The consequences of incarceration have harmful, discriminatory effects far beyond the jail walls, as participants discussed during SAOC’s third panel. “For former inmates, we are talking about the alienation of citizens not only in the voting booth, but also in the labor market,” noted Imani Perry, Princeton Professor with the Center of African American Studies. Depending on the state, a criminal record can prohibit people from accessing public housing or receiving federal student aid or welfare assistance. A parent that has spent 12 months in jail could lose custody of a child. These consequences may be perpetuated within families and communities. “Black males are 6.5 times more likely to be in jail than whites. Vulnerability makes one more vulnerable to prison,” Perry said. “And encounters with law enforcement as a child makes one more likely to go to jail in the future.”
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Increased incarceration rates have been accompanied by increased federal spending. “Spending on incarceration has increased by 5.150% since the War on Drugs,” said Jessica Colon MPA ’07, Deputy Project Director of the Red Hook Community Justice Center in Southwest Brooklyn. “The War on Drugs continues the centuries-long oppression of black, brown and poor populations. We are taking people during their most productive years, and when they get out, we’re just saying that folks deserve to have lost additional rights…Even people who have been convicted of voting fraud don’t lose their voting rights,” said Colon.

The Red Hook Community Justice Center is the nation’s first multi-jurisdictional community court, and looks to resolve neighborhood problems like drugs, crime and domestic violence. One of Colon’s responsibilities at the Center is the management of its AmeriCorps service program, which engages community members in cleaning up the area.

With the War on Drugs having exponentially increased incarceration rates, numerous other efforts have been devoted to the re-integration of former inmates into society. “Ten years ago if you Googled ‘re-entry,’ you’d come up with hits about the space shuttle coming back to Earth,” said Kara Gotsch, Director of Advocacy for The Sentencing Project. Now that there are 700,000 people leaving prison every year, ‘re-entry’ has taken on a different significance.” In his 2004 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush pledged $362 million for re-entry programs.

The “Second Chance Act” was signed into law in 2007 with widespread bipartisan support but, according to Gotsch, the Act was not funded the way it was intended to be. “Last fall the Senate zeroed out The Second Chance Act,” she said. “It’s hard to prove the success of a program when the funding is prematurely ended.” Gotsch was also involved in advocacy efforts for the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010, which reduced the 100 to one sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine.

The panel’s fourth speaker, Ronald Chatters, III MPA ’08, focused on the effects of incarceration upon women. “There are fewer female facilities,” Chatters noted, “which tends to break up family structures even more, and makes incarcerated family members harder to visit,” said Chatters. Chatters is currently a Soros Justice Advocacy Fellow at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Southern California, where he directs a policy and advocacy initiatives aimed at mitigating the barriers to reentry for inmates with disabilities.
What was your WWS experience like, and how did you go on to work in education?

I started out in the IR field at WWS. But after a summer internship at the US embassy in Bolivia, and a one-year fellowship with a foundation in Washington DC, I came to recognize that I was not effecting the direct or concrete impact that I was hoping for; IR was not the right fit for me.

After WWS, I thought I’d become a public school teacher in New Jersey. I applied for 20-30 positions and only received one job offer. And because of various institutional regulations, the school-district official couldn’t tell me what subject I’d be teaching, or where I would be – until one week before school started. Under those circumstances, I knew I couldn’t be a successful teacher. Instead, I went to work for Edison Schools, a national school management company, and then with the chancellor of the New York City schools, and later with the New Jersey education department. These were all very large organizations, with many students. I was still trying to have a big impact through my work, but I concluded that large, government organizations move at such a pace that my desire to have an impact was still limited.

(continued)
Until I served as principal of the Trenton Community Charter School, and realized the potential or working with a manageable-sized organization and student body. I was one of five people to found the Foundation Academy. None of us had the gumption to do it on our own, but collectively we put our minds to it in April of 2005. In August of 2007, after significant learning from each other and existing charter school models, the doors of Foundation Academy opened.

What does your typical workday look like?

This job has evolved so much, there’s really no such thing as a typical day. Today, for instance, I spent the morning working on an evaluation tool with our Director of Operations. Then I met a former board president, who is now a superintendent at another school, for his advice on how to structure the board organization. I prepared for a weekly meeting on our senior management plan. And finally had a meeting to talk about donor logistics for the school’s fall concert, since we require that every student participate in the school string orchestra.

Where do you hope to see the Foundation Academies 10 years from now?

In education, charter schools are a way for individuals who are talented and motivated to work around traditional government bureaucracy. Our work is parallel to theirs, but also a mirror opposite. I’m not under any illusion that this is a solution to this country’s educational challenges, but it is a small step forward. I hope to expand the Foundation Academies significantly. We started out serving 300 students in grades 5-10, but 10 years from now we could serve over 1,100 students across five campuses – at that scale, we could meet the needs of over 10 percent of Trenton’s students, to prepare them for college. It’s very much a team effort, and requires a committed team of individuals.

