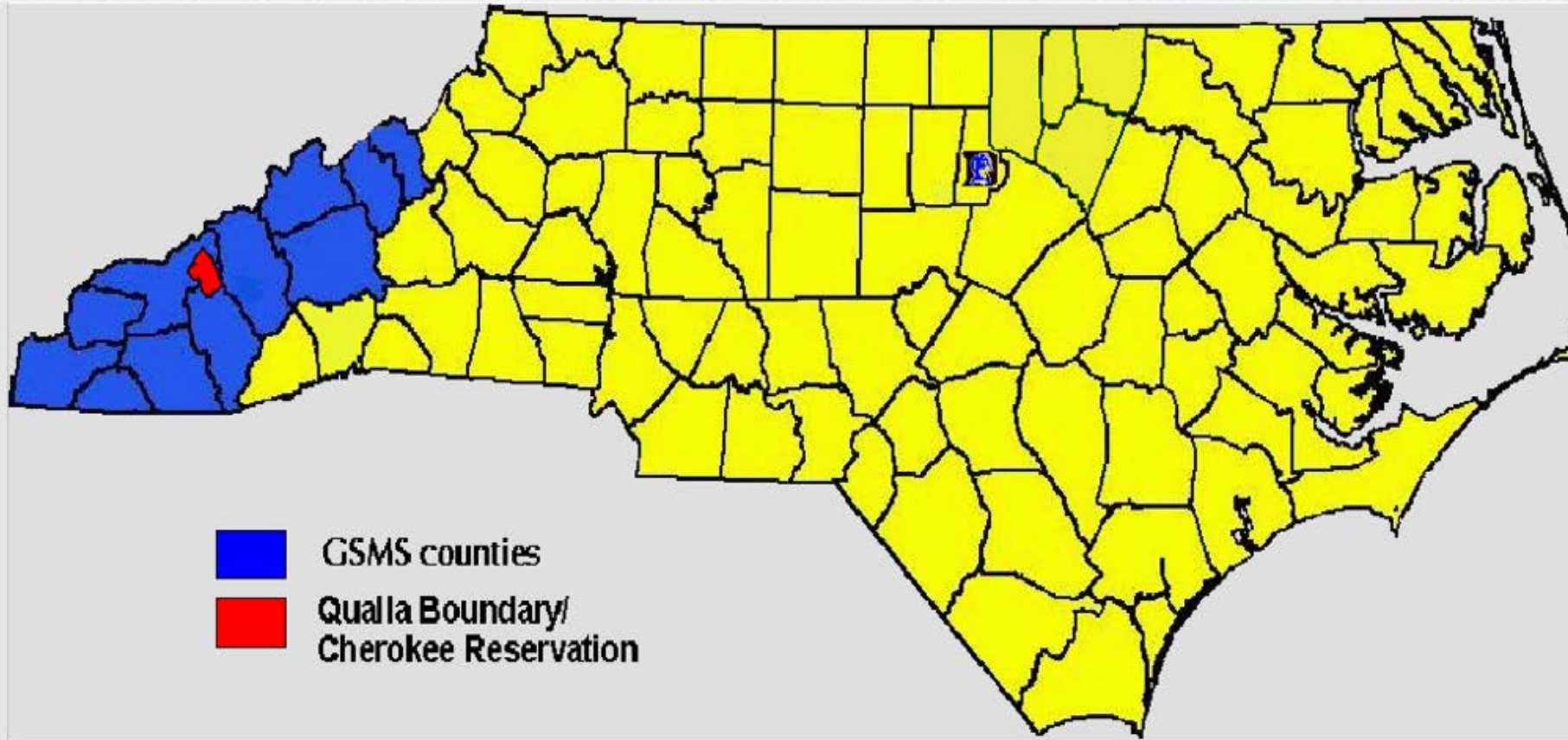
Southeastern Applied Labor Workshop

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- Study began in 1993 with sample of **1,420 children** (ages 9-13), including **350 from Eastern Band Cherokee Indian tribe**.
- Interviewed periodically over 25+ years & **collected measures of health, demographics, labor market activities** (in adulthood) & **family income & wealth** (see list of domains of data collected)

Domains of Data Collected across Waves of GSMS

Individual

History of physical development; BMI
 History of illness and disability
 Health risk behaviors, HIV and AIDS risk
 Pubertal development; early puberty

Peer and other social relations

Relations in school or work
 Relations out of school or work
 Gang membership
 Deviant peer group
 Leadership, rejection, neglect
 Sexual relationships, marriage, parenting

Relations with other adults

Relations with teachers
 Relations with employers
 Relations with other adults

School functioning

School work, attainment

Higher education, work, income

Age at school leaving, graduation
 Higher education
 Work history
 Income, income/need ratio

