

(ASAO Histories)

JANE GOODALE AND THE BRYN MAWR MAFIA

The Origins and Consequences of Including Students in ASAO

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Introduction

Jane Carter Goodale (1926-2008) played important roles in the development of ASAO as one of its early founders, chairs and session organizers. Arguably, her most important contribution was encouraging her students to participate in ASAO early on in their education and academic careers. The results of that encouragement are evident in the number of former Bryn Mawr College undergraduates and graduate students who played important roles in the association themselves, the quality of their academic and intellectual careers, and the ongoing presence and importance of students in general at ASAO meetings. At my first ASAO meeting in 1978 at Asilomar (California), I was privy to a conversation in which Ivan Brady referred to the notably large number of Jane's former and current students present as the "Bryn Mawr mafia". Whether wry or humorous in intention, the expression was promptly adopted by Jane and other ASAOers, like Mike Lieber, David and Dorothy Counts, and Mac Marshall, who over the years also welcomed students into the ASAO ranks. This paper examines the origins and consequences of including students in ASAO meetings and concludes that not only is ASAO a good training ground for future ethnographers but it also provides both its older and younger members with a vast network of ties and opportunities to work together both within the context of ASAO meetings and farther afield.

A lover of ASAO¹

ASAO was a match made in Heaven for Bryn Mawr College professor, Jane Goodale. References to ‘ASAO’ were often made in my presence during my undergraduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania by my advisor Bill Davenport, Ward Goodenough and graduate students Bill Donner and Jim Flanagan, and at ‘P.A.S.’ (Philadelphia Anthropology Society) meetings held at the University Museum and attended by the likes of Temple professor Denise O’Brien and Temple graduate student Lorraine Sexton and, of course, Jane and her mob. It was not, however, until I began graduate studies at Bryn Mawr in the Fall of 1977 that I began to fully appreciate ASAO’s significance to Pacific scholars and especially to Jane.

In every seminar, no matter the topic, Jane wove in the works and words of fellow ASAOers; always presented on a first name basis, always up close and personal with stories shared over dinner and in ASAO sessions. ‘David and Dorothy [Counts]’ and the ‘Melanesian Invasion’ begun in 1973 at the meetings on Orcas Island were code for tight-knit collegiality and collaboration, and why we newly minted grad students should all go to the next ASAO meeting in Asilomar regardless of our intended field sites. A long succession of Jane’s undergraduate and graduate students had attended ASAO meetings and they, too, shared stories in and out of the classroom: some like Fred Myers about the now lesser known ‘Australian Invasion’; Michele Dominy and Judy Huntsman on New Zealand and Tokelau; and Ali Pomponio (then Ali Logan) on young ASAO power couples Mac and Leslie Marshall and Bill and Margie Rodman. Just as Jane called us her ‘chicks’, or the children she never had, ASAO was pure family to Jane, at the time a small association of passionate people like none she had ever known.

In an interview with Jeanette Dickerson-Putman in 1998, Jane commented on how ASAO contributed to Bryn Mawr’s anthropology department. “We were a small department and we

made it a success through our own networks and our own colleagues. The ASAO essentially trained all the people that went to the Pacific, as well as we did” (2008: 42). During her tenure at Bryn Mawr College, Jane supervised eighteen PhD candidates and as many M.A. students. Many of these anthropologists worked in the Pacific such as Annette Weiner, Judy Huntsman, DeVerne Smith, Fred Myers, Mimi Kahn, Ali Pomponio, Debbie Rose, Laura Zimmer (Tamakoshi), Jeanette Dickerson, Pam Rosi, Robert Rubintein, Michele Dominy, Jane Fajans, and Martha Kaplan. Jane was also an outside examiner on nine PhD dissertations -- eight of which were based on ethnographic research in Australian Aboriginal communities -- and one based on Penn student Bill Donner’s work in the Solomons².