The Edward P. Bullard Award is awarded annually, during SAOC, to an alumnus/a who has served as an exemplary mentor to WWS students and/or to his/her community.
The 2011 SAOC symposium included a session titled “The War Next Door: Importing Drugs and Exporting Violence,” with panelists Sam Logan, Founder and Editor of Southern Pulse Networked Intelligence; and Benjamin Fong MPA’10, a Consular Officer at the U.S. Consulate in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. (Mr. Fong spoke in a personal capacity, and clarified that his views may not reflect those of the U.S. State Department.) Professor Anne Marie Slaughter moderated the panel, which as the title suggests, explored the link between U.S. drug consumption and rising violence across the Mexican border.

Since 2006, over 40,000 people in Mexico have been killed in drug-related violence. “If we think of international security as human security,” Slaughter noted, “then the violence in Mexico is as threatening to the United States as that in Afghanistan or Iraq.” Perhaps more worrying for U.S. policymakers, a greater number of young Americans die from drug use than from suicide, firearms, or school violence, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). In 2009, Mexico and the United States decided to join forces by signing a bilateral agreement to fight the War on Drugs together. Since then, the U.S. Congress has appropriated $1.5 billion for this agreement, which has become known as the Merida Initiative. However, to this day the bilateral agreement has failed to yield the hoped-for results.

The Merida Initiative consists of U.S. assistance to Mexico’s law enforcement operations through the provision of equipment, training, and information, but the Initiative’s overall impacts have been minor. Of the aforementioned 40,000 drug-related deaths, Logan explained, only 22 have led to convictions—less than 1% of the total. The Mexican military often inadvertently destroys evidence, Logan said, and responds inadequately in confrontations. It has the personnel to immediately respond to violence, but lacks the skills to break the drug cartels.

Logan equated some of these components to “changing your car’s oil while you’re driving at 60 miles per hour.”

As a result of this dire situation, both Fong and Logan advocated for targeting low-hanging fruit. Fong pointed out that the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (AFT) has acknowledged that more than 70% of the weapons used by Mexican cartels come from the United States. These are often bought by “straw buyers” in southern U.S. states, and then trafficked south of the border. “We are complicit in this,” Fong explained, as he advocated for stricter gun laws and greater security on the border in order to stem the “iron river” of weapons flowing south.

More than 70% of the weapons used by Mexican cartels come from the United States.
Logan noted that the flow of funds from the United States to the Mexican cartels has not received adequate attention. Americans are estimated to spend **$65 billion per year on illegal drugs**, of which only **$1 billion** is seized by law enforcement authorities.

Logan also addressed the social roots of the problem. According to a recent OECD study, there are seven million individuals in Mexico between the ages of 21 and 29 who are neither working nor studying—they have become known as the “**Ninis**” (Ni estudian, ni trabajan - in English, neither studying, nor working). About 600,000 of them are estimated to be working for criminal networks.

Policies that create opportunities for the “**Ninis**” and keep them away from crime could have a greater impact on stemming drugs and violence than interdiction strategies.

There is a strong consensus among analysts and policymakers as to what the best policies would be for fighting the international drug war, but politics on both sides of the border often get in the way. On the U.S. side, border state politicians would be committing political suicide if they attempted to implement tighter gun control laws. For the Federal Government, interdiction produces headlines, 

In Mexico, **local police forces all too often lose their funding when the town’s mayor is not of the same party as the state governor.** “In Colombia in the 1990s, the country got together against the Medellin and Cali cartels and politics stood aside,” Logan explained, in an alliance that allowed
The Epidemiology of Drugs: How Drugs Choose Their Communities

By: Katherine Manchester, MPA

SAOC’s second panel, “The Epidemiology of Drugs,” emphasized some of the vast disparities that exist between the greatest drug users in America, and those who suffer the greatest consequences due to misplaced policies. Professor Doug Massey, Henry G. Bryant Professor of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, “but that’s the norm for drug policies...We have very little evidence about what works and what doesn’t, and there is no demand from policymakers to request such evidence. The street prices of the most dangerous drugs are all below what they were in the 1980s – this is the ultimate failure in policy.”

At the same time, Pollack warned that the complex nature of drug-related crime presents many facades, capable of reinforcing whatever ideological confirmation bias we might be prone to. He recounted a story told to him by a Chicago patrolman, of gang members ambush a funeral home to desecrate the body of a rival gang member. “People who have in their mind a dehumanized perspective of criminals have experience with such incidents,” Pollack said.

