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Dialogue of the Deaf: Scholars, Practitioners, and the Drug War in U.S. Foreign Relations

Peter Andreas

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Peter Andreas (Brown University)

The oft-lamented divide between academia and the policy world is nowhere more starkly evident than in the U.S.-led international "war on drugs."[1] Indeed, it is difficult to find an issue in U.S. foreign relations where there is a greater disconnect between scholarship and policy practice.

Why is this? Is there something inherent in the drug issue itself that makes it so impervious to the influence of scholarship and scholars? At least part of the answer is that few other issue-areas in U.S. foreign relations in general—and U.S.-Latin American relations in particular—are as highly politicized and subjected to such moralizing discourse. Getting "tough on drugs" and going to "the source" in supply and transit countries in Latin America and elsewhere tends to be more about "sending a signal" and "showing resolve" than about dispassionate analysis of policy effectiveness and efficiency. Symbolic politics tends to trump empirical evidence and research. Indeed, evidence of failure often simply tends to generate calls for further escalation rather than policy reevaluation.

In this chapter I offer some Washington-focused reflections on the scholarly-policy divide in the drug war debate, drawing from more than two decades of observing and occasionally participating in what often seems to be a dialogue of the deaf—or

perhaps the problem is not lack of hearing but not liking what one hears.[2] Academics, as I argue below, have little discernible influence on the Washington policy debate on international drug control except at the margins (in technical aspects of crop substitution schemes, and so on). To the extent that scholars are involved in the foreign policy drug war debate—and there are plenty of disciplinary factors inhibiting this—it is primarily as outside critics rather than as trusted advisors. So to the extent that they have a receptive audience, it is more in the broader public sphere than in the halls of Congress or in the drug war bureaucracy. Their policy influence is therefore more indirect and more difficult to measure, though this does not mean it is necessarily unimportant.

Even the economists are marginalized

Even economists, arguably the scholars with the greatest influence in policy circles (as noted in other chapters in this volume), remain on the sidelines in the drug war debate. Most famously, this includes the late Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman, whose call for drug legalization was ignored. Indeed, the whole supply-side approach to the so-called "war on drugs"—reducing domestic consumer demand by suppressing supply—flies in the face of the conventional economic wisdom taught in the academy. Moreover, drug enforcement in the Americas generates many of the perverse consequences that economists have long warned comes from over-regulation, such as rent-seeking, corruption, and market distortions. Nevertheless, the U.S.-led international drug control campaign has been strikingly immune to the barrage of anti-statist and free market arguments by economists in recent decades that have helped propel the rolling back of government regulation, lowering trade barriers, and loosening controls on other cross-

border market exchange.

In fact, precisely the opposite has happened: drug enforcement budgets and bureaucracies have mushroomed, trade barriers have risen, and market controls have tightened. In short, efforts to suppress the international drug trade may be the most dramatic exception to the triumph of neo-liberal economic ideas in recent decades. And nowhere is this more apparent than in Washington and its relations with foreign drug producing and transit countries. Here, instead of the famed "Washington consensus" regarding the virtues of economic liberalization we have an enduring "Washington consensus" on market criminalization. Not everyone is a "true believer," but policymakers risk political suicide by openly defecting from the drug war. Everyone recognizes that the war on drugs is not going well, but it is politically taboo to advocate a radical change of course—and those that do tend to wait until they have left government, such as former U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz and three former presidents of Latin American countries.[3]

Why are economists so missing from the drug policy debate? Part of the answer is found in how the issue is defined. The international drug trade is largely defined in the policy world as a security and law enforcement issue rather than an economic issue. So while the IMF, World Bank, U.S. Commerce Department, and finance and trade ministries of drug export countries in Latin America and elsewhere are staffed by armies of economists (often trained at U.S. university economics departments), the same is certainly not true of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, the State Department's office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Matters, the Department of Homeland Security, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA),

and the interior ministries of drug producing nations. A partial exception may be those tasked with fighting money laundering, such as within the U.S. Treasury Department and the financial intelligence units within foreign governments, but even here accountants and financial investigators are more common than economists. Colombian economist Francisco Thoumi, perhaps the best-known economist working on the Latin American drug trade, was hired as a consultant by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime to help produce the *World Drug Report*, but was so appalled by the research standards and the level of politicization in estimating the size of the global drug trade that he later wrote a damning article about the experience.[4]