Reminiscing on her experience, Jane Fajans wrote that when, as an undergraduate, she first studied Melanesian ethnography with Jane, she had no intention of either becoming an anthropologist or working in Melanesia. Treated, however, as an equal by Jane, Ann Chowning and Annette Weiner, her “vocation grew gradually”. When Fajans pursued graduate studies at Stanford University, her interest in Melanesia and working with the Baining of New Britain, PNG solidified as she was “once again seduced by a cohort of peers, this time through ASAO” – at the time, “a small and intimate group” - and her ties to Jane Goodale (Fajans 2008: 187-88). Mimi Kahn, a graduate student of Jane’s, recalled how “even though her book [*To Sing with Pigs is Human*, Goodale 1995] was not yet published when I left for Papua New Guinea”, Jane’s “ideas invigorated our classes and appeared in papers that she presented at professional meetings”, i.e. ASAO and AAA. “Jane was deeply aware of the socially interactive nature of human nature, both in her own life and in that of the people with whom she worked...” (Kahn 2008:81). Illustrating the benefits of following Jane’s personal example of collegial goodwill and academic collaboration through ASAO and elsewhere, Pam Rosi described some of our bonding

and teamwork, beginning with sharing my housing at UPNG during the first three months of her fieldwork in Port Moresby, drawing on that and other experiences in urban Papua New Guinea and co-writing a paper in Richard Marksbury's 1993 volume on *The Business of Marriage* (a volume that grew out of ASAO sessions), and other associations over the years (Rosi 2008: 94-95). Mike Lieber captures what Jane and others love best about ASAO, and that was and continues to be the conversations it generates: conversations that flow between meetings, offices, and classrooms, conversations that are collaborative in their outcomes (e.g. research planning and conduct, dissertations, books, symposia), and conversations that often involve fruitful squabbling at ASAO sessions and in between on knowledge in Oceania (see Lieber 2008).

A founder of ASAO

Jane Goodale did not birth the idea of ASAEO (the Association for Social Anthropology in Eastern Oceania) and the need for regionally-based comparative studies to bring about progress in “our understanding of social dynamics and social history” (see Mawyer and Howard, this volume). Vern Carroll did. But, elected along with Alan Howard, to the ASAO executive committee in 1971, Jane did, along with Mike Lieber, Alan Howard and others, meet in 1972 to “form ASAO from what was left of its predecessor” ASAEO, and she did take “a leadership role in the defining and redefinition of how ethnographic comparison might best be conceived and implemented in face-to-face engagement” (Lieber 2008: 124). Part of that redefinition and implementation included the introduction of the three different categories of sessions: “informal”, “working” and “symposia”, first fully observed in the 1973 ASAO meetings. Jane seems to have forced the issue at ASAO's first official meeting at Orcas Island in 1972, however, as she and Martin Silverman chaired a “symposium” (Sex Roles in Oceania) at which no formal papers were given and the “exploration” of several topics (“male”, “female”, and “rape”) raised

in that unusual “symposium” morphed into two “symposia” in 1973. Although the male/female session had only three formal papers in 1973, the organizers intended that it would go on to become an ASAO volume, with additional contributors, entitled *Gender in Oceania*.

Not everyone appreciated the three-session system. Vern Carroll’s continuing vision was that “symposia” should be the only sessions to be held at meetings. In a report written in March, 1983 and published in the Spring 1984 Newsletter, Carroll wrote that in an “ideal world, there would never be a need to have more than one symposium (or other sort of time on the annual meetings schedule) on the same topic. (In this connection it might be useful to remember that many of our published symposia involved only one occasion in which the participants met face-to-face)” (see Mawyer and Howard in this volume). In her 1994 ASAO Distinguished Lecture in San Diego (reprinted and only slightly edited in her “Conclusion” to *Pulling the Right Threads*, 2008), Jane commented on the multi-year debate and made it clear that while some ASAOers thought it was too time-consuming to spend three years on a topic, she like “the successfully plodding tortoise” felt that “coming together to nut out the interesting points for comparison” allowed for greater understanding of particular topics “in more general and theoretical terms” (Goodale 2008: 210).

The multiyear discussion format based on ethnographic description and comparison also allowed for students and those returning from the field to get in on the discussions, share their data with others and more quickly become part of the production of Knowledge. One can imagine how many interesting and developing topics might have been missed if ASAO’s annual meeting program relied only on a small cadre of recent PhDs and interested scholars. Knowing this to be true based on her own experience and those of her students, Jane encouraged others to bring students to meetings in order that they and older ASAO members benefit from the ASAO

collaborative process and collegiality. While meetings of the older organization, ASAEO, had a mere handful of women in attendance (Judy Huntsman and several other female anthropologists were first mentioned in a 1970 ASAEO newsletter along with Ward Goodenough's wife, Ruth), Jane's entry brought with it an influx of female members. Generations of Jane's students, including former Bryn Mawr undergraduates Harriet Whitehead, Sherry Ortner, Jane Atkinson, Jane Fajans, Michelle Dominy, and Martha Kaplan attended and in many cases continued attending ASAO meetings for decades, in turn bringing their own students.