As Co-Director of the University of Chicago’s Crime Lab, which tests and evaluates pilot programs for reducing crime and violence, Pollack was able to share some of the Crime Lab’s interventions, many with young, black males. “We never tell kids in our interventions, ‘don’t fight,’” he said. “It would be like telling a student at Princeton, don’t disagree with someone in class. In his world, this kid has to be tough, even to teachers.”

“Even though most drugs are consumed - and to a great extent bought - in the suburbs, drug prevention efforts are concentrated in the cities.”
Surprisingly, most of the youth homicide reports that Pollack reviewed involved “stupid teenage stuff, and interpersonal or family conflict.” This led to efforts to help young people communicate more effectively, and deal with their emotions in a non-violent manner. One such intervention was a sports program, conducted as a randomized control trial involving 2,740 kids. “Half of the kids were too old for their grade,” said Pollack. “One third had previously been arrested. One hundred percent were non-white. But the intervention worked, turning Fs into Ds by helping kids work better with their teachers. Violent crime was down by 40% among kids who participated, and down 2% overall.”

The third panel speaker, Zerline Hughes of the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), provided the audience with a brief re-cap of the evolution of The War on Drugs. When cocaine could be made more cheaply as crack, it became more widely accessible, especially within communities of color. Then in 1986, Len Bias, an African American basketball player for the University of Maryland who had just been selected to join the Celtics, died from a drug overdose before he could join the team. “Congress assumed that he had taken crack, and passed harsh laws against it,” recounted Hughes. “But Bias had taken cocaine.” Nevertheless, the War on Drugs was declared, with a 1:100 disparity between the amount of crack cocaine and powder cocaine needed to trigger certain federal criminal penalties. The Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 reduced that disparity to 1:18.

Hughes presented a short documentary she had been involved in, called “Crack the Disparity: It’s Not Fair. It’s Not Working.” The documentary illustrated how, under the 1:100 regulation, possession of five grams of crack led to a mandatory minimum sentencing of five years, while it took 500 grams of powder cocaine to receive the same penalty. “So a person found with a NutraSweet-sized packet of crack cocaine, with no previous offences, faced the same federal charges as if he or she had attempted murder,” Hughes noted.

High enforcement strategies against drug-use have become more prevalent, with communities spending less on rehab, counseling and diversion programs, and more on policing. “When crime is down, like now, the police are still looking to make arrests to keep budgets up,” Hughes said. “Drug arrests are easy arrests.” Hughes concluded by recommending a de-escalation of the War on Drugs; careful consideration of public safety funding; treatment for addicts; and getting the media more involved in pushing out these messages.”
At the conclusion of the SAOC symposium WWS alumni, students and staff attended a meeting led by Dean Christina Paxson and Associate Dean for Graduate Admissions, John Templeton to discuss the current curriculum, diversity outreach efforts and program expansion in the areas of public policy and finance.

Paxson explained the decrease in the school's finances and assured alumni that financial aid would be protected for students. “We still offer the same financial aid package that we have, and we want to keep the quality of education constant,” said Paxson. Currently, 20 to 30 percent of WWS alumni provide donor support and WWS wants to expand giving and increase participation rates in the coming years.

In terms of priorities for WWS, several initiatives were outlined to increase students’ preparedness in the workforce, as well as ways to diversity faculty and the curriculum:

- Foster a multidisciplinary approach to policy issues using various departments and other schools on campus.
- Broaden the scope of WWS within Princeton by engaging in joint-hiring from departments such as African American Studies and Engineering.
- Expand the Distinguished Visitors in Leadership and Governance seminars and dedicate resources to the Jules-Rabinowitz Center for Public Policy and Finance to enable more policy students to have experience working with financial markets as it affects all aspects of policy.

Templeton also provided a historical overview of WWS’ diversity and admissions statistics to show alumni trends in data. In 2011, WWS conducted a survey on diversity and “77 percent of students said they were satisfied with the diversity of the student body,” while “43 percent were satisfied with the diversity of faculty.” After seeing the data, various alumni expressed the need for issues of race and ethnicity to be integrated into the coursework as a way to enhance both the students and faculty members’ learning experiences. Regarding admissions data, Templeton explained that he “welcomed input and help to shape new recruitment strategies” to increase ethnic, social and political diversity among the students. Several alumni have pledged to help with those efforts on a regional basis though formal and informal networks.
“People can hold moral values because they have access to legal money,” noted Rev. Dr. M. William Howard, Jr., at the opening of SAOC’s Keynote Dinner on Saturday November 12th. “Too many teens are being alienated from the workforce for the rest of their lives for the possession of very small amounts of drugs. All because, like you and me, they need to eat.”

