The Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing (CRCW) is an interdisciplinary center at the Woodrow Wilson School and the Office of Population Research. The Center’s mission is to stimulate basic research, educate faculty and students about issues related to children’s policies, and influence policymakers and practitioners at the federal, state, and local levels.

CRCW supports three initiatives: the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a basic research project; the Future of Children Project, a journal and outreach program for policymakers, practitioners, advocates, and researchers; and the Youth Policy Initiative, a set of studies that design and evaluate policies for youth. CRCW staff has been busy these past six months working on all three projects.

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is following a longitudinal birth cohort of nearly 5,000 children born in the U.S. at the end of the 20th century. The study provides new information on the capabilities and relationships of parents, particularly unwed parents, as well as the effects of parental resources and public policies on children’s well-being. During the spring of 2005, researchers at the Center have been preparing the third wave of data for a September 2005 public release and are currently in the field with the five-year follow-up survey. In June, the Center submitted a grant application to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, requesting funds for another round of follow-up interviews when the children are nine years old. Additional information about the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study can be found at www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu.

The Future of Children Project seeks to promote effective policies and programs for children by providing policymakers, practitioners, and the media with timely, objective information based on the best available research. The project is co-sponsored with the Center for Health and Wellbeing and the Education Research Section at the Woodrow Wilson School, and the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. The project publishes a bi-annual journal, sponsors courses and conferences for the WWS M.P.A. students, and hosts outreach activities for policy-makers and practitioners at the national and local levels. This past spring the project published its first volume, School Readiness: Closing Racial and Ethnic Gaps, and hosted a number of outreach activities, including an ERS-sponsored practitioners’ conference at Princeton, two events at the Brookings Institution on early childhood education, and an audio-conference on the Web. Center practitioners also taught a course, “Childhood Obesity” at the School in the spring of 2005, in conjunction with an upcoming volume (Spring 2006) on that topic. A second volume, Marriage and Child Wellbeing, was published in September, and will be followed by several public events. More information about the journal and related events can be found at www.futureofchildren.org.

The Youth Policy Initiative designs and evaluates policies and programs for youth, including mentoring, after-school, and pregnancy prevention programs. Much of the work is carried out in conjunction with researchers at applied research organizations such as Public/Private Ventures and MDRC. The Center’s researchers are currently involved in several studies: an evaluation of Children’s Future, an initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that is designed to improve the lives of children in Trenton ages 0 to 3 years old; a study of Philadelphia’s Beacon School program which examines how after-school staff practices and characteristics affect the engagement and learning of young participants; a random-assignment evaluation of school-based mentoring; and a random-assignment evaluation of a specially designed after-school math and reading curriculum. Additional information about these studies can be found at www.crcw.princeton.edu/evaluation.asp.

In conjunction with the Woodrow Wilson School, CRCW has launched a new speaker series this fall, entitled “Researcher Meets Policymaker,” bringing together leading researchers and policymakers to discuss issues of common interest. The first presentation on September 27 featured Kathryn Edin and Robert Doar, speaking about the low marriage rates among low-income mothers. Dr. Edin, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, is co-author of the book, Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage; Robert Doar is the commissioner of the New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and is charged with developing a marriage program aimed at low-income women. The next presentation will be held on November 15 and will feature Jonathan Rauch from the Brookings Institution. Rauch is the author of Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America; he will discuss gay marriage and parenting.
Barbara Walter, a fellow with the Center for Globalization and Governance (CGG) and an associate professor of political science at the University of California, San Diego, recently received a two-year research grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to fund a project entitled “The Reconstruction of Political Authority in States at Risk: International Strategies and the Role of NGOs,” a project that she is working on with David Lake, Miles Kahler, and Kristian Gleditsch, all of UCSD. She is also the author of Globalization, Territoriality, and Conflict, a book that is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press (co-edited with Miles Kahler).