The Bryn Mawr Mafia at ASAO Asilomar CA, 1978

The seventh annual ASAO meeting at the Asilomar conference center near Monterey CA, February 15-19, was my first ASAO meeting and an exciting time for me. Twelve of Jane's former and current students attended, some giving papers, some about to go off to the field for the first time, and a few there for the show. With little over 100 members and visitors in attendance (up from over 40 at the first ASAEO meeting in Santa Cruz in 1969), the Bryn Mawr contingent was noticeable and Jane made sure everyone noticed her brood. There were four multi-day Symposia and one working session on the program (a stark difference from the years I was Program Coordinator when, for example, there were 4 symposia, 6 working and 12 informal sessions planned for the Honolulu meeting in 2011). Reviewing the Spring 1978 Newsletter XXVI, I find that Jane and several of her 'chicks' participated in more than one Symposium: DeVerne Smith in *The Role of Anthropology in Contemporary Micronesia* (Len Mason, Chair); Judy Huntsman, DeVerne Smith, Jane Goodale, Bob Rubinstein and Annette Weiner in *The Meaning of Sibling in Oceania* (Mac Marshall, Chair); and Jane Goodale and Bob Rubinstein in *Knowledge in Oceania* (Brad Shore, Chair). Fred Myers chaired a working session on *Ritual Symbolism in Oceania*. As far as I can remember, I was the only Bryn Mawr representative – a

listener only - at the fourth Symposium *Middlemen and Brokers* (Bill Rodman and Dorothy Counts, Chairs), a topic near to my interest in Big Men's role in development in Papua New Guinea. I also attended one of two informal sessions – *Urbanization in the Pacific* (David Counts, Chair) – as migration and urbanization were fast becoming topics of interest to me.

That Bryn Mawrters (long a favorite nickname among Bryn Mawr alumnae and students) were all over the place did not miss the attention of ASAO's outgoing Chair and Program Chair, Ivan Brady. In a small circle at one of the social gatherings, I listened as Ivan jokingly referred to the Bryn Mawr contingent as the "Bryn Mawr Mafia". At the time I thought it was sour grapes on his part, but getting to know his dry sense of humor over the years, I now know better. When word got back to Jane, she embraced the expression and flaunted it. Over time, it became almost mythical in the sense that people did not know where it came from and some thought it predated the 1978 meeting, practically antediluvian. On a more serious note, however, the Asilomar meeting marked a change in ASAO weather as some attendees at the Fellows Meeting "discussed the issue of whether the size and number of formal symposia should be limited" because "some individuals expressed frustration at not being able to attend more sessions". A related concern was that some participants were in two or more symposia at a time. The Fellows agreed that "the Board of Directors should consider both matters and develop new policy as necessary" (Newsletter XXVI, Spring 1978:14). The Bryn Mawr Mafia were not the only double-dippers at the meeting but they and their cohort - the Counts and others who were also bringing students to the meetings and encouraging them to participate - were wanting change.

Shaping ASAO

Over the years, Jane's contributions to ASAO were many. In bringing in her Mafiosa students and friends, they were countless. As a close associate with Penn professors Bill

Davenport and Ward Goodenough – both early leaders in ASAEO – it is not surprising that Jane quickly cottoned onto that prototypical organization and attended the second of the first two meetings in Santa Cruz. Pacific scholars working at Penn, Temple and Bryn Mawr all attended P.A.S meetings and served on the doctoral committees of one another's students. Bill Donner remembers his good fortune to having Jane as both teacher and mentor when he was a Haverford College undergraduate taking courses with her at Bryn Mawr College and a Penn graduate student (Donner 2008: 150). The interweaving and support of faculty and students across institutions was always a part of Jane's collaborative ethics and greatly expanded what the expression Bryn Mawr mafia meant to her (and ASAO).

In 1979, Jane was re-elected to the Executive Board and in 1982-83 served as ASAO Chair. As a result of her encouragement and their own ongoing engagement and love for ASAO, four of the Bryn Mawr Mafia were at various times elected to the ASAO Board and presided over association meetings: Mimi Kahn in Savannah GA (1988), Ali Pomponio on the big island Hawai'i (1993), Michele Dominy (1998-1999) and myself in Vancouver (2000). Annette Weiner was elected AAA Chair in 1991-93, demonstrating some of the reach of the mafia's influence in anthropology. And Mimi Kahn went on to serve as Newsletter editor (1992-1993) and beginning in 2009, I served as program coordinator and organized four meetings: a snowy Alexandria VA (2010), Honolulu HI (2011), Portland OR (2012), and San Antonio TX (2013).

