

**Jane Goodale and the “Bryn Mawr Mafia”:
The Origins and Consequences of Including Students in ASAO***

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Jane Carter Goodale (1926–2008) played important roles in the development of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) as one of its early founders, board 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 undergraduate and graduate students who themselves played important roles in the association, 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 during 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 brought and welcomed students into the ASAO ranks. This paper examines some of 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 an expanded

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network of ties and opportunities to work together in the context of ASAO meetings as well as farther afield.

A Lover of ASAO

ASAO was a match made in Heaven for Jane Goodale as a Bryn Mawr College professor (see Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2009, 2010). References to ASAO were often made in my presence during my undergraduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) by my advisor Bill Davenport, Ward Goodenough, and graduate students Bill Donner and Jim Flanagan, as well as at meetings of the Philadelphia Anthropology Society (PAS), held at the Penn Museum and attended by the likes of Temple University professor Denise O'Brien, Temple graduate student Lorraine Sexton, and, of course, Jane and her "mob." However, it was not 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 one of her seminars, 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 that had been shared over dinner and in ASAO sessions. "David and Dorothy [Counts]" and the "Melanesian Invasion" that had begun in 1973 at the meetings on Orcas Island were code for tight-knit collegiality and collaboration, and reasons 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" (Dickerson-Putman 2008: 42). During her tenure at Bryn Mawr College, Jane supervised eighteen PhD candidates and as many MA 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 Rubinstein, 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 Solomons.

Reminiscing on her experience, Jane Fajans wrote that when, as an undergraduate, she first studied Melanesian ethnography with Jane Goodale, she had no intention of either becoming an anthropologist or working in Melanesia. Treated, however, as an equal by Jane Goodale, Ann Chowning, and Annette Weiner, Fajans's "vocation grew gradually." When Fajans pursued graduate studies at Stanford University, her interest in Melanesia and working with the Baining of New Britain, Papua New Guinea, 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 by her ties to Jane Goodale (Fajans 2008: 187–188).

Mimi Kahn, a graduate student of Jane's, recalled how "even though her book [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” such as 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 the University of Papua New Guinea during the first three months of her fieldwork in Port Moresby; drawing on that and other experiences in urban Papua New Guinea; cowriting a paper in *The Business of Marriage*, an edited collection that grew out of ASAO sessions chaired by Richard Marksby (Rosi and Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993); and other collegial undertakings over the years (Rosi 2008: 94–95). Mike Lieber captured what Jane and others love best about ASAO: the conversations it generates—conversations that flow between meetings, offices, and classrooms; conversations that are collaborative in their outcomes (eg, research planning and conduct, dissertations, books, symposia); and conversations that often involve fruitful squabbling at ASAO sessions and in between meetings about knowledge in Oceania (see Lieber 2008).

A Founder of ASAO

Jane Goodale did not birth the idea of the Association for Social Anthropology in Eastern Oceania (ASAEO) and the need for regionally based comparative studies to bring about progress in “our understanding of social dynamics and social history”; Vern Carroll did. But, elected along with Alan Howard to the ASAO Executive Committee in 1971, Jane—along with Mike Lieber, Alan Howard, and others—did 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 (see Mawyer and Howard’s paper, “A History of ASAO Sessions: Formats and Topics”). 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 had hoped that, with additional contributors, it would go on to become an ASAO volume, provisionally titled “Gender in Oceania” (*ASAO Newsletter* #12 [spring 1973]: 2).

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 *ASAO 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)” (*ASAO Newsletter* #50: 3).

In her 1994 ASAO Distinguished Lecture in San Diego,¹ Jane commented on the debate about multiyear sessions 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 so that they and older ASAO members could benefit from the ASAO collaborative process and collegiality. While meetings of the earlier organization, ASAEO, had a mere handful of women in attendance (Judy Huntsman and several other female anthropologists were first mentioned in the March 1970 *ASAEO Newsletter* [#5], along with Ward Goodenough's wife, Ruth), Jane's entry brought with it an influx of female members as well as male students like Bob Rubinstein and Fred Myers. 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, California, 1978