Meanwhile, university based economists, including trade economists and development economists, rarely include illegal drug markets or illegal markets in general as a major area of study—no doubt partly because the data is so inherently bad and unreliable. Prominent exceptions to this disciplinary neglect—most notably Peter Reuter at the University of Maryland, probably the leading economist in the world whose work focuses on illegal drugs—are often based in public policy schools rather than economics departments. Reuter and others have long emphasized the flawed methods and questionable numbers used in official estimates regarding the size and magnitude of the drug trade, yet the demand for such numbers in the policy world has overridden concerns about their reliability.[5]

It is difficult to find an economist who is a fan of the war on drugs, but it is also difficult to find many economists who actually engage in the drug war debate. So while one might expect that economists would be the harshest critics of the war on drugs, they are the harshest silent critics. Many economists no doubt privately agree with Adam

Smith that, “A smuggler is a person who, although no doubt blamable for violating the laws of the country, is frequently incapable of violating those of natural justice, and would have been, in every respect, an excellent citizen had not the laws of his country made that a crime which Nature never meant to be so.” Interestingly, in Adam Smith’s day, smugglers were actually called “free traders.” This is not to suggest that economists are necessarily fans of the Pablo Escobars of the world, but rather that many economists would no doubt view the rise of Pablo Escobar as a particularly perverse and unintended consequence of government intervention in the market.

The role and limits of political scientists

The lack of drug policy engagement by economists is much less true of political scientists. Yet even here the international drug war debate is a marginalized issue—as immediately evident by simply looking through the program of the annual conference of the American Political Science Association, major textbooks in the field, course syllabi, and mainstream disciplinary journals. International and comparative political economy scholars, like their counterparts in economics, focus almost exclusively on the licit rather than the illicit side of the global economy.[6] Most political scientists tend to view drug trafficking and drug enforcement as policing issues and therefore more the domain of criminology. Criminologists, however, mostly focus on domestic crime and crime control issues rather than their international dimensions.

The relatively small number of political scientists doing work in this area tend to aim their writings at a broader interdisciplinary and public audience rather than to advance a particular disciplinary theoretical debate. With few exceptions, they also tend

to come from the subfield of comparative politics rather than the subfield of international relations. Not surprisingly, many of them are Latin America specialists with region and country-specific expertise, such as the Andean region or Mexico. There have also been useful collaborations between U.S. and Latin American political scientists on drug-related issues through various edited volumes over the years and frequent panels at conferences such as the Latin American Studies Association.[7] In recent years, the Transborder Institute at the University of San Diego and the Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington have been important vehicles for scholars to add their voice to public discussions about the escalating drug-related violence in Mexico.

These scholars tend to engage the public debate not through regular, direct interaction with policymakers and practitioners in the drug policy world—though many of them do have such connections—but more indirectly, such as through policy articles and reports, and op-eds and other media commentary. U.S. Congressional hearings and government briefings on international drug trafficking related issues at times include academics, but this is fairly infrequent. Outside experts are more often drawn from think tanks, such as Brookings and RAND, rather than universities, and occasionally other Washington-based groups such as the Washington Office on Latin America. This is part of a broader trend, in which Washington think tanks have increasingly filled the gap between the academic world and the policy world.

U.S. policymakers and their counterparts in drug export countries are not exactly rushing to university-based scholars for advice on how to run the drug war, and certainly not for advice on rethinking the drug war. It is perhaps telling that it is hard

to identify many American political scientists who have taken a leave of absence from their university to work in government on international drug control related issues (MIT's Chappell Lawson, who worked with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and is a contributor to this volume, is a recent exception). In contrast, it is not difficult to point to many political scientists who have taken time out from their academic careers to work in more traditional "high politics" spheres of U.S. foreign policy. Some prominent recent examples include Steven Krasner and Condoleeza Rice from Stanford.

The Council on Foreign Relations has a long-established program of placing junior scholars in policy settings for a year as International Affairs Fellows. But tellingly, these appointments are typically in the National Security Council, Policy Planning at the State Department, the Pentagon, and Treasury. In contrast, I have not heard of a single International Affairs Fellow placed in the much less prominent and prestigious area of international drug control or international criminal law enforcement more broadly. And if there are some cases, these are certainly rare exceptions.[8] More International Affairs Fellows are from the political science subfield of international relations than from the subfield of comparative politics, yet comparative politics scholars with regional expertise are the ones who have been most interested in international drug control-related issues in Latin America and elsewhere.