Obvious enough in 1978 to merit a tag, the Bryn Mawr Mafia continued to earn its moniker for many years after. At the 1992 New Orleans meeting, Jeanette Dickerson-Putman chaired a working session on *Women, Age and Power: The Politics of Age Differences Among Women* (in which Jeanette, Jane, Ali and I comprised almost half of the participants), I and Dorothy Counts organized a working session on *The Legitimacy of Violence*, and Jeanette

Dickerson-Putman and I organized an informal session on *Women and Development*. By being in more than three sessions, I broke standard ASAO procedure which is to participate in no more than two sessions of different status in any particular meeting. At the end of the 1992 meeting, Chair Leslie Marshall handed the gavel over to Ali Pomponio. The BMM reigned.

Students as part of the cloth of ASAO

The Bryn Mawr Mafia is more, of course, than a group of scholars who ruled and swaggered about ASAO meetings. Rather, it is an extension of Jane's collaborative ethic. In my very first year as a graduate student at Bryn Mawr, Jane made it abundantly clear to all her students that they were to value collaboration and interaction with one another, to not compete with one another, and above all to not be loners and to isolate ourselves in some ivory tower. She urged us to take seriously the acknowledgements in books, where anthropologists thanked scores of teachers, colleagues and those who assisted them to and in the field. Connecting and collaborating with our peers and others was a crucial part of our learning and preparation for both fieldwork and scholarship. Living her ethic, Jane left her office door open to all of us, contributing a generous amount of her time and ideas to students and colleagues. Encouraging and enacting the same kinds of behavior at ASAO, we were all well-connected and part of larger conversations in our particular areas of interest.

When we returned from the field, Jane and other ASAO members continued the process of grooming us for success: including us in sessions, co-organizing sessions with us and learning from us and encouraging us to take the reins early in the process of becoming sturdy professionals. An example from my own experience elucidates how Jane wove us into the fabric of ASAO and her own work. During my first fieldwork (1982-1983) with the Gende of Papua New Guinea, I discovered and analyzed their use of card-playing as a parallel exchange system

and means of lessening the negative social impacts of economic inequality on villagers' lives by offering a respectable way of 'earning income' to be used for exchange commitments and everyday needs without the shame of handouts and charity. During my post-fieldwork seminar at the University of Papua New Guinea, my analysis of my card playing data received the most attention and I was encouraged to write it up before I left the country as the first post-fieldwork report to be published in *Research in Melanesia* (Zimmer 1983). ASAO member and fellow Madang hand Peter Lawrence (University of Sydney) soon heard of my findings and asked me to write them up for *Oceania* (Zimmer 1986). On my return to Bryn Mawr, Jane too was electrified by my findings, having interesting data of her own on Tiwi gambling, and suggesting we co-organize sessions on the topic at upcoming ASAO meetings. At the closing plenary of the 1984 meeting in Molokai, Jane and I put forth a proposal for an informal session on "Gambling in Oceania". By the 1985 meeting in Salem MA, we had enough interest (nine participants) that we changed the session to a working session. All the while I was working on my PhD dissertation (Zimmer 1985), I was working on the *Oceania* paper, taking care of a family and doing most of the work of organizing an ASAO session! Jane was never one to encourage her students to take it easy. A second working session in New Harmony in 1986 ended in the decision to publish four of the papers (including ones by Jane, me 1987b, Bob Rubinstein--another student of Jane's, and Lorraine Sexton) and an introduction by me (Zimmer 1987a) in a special issue of a journal. Busy with her own work and confident that I could handle it—as she always took the stance that her students could handle just about anything (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, ed. In Press), Jane encouraged me to be the sole editor of the Special Issue of *Oceania* (Zimmer, ed. 1987). Years later, I would be invited by a younger generation of ASAOers to contribute a paper to an ESfO session updating gambling in Melanesia (2014).