Experience of trauma and violence

Physical abuse and neglect
 Sexual abuse

Other traumatic events

Delinquency and crime
 Self and parent reports of offending
 Juvenile court records
 Adult criminal records

Other

Guns in home
 Other life events
 Spirituality and religious faith
 Need for MH care
 Use of services for MH problems

Family

Family of origin
 Number and age of other children in home
 Stability of family structure
 Teenage parents

Family of residence

Marital history
 Number and ages of children
 Stability of family structure

Family relations

S's relations with parental figures
 S's relations with siblings
 Relationship of parenting figures to S
 Relations between parenting figures
 Relations with spouse and children

Family resources

Income, sources, and stability

Income, sources, and stability
 Amount of education
 Employment and unemployment
 Health and insurance
 Access and barriers to care
 Family burden

Psychiatric and criminal history

Family history of arrest for crime
 Family history of drug problems
 Family history of psychiatric disorder
 Family history of suicide
 Current maternal depression

Other characteristics of family of origin

Guns in the home
 Spirituality and religious faith
 Attitudes and barriers to use of MH services

School and post-school educational settings

Per-student expenditure
 Ranking on standardized tests
 Official reports of violence
 S's perception of violence

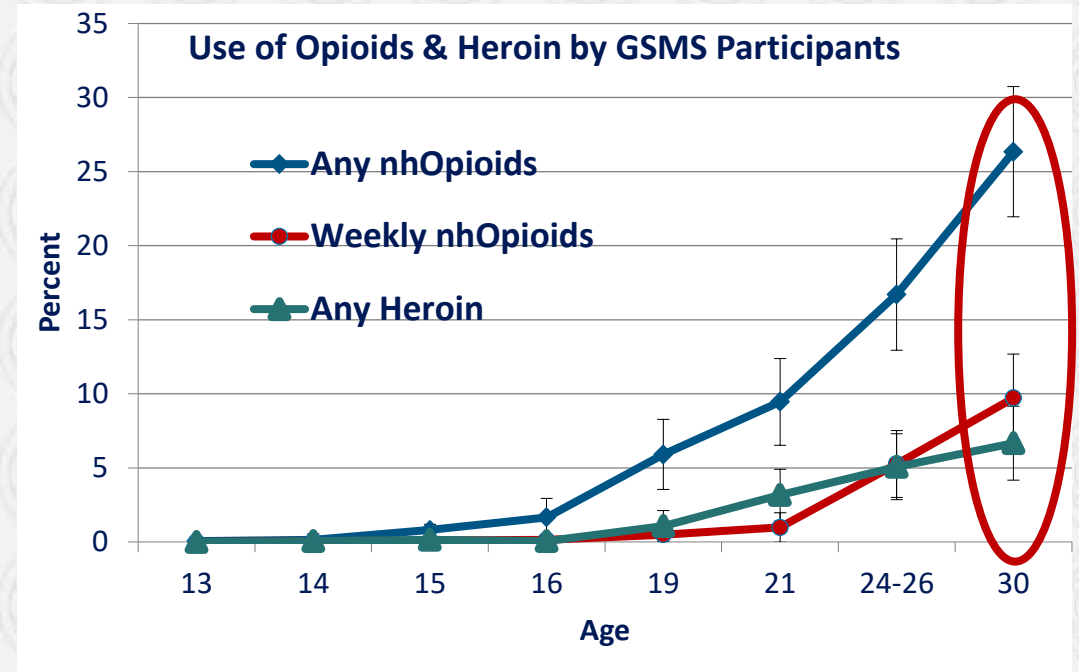
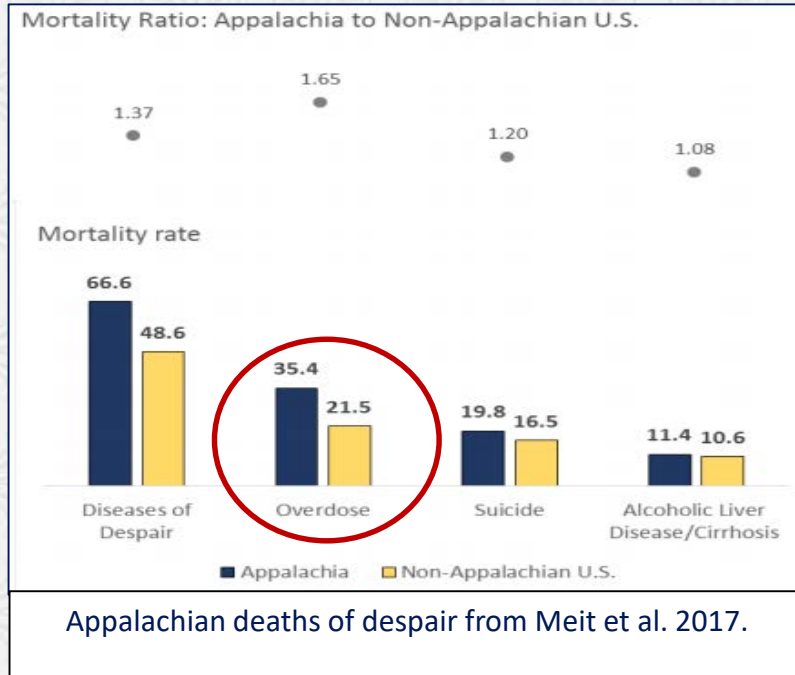
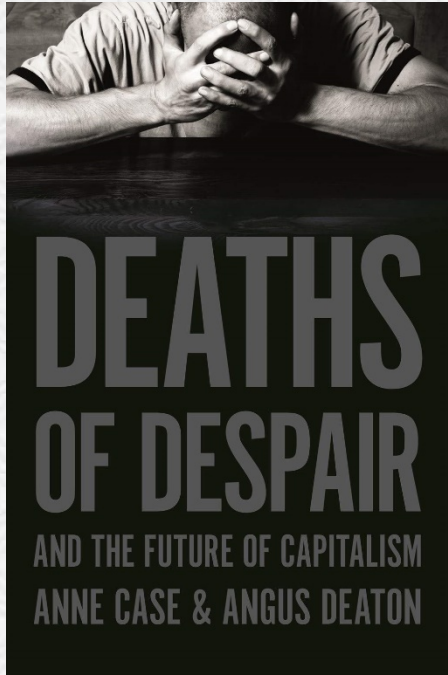
Community characteristics