There is, of course, a fair amount of U.S. government funding for drug-related academic research, such as through the National Institute on Drug Abuse (part of the National Institute of Health) the National Institute of Justice (the research wing of the Department of Justice), and the Department of Homeland Security. Almost all of this funding is on domestic programs—as is the field of criminology, which receives

considerable funding from the U.S. criminal justice system but is not discussed here given the lack of significant international drug policy focus and presence. Nevertheless, some agencies, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), have funded research on crop substitution and alternative development in drug exporting countries. Also, the Inter-American Foundation, which is U.S. government funded but operates quasi-independently, has sponsored important alternative development projects in rural drug producing areas of countries such as Bolivia.

For the most part, it is fair to say that this government-funded work is preoccupied with the nuts and bolts of policy implementation "on the ground," such as convincing Andean farmers to grow hazelnuts rather than coca, rather than influencing and shaping the broader drug policy debate and determining policy priorities. The later could include, for example, the balance of spending between supply reduction and demand reduction, or deciding whether or not to use the military for anti-drug missions—something that political scientists with expertise on civil-military relations might have something useful to contribute but don't seem to be consulted.

The engagement of scholars with the policy world can take more subtle forms than direct, face-to-face interaction with policy practitioners. This includes the bread-and-butter activity of most scholars: writing books and articles. The library at DEA headquarters, for instance, is full of academic books and other scholarly publications, many of which are critical of U.S. drug policy—though who knows how much of this actually gets read. When I visited this library years ago for my own research I noticed the book collection includes, for example, Ethan Nadelmann's pioneering study, *Cops Across Borders*, on the internationalization of U.S. criminal law enforcement—a book

that one DEA agent told me impressed him so much that he tried to invite the author to give a talk at headquarters until his superiors informed him that Nadelmann was persona non grata because he opposed drug prohibition.[9]

Leading international affairs journals with a policy audience, such as *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy*, also frequently publish articles by publicly engaged scholars, and this at times includes articles on the war on drugs. A recent example of an article that has the potential to be highly influential is a *Foreign Affairs* piece by Mark Kleiman on how to stem Mexico's mounting drug violence.[10] Kleiman, a well-known public policy scholar at UCLA, pragmatically proposes that the United States and Mexico should strategically target the most violent drug trafficking organizations rather than drug trafficking in general. Given the timing (more than 45,000 Mexican drug-related deaths between 2006 and 2012 and a Mexican presidential election on the horizon), the prominent venue (*Foreign Affairs*), and concrete policy prescriptions that avoid going anywhere near the "L world" (legalization), it is not difficult to imagine this article resonating and even causing a stir in at least some policy circles—in Mexico City if not in Washington. The tough, hard-nosed policy advice—aggressive "strategic strikes" against the most violent traffickers—masks the radical implications of actually following this strategy, which involves de facto decriminalization of the drug trade for traffickers who avoid violence in business disputes and interactions with government authorities.

Kleiman's article is also distinct from the writings of most academics in that it is entirely prescriptively focused—precisely what policymakers are looking for. For the most part, it is fair to say that political scientists and other academics are better at explanation than at prescription. Explanation can have important prescriptive

implications, but the prescriptions are typically not placed front and center in the analysis, let alone framed in terms of a 10-point action plan.

This is certainly the case of academic work on the war on drugs. There is a great deal of scholarship on why the drug war is failing, but very little on how to actually win it. And in fact many scholars argue that it is unwinnable—something policymakers do not want to hear, even if they may agree it's true. Abandoning the war on drugs and developing a radically different policy approach is a political non-starter in Washington. For most scholars, phrases such as "winning the war on drugs," "zero tolerance," and creating a "drug free America" are not realistic objectives but rather political slogans that they shy away from. Academics offer powerful critiques of the war on drugs, but most tend not to go much beyond the standard mantra that we need to do more to reduce consumer demand—which pretty much all politicians pay lip service to, but this never seems to actually translate into a major change in budget allocation priorities.