The seventh annual ASAO meeting at the Asilomar Conference Center near Monterey, California, February 15–19, 1978, 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 just for the experience. 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 multiday symposia and one working session on the program (a stark difference from the years when I was Program Coordinator with, for example, 4 symposia, 6 working sessions, and 12 informal sessions planned for the Honolulu meeting in 2011). Reviewing the Spring 1978 *Newsletter* (#26), 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” (chaired by Len Mason); Judy Huntsman, DeVerne Smith, Jane Goodale, Bob Rubinstein, and Annette Weiner in “The Meaning of Sibling in Oceania” (chaired by Mac Marshall); and Jane Goodale and Bob Rubinstein in “Knowledge in Oceania” (chaired by Bradd Shore. 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” (chaired by Bill Rodman and Dorothy Counts), 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” (chaired by David Counts)—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 and did not miss the attention of ASAO’s outgoing Board Chair and Program Chair Ivan Brady. In a small circle at one of the social gatherings, I listened as Ivan jokingly referred to our contingent as the “Bryn Mawr Mafia” (see Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2008). 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—that it was 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” (*ASAO Newsletter* #26 [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. Over time, ASAO Program Coordinators developed guidelines for session organizers and participants that discouraged participation in multiple sessions and emphasized commitment to staying in a session for all of the discussion, not just giving or listening to selected papers and then dashing off (“session-hopping”).

Shaping ASAO

Over the years, Jane’s contributions to ASAO were many. In bringing in her Mafiosa students and friends, those contributions were countless. As a close associate with Penn professors Bill Davenport and Ward Goodenough—both early leaders in ASAE0—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 PAS meetings and served on the doctoral committees of one another’s students. Bill Donner remembered his good fortune in having Jane as both teacher and mentor when he was a Haverford College undergraduate taking courses with her at Bryn Mawr College and later as 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 to ASAO).

In 1979, Jane was reelected to the Executive Board and in 1982–83 she 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 as chair over association meetings: Mimi Kahn in Savannah, Georgia (1988); Ali Pomponio in Kona on the Big Island of Hawai'i (1993); Michele Dominy in Hilo on that same island (1999); and myself in Vancouver, British Columbia (2000). Annette Weiner was elected American Anthropology Association (AAA) Chair in 1991–1993, demonstrating some of the reach of the mafia's influence in anthropology. Mimi Kahn went on to serve as *ASAO Newsletter* Editor (1992–1993) and, beginning in 2009, I served as Program Coordinator and organized four meetings: in a snowy Alexandria, Virginia (2010); Honolulu, Hawai'i (2011); Portland, Oregon (2012); and San Antonio, Texas (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 constituted almost half of the participants); Dorothy Counts and I 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 an active participant 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 Bryn Mawr Mafia 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 of graduate work 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 isolate ourselves in some ivory tower. She urged us to take seriously the acknowledgments 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 always 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 became well connected and part of larger conversations in our particular areas of interest.

When we students 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, 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 (UPNG), 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 the periodical of the UPNG Department of Anthropology and Sociology, *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 suggested that we co-organize sessions on the topic at upcoming ASAO meetings. At the closing plenary of the 1984 meeting in Moloka‘i, Jane and I put forth a proposal for an informal session on “Gambling in Oceania.” By the 1985 meeting in Salem, Massachusetts, 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, Bob Rubinstein [another student of Jane’s], and Lorraine Sexton) and an introduction by me 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 2018), Jane encouraged me to be the sole editor of the special issue of *Oceania* (Zimmer 1987; see Goodale 1987; Rubinstein 1987; Sexton 1987; Zimmer 1987a, 1987b). Years later, I would be invited by a younger generation of ASAOers to contribute a paper to a European Society of Oceanists session updating gambling in Melanesia, which was also subsequently published in an *Oceania* special issue (Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2014).

ASAO and the Importance of Networks

The network of friends and colleagues that 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 PAA 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 2 February 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 as well as discovering over 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 Holzknrecht. Ali was friends with both the Wormsleys and Hartmut and Sue Holtzknecht and had arranged that they all 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, my own and others networks saved the day (see Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2018). 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) told 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 Papua New Guinea. Louise (whose work had inspired me in the first place) and Makere Morauta (a member of the PNG 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 the University of Papua New Guinea. 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 responsibilities 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, Secretary Jan Rensel informed me that according to her reckoning I had received more votes than any other board nominee 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 had stayed with me on their way in or out of Port Moresby or had at least been 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” in *Game of Thrones*—the mother of Pacific anthropology.

Note

1. This 1994 ASAO Distinguished Lecture was partially edited by Jane, updated with a postscript, and published in a festschrift (Zimmer-Tamakoshi and Dickerson-Putman 2008).

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