Number and training of professionals
 S's perception of neighborhood
 Neighborhood crime: Census and FBI data

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- Study began in 1993 with sample of **1,420 children** (ages 9-13) from western North Carolina (see map), including **350 from Eastern Band Cherokee Indian tribe**.
- Interviewed periodically over 25+ years & **collected measures of health, demographics, labor market activities** (in adulthood) & **family income & wealth** (see list of domains of data collected)
- GSMS & GSMS-RA increasingly focused on understanding **life & health in rural America into mid-life**.

Health Concerns for Rural America



Economic Conditions in Rural America

- While employment in U.S. over 2007-2017 grew by 5.6%, it declined by 4.5% in GSMS area.
- In 2018, median household income was 28% lower in GSMS area than for U.S.
- Economic Challenges even greater on Eastern Band Cherokee Indian reservation in GSMS area. Over 2014-2018:
 - Employ/Pop ratio was almost 10 percentage pts. lower than for U.S. (47.7% vs 57.4%)
 - Poverty rate was 6 percentage pts. higher than for U.S. (20.2% vs 14.1%)

Cash Transfer Quasi-Experiment for Cherokee Indians in GSMS



- In 1996, casino(s) opened on reservation, providing each member of Tribe with \$4-\$5K annual unconditional cash transfer, or ~20% increase in HH income.
- **Studies** (published in *AER*, *AEJ-Applied*, etc.) have **examined effects of these increases in “permanent income”** on:
 - **Participants’** obesity, educational attainment, criminality, self-reported lifespan, civic participation, emotional & behavioral health, personality traits
 - Their **parents’** employment, substance abuse, etc.
- **Casinos closed March thru May 2020, but reopened after that**, albeit at limited capacity & in defiance of NC Governor’s order. **Consequences for transfers & impact on health, well-being & local labor market topic for further research!**

New Study: GSMS of Rural Aging (GSMS-RA)

- GSMS-RA a 5-Year study recently funded by National Institute on Aging (NIA).
- PIs: William Copeland (U of Vermont); Kathleen Cagney (UChicago); Kenneth Dodge (Duke) and Joe Hotz (Duke)
- Continued focus on collecting measures of mental, physical & behavioral health, including substance abuse.
- **New objectives** in GSMS-RA:
 - **What are “useful” measures of “despair”?** Which one’s are predictive of substance abuse & other dimensions of health?
 - **What is the analogue of the Gig Economy in rural America** (not Uber!) and what role does informal and unstable work play in health in rural America.
 - **Use measures** (of health, economics, etc.) **in GSMS-RA that are comparable to those in existing national studies** like Add Health, PSID, NLSY, HRS, and other studies.

- **Interest in GSMS-RA & Suggestions for Data Collection?**
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