The privileging of prescription over explanation in the policy world is illustrated by my own recent experience. In 2010 the Council on Foreign Relations invited me to write a report for them about the Mexican drug war and the U.S.-Mexico border. The first step was to put together a one-page proposal outlining my main "argument." I did so, emphasizing how the perverse and unintended consequences of past policy choices had created a "perfect storm" on the border, and outlined lessons learned for the future. However, I had completely misunderstood what they meant by "argument"—it was supposed to be an argument about how to fix the problem, not an argument about what created the problem in the first place. That would be merely background. I opted not to pursue this. I did not mind writing a report that concluded with policy recommendations

that logically flowed from a detailed diagnosis of the problem, but was less enthused and confident about writing a report presuming to know how to solve the problem. So in this particular case, I came down squarely on the academic side of the scholarly-policy divide.

Disciplinary inhibitions

Even if the policy world were more receptive to academic input in the drug war debate, it should be emphasized that scholars face major disciplinary obstacles that inhibit greater engagement. This is of course true of other policy issue areas, not just drug policy.[11] In subtle and not-so-subtle ways, the professional incentives in traditional disciplines (at least outside of public policy schools) have a deterrent effect. At best, engaging a broader policy audience is tolerated; at worst it may count against you, especially if it is perceived as coming at the expense of producing theoretically focused peer-reviewed publications.

This is particularly true for junior scholars trying to build up a tenure-worthy record through peer-reviewed university press books and disciplinary journal articles. Publishing in the *American Political Science Review* or *International Organization* is the ticket to tenure in political science; publishing in *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy* is not. Publishing in the later is acceptable if it is not perceived as coming at the expense of publishing in the former. In other words, the policy stuff is "extra" and doesn't "count." Publishing a book in the prestigious comparative politics series of Cambridge University Press—selling perhaps 500 copies mostly to libraries priced at $80 per book, and receiving favorable reviews in disciplinary journals that no one outside the field has ever

heard of—gets you tenure. But publishing a book with a commercial press such as Public Affairs—selling tens of thousands of copies heavily discounted on Amazon as a "trade book," and reviewed in popular outlets such as the *New York Times*—does not.

The rules of the academic game for younger scholars are clear: spend six years keeping your head down and focused on cranking out peer-reviewed academic articles and books that advance the central theoretical debates in the field. Then by the time you finally receive tenure you may be so socialized in the norms of the discipline, including in writing style, and have so internalized and self-identified with the academic rewards system that any initial ambition and passion to reach a broader public audience may be extinguished or at least greatly deflated.

Moreover, the academic rewards system continues to have a disciplining effect beyond tenure by shaping promotions and professional advancement based on scholarly productivity of a particular sort. In an academic world where mobility after tenure is highly constrained, a tenured professor's ability to get an attractive outside job offer is largely driven by one's scholarly reputation and publishing record—and the more publications in the "right" journals and with top-tier university presses the better. These professional trajectory patterns and constraints are not universally true, of course, and there are exceptions one can point to (including many of the contributors to this volume). But they are exceptions that tend to prove the rule. And as discussed below, in some cases they never even make it through the tenure hoops, opting instead to leave academia and enter the policy world full-time.

A tale of two scholars turned drug policy wonks

Take the cases of Ethan Nadelmann, founder and director of the New York-based Drug Policy Alliance, with offices across the country, and Vanda Felbab-Brown, a Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington. Nadelmann operates outside the beltway; Felbab-Brown inside. Nadelmann advocates abandoning the war on drugs and a fundamental rethinking of drug prohibition; Felbab-Brown advocates for much more modest drug policy reforms. Nadelmann is more of an activist pushing for radical policy change from the outside; Felbab-Brown is more of a Washington insider where the range of "acceptable" policy options is far more constrained. But what they both have in common is that they bailed out early from academia because it simply proved too confining. They powerfully illustrate the difficulty of trying to bridge the academic-policy divide on the drug issue.

Nadelmann took a tenure-track assistant professor position at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School in 1987 after receiving his PhD in government at Harvard (and also earned a JD from Harvard Law School). His PhD thesis was on how U.S. law enforcement agencies, especially the DEA, were increasingly extending their reach across borders. It was the first study of its kind, involving extensive fieldwork in Latin America and elsewhere. The book that came out of the dissertation, *Cops Across Borders* (mentioned and cited earlier), remains the most comprehensive and authoritative account ever written. Nadelmann also published a widely cited article on "international prohibition regimes" in the journal *International Organization*, the top international relations journal in the field.[12] Nadelmann, it seemed, had a very bright academic future ahead of him.