ASAO and the importance of networks

The network of friends and colleagues ASAO has graced me with over the years is enormous and has upheld and furthered my career and work beyond anything I might have imagined or hoped for. Jane, herself, knew the value of networks both singular and entangled; lecturing in class on the importance of overlapping networks in Melanesian societies and sharing anecdotes about the mutual support and inspiration of mentors, colleagues and others around the world as she ventured forth on her own intellectual and ethnographic journeys. Reflecting on my first fieldwork in Papua New Guinea (one of the most challenging times in my life), I see clearly how the networks I already had and others that would also soon come to my aid provided both a safety net that would not let me fail and a springboard to a productive future. While my initial networks were made up of faculty and students at Penn, Bryn Mawr and Temple – all members of the Philadelphia Anthropological Society and AAA, and some part of the Philly area Women and Development group – those who were also ASAO members were the strongest threads.

In the months leading up to my departure for Papua New Guinea on February 2, 1982, returned fieldworkers and Bryn Mawr PhD candidates Ali Logan (Pomponio) and Mimi Kahn spent hours instructing me on topics such as the care of tropical ulcers, PNG politics, useful contacts and what to wear (cotton) and not wear (shorts and trousers). At a party hosted by Jeanette Dickerson and Duncan Putman, Jane and Freddy de Laguna urged me to keep a personal journal in addition to the usual field notes and surveys; the journal a means of “returning to the scene” and remembering one’s feelings and discovering with time the significance of all that happened. Other ASAOers and their networks were already paving the way with research permissions and affiliations and connections with UPNG and other PNG institutions like Andrew Strathern and the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies. When I arrived at Jackson’s airport in

Port Moresby I was picked up by Bill Wormsley and stayed with him and his wife while making all the duty calls and getting my research visa extended. When I flew to Lae I was picked up by Hartmut Holzkecht. Ali was friends with both the Wormsleys and Hartmut and Sue Holtzknecht and had arranged that both keep an eye on me.

When things inexorably fell apart as the result of the necessary but harsh and combative politics of anthropology at the time and my fieldwork with the Pindiu was abruptly interrupted forcing me to leave Morobe Province in early April of 1982, mine and others networks saved the day (see Zimmer-Tamakoshi, In Press). Coming out of Lae shell-shocked and ready to return to the States, I was surrounded and supported by national and expatriate scholars familiar with Jane and other Bryn Mawr researchers, many of them members of ASAO or with links to ASAO. All (including Jane and Phil Kilbride and my family by phone) telling me to stay the course and move my project to Madang, one of the three provinces I had received permission to work in before leaving the States for PNG. Louise (whose work had inspired me in the first place) and Makere Morauta (a member of PNG's national Parliament) then took me off with their family for a restorative vacation at Variatu. Assisted by Louise Morauta, Maev O'Collins and August Kituai and cheered on by Peter Lawrence, I relocated to Madang where I have been working with the Gende since May 1982.

When I returned home in May of 1983, Bob Rubinstein was there to counsel me on the nearly universal phenomenon of reverse culture shock which leaves you feeling "crazy" in your own culture. Several years later, I applied for and was hired to teach at UPNG. Maev O'Collins stated that my stick-to-itiveness when I was in a tough situation and my being a student of Jane's nailed my acceptance. At UPNG for three and a half years, my networks expanded exponentially as I was given the additional task of Research Liaison and met every anthropologist who came

through UPNG on their way to the field. When, in 1998, I was voted in as a new member of the ASAO board, Jan Rensel informed me I had received more votes than anyone else had ever received. I knocked that up to having been useful, to one degree or another, to quite a few ASAO members in those days, many of whom stayed with me on their way in or out of Port Moresby or were at least the guest of honor at dinner parties I threw for them.

Like Jane, ASAO has an ethic of collaboration and community among its members. Including students, training them through association with scholars at different times in their careers, and ultimately upholding them with a net of safety and inspiration, ASAO has been and will continue to be – like the ‘mother of dragons’ – the mother of Pacific Anthropology.

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1 Because of my part in organizing sessions in honor of Jane at both ASAO and AAA meetings, and co-editing *Pulling the Right Threads* (2008), I was called upon to speak about Jane and her graduate students at a Bryn Mawr College event in her honor (2007), to write the obituary for Jane in the *American Anthropologist* (2010), and to co-author an obituary for Jane in the ASAO newsletter (2009). I first used the expression “A Lover of ASAO” as the title for my half of the ASAO obituary.

2 Jane taught many hundreds of anthropology undergraduates including Haverford undergrad, Bill Donner, who majored in anthropology at Bryn Mawr before going on to graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania (see Donner 2008: 150).