While serving as president of the New York Theological Seminary in the early 90s, Howard ran a Master’s program for inmates at Sing-Sing Correctional Facility. Research determined that 75% of inmates came from the same five to seven neighborhoods in New York. “This is not a natural phenomenon,” Howard said, “This is because of how law enforcement has failed these communities.” Howard has also spent a significant amount of time in New Jersey, including serving as pastor to Bethany Baptist Church in Newark; working with Bethany Cares, Inc., a community-development corporation; and being a founding member of the Newark Community Foundation.

“We need to address the needs of these young people in a whole new way,” he concluded. “There is hardly any problem in Newark that we couldn’t solve if work opportunities hadn’t disappeared.”

The keynote speech was then picked up by Wanda H. Moore, Assistant Attorney General and Director the Office of Community Justice, where she spearheads the implementation of community-based, crime prevention strategies. She described a number of interventions her office had enacted, including Fugitive Safe Surrender, where persons wanted for non-violent felony or misdemeanor crimes can voluntarily turn themselves in.

“Desperate people commit desperate acts,” Moore said, “so we temporarily turned a church into a courthouse to encourage fugitives to surrender. At one, four-day event in Newark, we cleared over 40,000 warrants. Less than 1% of the people who turn themselves in are detained.”

Moore’s other programs have included “Drug Court” for young people, which has seen the number of positive drug tests in New Jersey high schools plummet, while 84% of participants went on to graduate from high school, in spite of their earlier drug use.

Despite the magnitude and complexity of these challenges, Moore ended her speech on a high note. “We need to make clear that the cost of prevention is minimal compared to the cost of incarceration,” she said. “When police officers come to us with ideas about inmate re-entry [into society], you know there’s a paradigm shift.”
Mentorship is a friendship focused on the sharing of knowledge and information from an experienced person to another. Mentorship is as important to career growth as it is to obtain an advanced degree. However, with such a vast alumni network and expert faculty, why is it that many WWS students lack a viable mentor? Sometimes, it can be a time commitment and for others they may not have found a good match. Here are a few tips to start or enhance your mentorship relationship:

**Meet** – Both mentee and mentor must be accessible and willing to meet virtually or face-to-face at least once a month.

**Encourage** – A Mentor should work with their mentee to bring the best out of them through discussion and listening.

**(K)nowledge** – Find a mentor who is an expert in the area you want to know about; someone that can help open doors that may be closed to you. Mentors should seek Mentees that want to learn.

**Time** – You both have to make the time.

**Open** – Mentees want someone that will tell it to them straight. Mentors have to be willing to offer constructive criticism and realism

**Responsive** – The Ivy League Rule is to respond to an email or phone call within 24 hours, don’t break tradition.

For the first time in SAOC’s history, participants gathered after all of the panels for a discussion of their own. Through the “World Café” format – a conversational process pioneered in 1995 by Juanita Brown and other academic and business leaders in California – participants discussed many of the common themes that had arisen from SAOC’s. Amy Lerman, Assistant Professor of Politics and Public Affairs at Princeton University, introduced the session by speaking on the connections between drugs, incarceration and democratic participation in government.

“When I signed up to teach an accredited college course in American government at San Quentin State Prison in California, it completely changed my life. I realized that my students were having a conversation about government that had a fundamentally different orientation than mine, because their most frequent contact with the state was the criminal justice system.”

Incarceration in the US – much of it driven by low-level, non-violent arrests relating to the War on Drugs – has profound implications for participation in democracy. In every state but two, felons lose their right to vote, meaning that 5.3 million Americans currently cannot vote. A full 13 percent of black men cannot vote.

“No matter what social or economic issue you decide to become involved in, the War on Drugs and incarceration will be factors,” Lerman noted. “If you go into public health, consider the strong connections between drugs, incarceration and HIV/AIDS. But also, prison could be the first time that many people access basic health care. If you go in to education, probation and parole officers are becoming more integrated with school systems. Regarding the economy, some of the recent rollback in incarceration may be due to the economic slow-down.”

“The US federal prison system is the largest in the world,” Lerman concluded. “How it functions will have widespread impacts.”

Following Lerman’s remarks, SAOC participants formed groups and were guided through discussion topics while a volunteer record-keeper took down key thoughts and questions. Every few minutes, participants moved to different tables, mixing up the discussion groups, before finally coming together to share prominent ideas. The exercise was facilitated by Laura Hanson, MPA 1 and Jake Schlachter. “The World Café enabled students and alumni to process some of the most challenging ideas we encountered over the weekend in a collaborative, intentional way,” said Hanson. “Collective reflection helped put the failures of the War on Drugs in perspective relative to our policy work, families, and communities. It was especially rewarding to see how actively participants engaged with Professor Lerman and each other. I hope that group dialogue becomes an integral part of future SAOC programs.”
Snapshots from SAOC 2011
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