The Center for Health and Wellbeing (CHW) has been awarded a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to fund a new fellows program. The program will bring a set of fellows to work jointly at the Foundation and CHW for a period of one to two years. These fellows will help RWJF build its capacity for research and research dissemination, strengthen WWS’s capacity for research and training in health and health policy, and play an important role in fostering collaboration between the two institutions.

The newest volume of the journal The Future of Children, “Marriage and Child Wellbeing” (Vol. 15, No. 2), was recently published. This issue features articles on marriage and its effects on children, presenting evidence that stable marriages can improve children’s emotional, intellectual, and economic well-being, and that some well-designed marriage-promotion initiatives may benefit children and families. A policy brief “The Decline in Marriage: What to Do,” authored by the editors of the publication, is available at www.futureofchildren.princeton.edu/briefs/briefs/05_fall_marriage.pdf.

NBC’s The Today Show mentioned The Future of Children journal’s latest volume on “Marriage and Child Wellbeing” on the September 14 show.

The Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination (LISD) began the 2005–06 academic year with a number of new staff members: former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Robert P. Finn is a senior research associate and director of LISD’s initiative on Central Asia; Beth English is a research associate and is editing the Institute’s forthcoming Diplomatic Study Series; Anne-Marie Gardner is a research associate and executive editor of LISD’s Encyclopedia Princetoniensis: The Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Governance and International Diplomacy; and Natasha Gopaul is a special assistant to Institute director Wolfgang Danspeckgruber.

In July, USD sponsored the conference “Strengthening Afghanistan and the Region” in Istanbul, Turkey. The conference, arranged with the Istanbul Policy Center of Sabanci University, convened international experts, diplomatic and military representatives, and practitioners to evaluate the international community’s involvement in Afghanistan during the last four years and suggest effective projects for the years to come.

On September 20, USD co-sponsored a public lecture, “Pakistan’s Role in a Changing World,” with WWS and the Department of Near Eastern Studies; the lecture was delivered by Foreign Minister of Pakistan Kurshid M. Kasuri. On September 29 the Institute hosted Rita Kiefer-Beck, the recently appointed Foreign Minister of Liechtenstein, and members of the Liechtenstein Embassy as part of their first official visit to the United States. USD hosted a retreat and preparatory seminar September 28–29 for members of Austria’s Permanent Mission to the U.N. in anticipation of the Austrian European Union presidency which begins on January 1, 2006. On October 12, the Institute hosted a luncheon discussion, “Afghan Civil Society,” with guest speaker Dr. Susanne Schmidt of Swisspeace and also co-sponsored a lecture by the former Interior Minister of Afghanistan, Ali Jalali, on October 20. At the end of October, USD convened the Tenth Liechtenstein Colloquium on European and International Affairs, “Grand Strategy in the International System,” in honor of Robert G. Gilpin Jr. in Triesenberg, Liechtenstein.

The Policy Research Institute for the Region (PRI) co-sponsored several major conferences early this fall. One of the highlights came on September 6th, when PRI partnered with the NJ State Parole Board to examine the problems convicts face upon reentering society. Over 225 people attended the event, representing scores of faith- and community-based organizations, as well as several state and local law enforcement agencies. Princeton faculty members Bruce Western, Devah Pager, and Hilliard Pouancy also took part. In lectures, panel discussions, and breakout groups the participants considered the ways that different kinds of community organizations can form new partnerships with government to create more effective support systems for newly released parolees. Additional information on recent events can be found at region.princeton.edu.

The Princeton Survey Research Center (SRC), together with the WWS S07: Quantitative Analysis classes, is conducting a poll on the New Jersey gubernatorial election. Results of the poll will be announced in early November, and the data will be used throughout the semester in the classes.

On September 23 the Program on Science and Global Security (SAGS) hosted a symposium on bioterrorism preparedness, “Breaking Barriers: Integrating Human and Animal Public Health Against 21st Century Threats,” also sponsored by the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation with funding from the Policy Research Institute for the Region. Additional information from the conference can be found at the program’s Web site at www.princeton.edu/~glob-sec/Macy/index.html.