

***STRAIN, CRIME, AND COVID:
EMERGING FROM THE PANDEMIC
DURING A NEW WAVE OF THE OPIOID
CRISIS***

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TODAY'S TALK

- Two overall goals:
 1. How does the U.S. compare to the rest of the world regarding crime and Covid?
 2. How do stress / strain approaches help highlight priority areas of research need as we emerge from Covid?

HOW THE U.S. COMPARES

- The U.S. initially appeared to be similar to much of the rest of the world^{1,2,3}...
 - ... But things are different now.
- A key difference:
 - Opioids

¹ see Nivette et al., 2021 ² Boman & Gallupe, 2020 ³ Campedelli et al., 2020

OPIOID OVERDOSES

- Between May 1, 2020 and April 30, 2021...
 - The U.S. experienced more than 100,000 overdose deaths in a 12-month span...
 - ... For the first time in American history¹
- About 75% of these deaths are opioid-related¹
 - Opioid overdose deaths are now the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S.^{1,2}

¹ CDC, 2021 ² Hedegaard et al., 2020

OPIOID OVERDOSES

- In addition to the tragedy of these losses, overdoses negatively impact our economy
- Years of life lost (YLL)
 - Lost wages + CJ costs + substance treatment costs + healthcare costs + quality of life lost, etc.¹

¹ see, e.g., Florence et al., 2016

OPIOID OVERDOSES

- Example: A 38-year-old Ohio male loses his life to an opioid overdose
 - Average lifespan¹ (76) – actual age (38) = 38 YLL
 - Calculated economic impact^{2,3} in Ohio across 38 YLL = \$1,245,900 (pre-Covid costs)
 - Overdose deaths are trending younger³
 - Most common age group: 25-34 years old⁴

¹ Arias et al., 2021 ² ODH, 2019 ³ Rembert et al., 2017 ⁴ Florence et al., 2021

OPIOID OVERDOSES

- Aggregated *annual* costs across the country, with non-fatal and fatal overdoses¹
 - Non-fatal: \$471 billion. Fatal: \$550 billion.
 - Summed total: \$1.02 trillion
- These numbers **are from 2017 data**
 - They don't account for recent overdose trends
 - **And they're unadjusted for recent inflation**

¹ Florence et al., 2021

OPIOID OVERDOSES

- Recent findings from my team
 - Opioid pill trends from years ago still have a huge effect on overdose deaths¹, IPV^{2,3}, and homicide³
 - Opioids may trigger IPV-related homicides³
 - Cannabis relaxation policies may reduce the effect of pills on overdose deaths¹
 - Policy ideas need to account for the structural context of where they're meeting people^{2,3,4}

¹ Boman & Confer, under review ² Pryor et al., 2020 ³ Wentzlof et al., 2021

⁴ Boman & Mowen, 2018

STRESSES AND STRAINS

- Strain¹ is an individual-level theory with structural backgrounds
- Its compatibility with individual-level and macro-level concepts makes it valuable to:
 - Develop research and inform policy...
 - ... especially with recent concerns over structural inequality

¹ Agnew, 2006

STRESSES AND STRAINS

- Before and during Covid...
 - ... Opioids most certainly put stress on friendships¹, families², and people more broadly³
 - The relationships of drug users are high in intensity... but also conflict⁴
 - Education is a protective barrier⁵

¹ e.g., Boman & Mowen, 2018 ² e.g., Mowen & Boman, 2018

³ e.g., Florence et al., 2021 ⁴ Boman et al., 2012 ⁵ Pear et al., 2019

MOVING FORWARD

- Where do we go from here?
- A handful of key areas could be addressed comprehensively
 - Opioids could certainly be one of these areas
 - We know lots already, but after Covid...
 - ... A national-level strategy may be warranted

MOVING FORWARD

- Notable trends and future research areas
 - Users leaving jail are **13 times** more likely to overdose¹
 - In response, some states now offer free MAT
 - **How do we improve MAT access and effectiveness for CJ-involved users?**
 - **Rural treatment centers**^{2,3}
 - **Peer support services**^{4,5}

¹ Binswanger et al., 2010 ² Baldwin et al., forthcoming

³ Thomas et al., forthcoming ⁴ McGuire et al., 2020 ⁵ Boman et al., forthcoming

MOVING FORWARD

- Opioids impacted people at the start of Covid in different ways
- With opioids, we know more about structural disadvantage than **people in specific groups**
 - Veterans and service members^{1,2}
 - First responders³

¹ Wilder et al., 2015 ² Baldwin, 2015 ³ Baldwin & Brooke, 2019

MOVING FORWARD

- Projects that **account for micro- and structural-level factors** would be invaluable!
 - To accomplish at a national-level, **better rural data** are needed

Thank you!

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OPIOID OVERDOSES

- While opioid deaths are up, we're less sure as to why
 - The stress with the emotions regarding the pandemic very well could be an explanation
- My team is working on this as we speak
 - *What is causing the spike in opioid overdoses?*
 - *What are the consequences of the opioid crisis?*

OPIOID OVERDOSES

- My team's data
 - Annual panel data at the county-level
 - 2006 onwards
- Data sources:
 - CDC Wonder, NIBRS, DEA, ACS, Census, original data

STRESSES AND STRAINS

- The opioid crisis is probably best understood through micro- and macro-level causes
 - Strain theory can accommodate all factors
- Strain concepts also align with other theories
 - Particularly relationship-based theories
 - Differential association¹ and social learning^{2,3}

¹ Sutherland, 1947 ² Burgess & Akers, 1966 ³ Akers, 2010