But the late 1980s also happened to be a time when the U.S. war on drugs was heating up at home and abroad and generating intense public debate. Nadelmann joined the debate with a big splash, writing a well-timed and highly provocative article in *Foreign Policy*, "U.S.-Drug Policy: A Bad Export," boldly calling for an end to the "war on drugs."[13] The buzz around the article generated a cascade of media appearances, including on Nightline.[14] Nadelmann emerged as the most visible, articulate, and energetic critic of prohibitionist U.S. drug policies.

The so-called "legalization debate" gained so much media attention that politicians could no longer simply ignore it and hope it would go away. Congressional leaders even called for hearings on the issue, with Charles Rangel and other House leaders hoping this would discredit any talk of legalization once and for all. Nadelmann was invited to testify, giving Rangel the opportunity to publicly disparage the "Princeton assistant professor." But other than serving as symbolic theater for politicians eager to show they were committed drug warriors, the hearings did little to put an end to discussing drug war alternatives—though many advocates, including Nadelmann, increasingly talked about "harm reduction," "decriminalization," and "drug policy reform" rather than the more sweeping and controversial term "legalization" in the case of hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin.

Meanwhile, Nadelmann's tenure clock at Princeton was ticking, and no doubt some of his senior colleagues were scratching their heads and raising their eyebrows. Nadelmann ended up jumping ship at the 11th hour before his tenure review process was completed. In 1994 Billionaire philanthropist George Soros stepped in and made Nadelmann an offer he could not refuse: generous funding to set up his own drug policy

research and advocacy organization. Nadelmann jumped at the opportunity and never looked back (leaving behind a half-written rough draft of a second book manuscript that gathered dust for more than a decade and a half until another assistant professor of political science updated, expanded, and finished it[15]). The organization later became the Drug Policy Alliance, considered the leading organization in the country promoting alternatives to the war on drugs. *Rolling Stone* even dubbed Nadelmann the "point man" for the nation's drug policy reform efforts.

Felbab-Brown is a more recent and less dramatic case. She received her PhD in political science from MIT in 2007, and secured a tenure-track job at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service. Felbab-Brown's dissertation focused on the relationship between counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics missions in Colombia, Peru, and Afghanistan. From these detailed case studies she concluded that fighting drugs and fighting insurgents at the same time was incompatible and counterproductive—a conclusion that was not particularly new to drug policy critics but was new to the scholarly literature on conflict commodities and internal wars. The dissertation won an award and generated interest from Cornell University Press, a top tier academic publisher.

But once in Washington Felbab-Brown apparently had little patience or interest in engaging theoretical academic debates and playing the tenure track game. She soon left Georgetown and moved across town to Dupont Circle to become a full-time Fellow at the Brookings Institution, where she immediately thrived by creating her own policy niche. Brookings had not had anyone permanent working on international drug trafficking issues since Paul Stares left in the mid-1990s.

Rather than being a struggling tenure-seeking assistant professor going through the grind of the long peer review process for scholarly articles and books, Felbab-Brown was now publishing frequent policy reports on timely and important topics such as the escalating drug violence in Mexico, regularly being called on to testify before congress on issues such as the Merida Initiative, participating in government briefings, hobnobbing in Washington policy circles, and writing op-eds and making media appearances. She was even given a publicity assistant to send out regular emails drawing attention to her latest op-ed, policy report, or testimony. No longer worried about the tenure implications, Felbab-Brown published her book in-house, with Brookings Press—and far sooner and with greater visibility in the policy world than would have been the case with Cornell University Press.[16]

I am certainly not suggesting that Nadelmann and Felbab-Brown are typical cases. Far from it—and most stories don't end nearly so well. But they each powerfully illustrate the formidable challenge of bridging the academic-policy divide in this policy realm. And indeed in both cases they ended up giving up on the bridge-building project altogether and formally left academia, though they maintain connections to the academic world.

Final thoughts

I conclude by recounting a few of my own experiences dealing with the political theater that often characterizes the drug war debate in Washington, where the players are keenly aware of their audience and rarely deviate in public from carefully prepared scripts. Some time ago I spent a year at the Brookings Institution, and while there

was invited to present congressional testimony before a House Judiciary Committee panel on drug trafficking and global organized crime. The chairman of the committee began the hearings with a somber opening statement about the alarming spread of transnational criminal organizations, with their long tentacles reaching deep into America and poisoning the nation's youth with drugs. The chairman's aide sitting nearby, however, interrupted him after the first few sentences, telling him that he didn't have to read the whole statement out loud because there were no cameras from the media present. Everyone in the room heard this comment and burst out laughing, panelists and committee members alike. We all understood that it was a show, that we were all part of a performance, playing our designated roles. CNN had not shown up that day, but the show went on as scheduled even if with a bit less fanfare.

My point in recounting this story is to underscore the ever-present role of symbolic politics and the theatrical characteristics of the drug war debate. It is extremely difficult to have a reasonable and sensible dialogue in such circumstances, with politicians always making sure to sound sufficiently tough on drugs and making sure not to say anything that may come across as too lenient. This lends itself to hyperbolic declarations rather than rational conversations. Having said that, I should also note that I have also been at a number of closed-door and off-the-record meetings in Washington, typically with mid-level policy practitioners, where the participants do not always behave as if they are on stage performing for an audience. And this opens up the possibility for real discussion, real dialogue, and real debate because they don't worry about losing their jobs or the next election. And some of them seem to genuinely value having outside academics come in and say things that they may at least partly agree with but are

reluctant to openly say themselves. In the end, though, the drug war is ultimately driven much more by the onstage theatrics than by any frank discussions and evaluations that may take place backstage.

So it is worth returning to the main question asked of me by the volume's editors: To what extent have academics overcome the scholarly-practitioner divide in the realm of the U.S.-led international war on drugs? The answer, it seems, is strikingly little. To the extent that it has happened it is subtle, indirect, and extremely difficult to measure. And there appears to be little prospect that this will greatly change any time soon. More realistically, university-based scholars who are inclined to engage the policy world in this particular issue-area—overcoming or ignoring disciplinary inhibitions—are more likely to influence the broader public debate rather than specific policy decisions. This role should not be discounted or overlooked, but its policy impact is also more indirect and difficult to trace and evaluate.

It may nevertheless be worth contemplating, even if briefly, what the policy contribution of scholars *could be* if the international drug war debate in Washington were to somehow become much more open and less politically constrained. For instance, economists and public policy scholars could greatly inform policy decisions through a detailed and sophisticated cost-benefit analysis—a type of analysis that is otherwise popular in policy circles—of all aspects of the war on drugs. Some of this work, in fact, has already been done. Peter Reuter, for example, has shown that due to the pricing structure of the international drug market it is far less cost effective to attack supply at the point of production abroad than at the point of consumption at home. Similarly, game theorists would have much to offer in analyzing the strategic interaction between

drug enforcement and drug trafficking organizations—and would have surely predicted that President Calderon's drug war offensive in Mexico would spark much greater competition and violence between traffickers rather than reduce and tame Mexican drug trafficking.

Political scientists with decades of experience studying civil-military relations in Latin America and elsewhere would also no doubt have some useful insights for the policy community regarding the implications and longer term consequences of turning soldiers into cops through the militarization of the drug war—which is most advanced in the case of Mexico. Scholars working in comparative politics and comparative public policy could also more systematically compare different policy approaches to drug control across different times and places—most obviously, drawing policy lessons from the European experience for the United States. Again, a great deal of work has already been done, though can be updated and further developed.[17]

Historians also potentially have much to offer the policy world here, though they tend to understate the policy relevance and implications of their work. Most obviously, more attention to America's failed experiment in alcohol prohibition in the 1920s may offer powerful lessons and insights for today's war on drugs. In a policy environment chronically afflicted by historical amnesia, more historical perspective on drugs and drug control is desperately needed.[18] Last but not least, ethnographic research can make an enormously valuable contribution by helping policymakers make better sense of the on-the-ground micro-dynamics of communities enmeshed in various stages of the international drug trade, from peasant villages in Bolivia to favelas in Rio to Mexican border towns to street-level dealing in America.[19] This, in turn, has the potential to

generate more nuanced and customized policy interventions at the community level.