

## Survey of Policy Interests and Activities of AAA Sections & Interest Groups Committee on Public Policy (CoPP), Phase Two, October 2011

Dear colleagues, The Committee on Public Policy has been revamped and re-energized, and is eager to begin working with you on our new charge of encouraging sections and interest groups to develop policy-related projects; enhancing communication and cooperation among AAA units on policy issues that cross-cut particular domains; and enhancing the visibility of anthropological contributions to public policy debates. You have been identified as someone willing to serve as liaison. We would greatly appreciate your taking a few minutes to fill out the attached survey and returning it to Susan Greenhalgh and Elisa Sobo, co-chairs of CoPP, by October 21, 2011 ([greenhalgh@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:greenhalgh@fas.harvard.edu), [esobo@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:esobo@mail.sdsu.edu)). With your permission, the results will be posted on the CoPP website so other sections can see what policy activities are being pursued elsewhere.

1. What interests and/or activities does your section or interest group currently have in the realm of public policy? Please elaborate with specific examples.

AQA (formerly SOLGA) has a long record of advancing its mission by providing leadership within the public policy work of the AAA. SOLGA actively lobbied the AAA Executive Board to prevent scheduling annual meetings in US states that retained sodomy laws (prior to their annulment by *Lawrence v. Texas*) and to issue AAA policy statements opposing such laws. In response to President George W. Bush's proposal for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, SOLGA members were instrumental to advising the preparation of the official AAA "Statement on Marriage." <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/marriage.html> Most recently, in response to the invitation to propose a new AAA public policy initiative, following-up on the successful Race Project, AQA members took leadership in drafting a proposal on the topic of kinship and family. The content of this proposal figured prominently in one of the three proposals formally considered by the Executive Board at the close of 2011. AQA remains available to join the AAA in advancing public policy concerns of relevance to its mission: which is to examine diverse "sexual and gender identities and expressions, and their intersections with race, class, disability, nationality, colonialism and globalization."

AQA members are committed to integrating public policy applications in their research. Current members do so in such areas as: advancing legal protections for sexual orientation and gender identity/expression; mobilizing opposition to laws discriminating against sexual orientation or gender identity/expression; community-based advocacy for transgender health care and civil rights; legislative lobbying for LGBTQ youth; advancement of HIV/AIDS education and health care that defends sexual/gender diversity; and many more. These projects take place in rural and urban locales across the United States, Canada, Columbia, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, and South Africa (to name a few) even as they invoke a national and transnational scope for their work. More specific public policy interests advanced by our membership may include:

- Defending human rights in regards to basic freedoms from bodily harm and persecution in nations around the world; support for the full implementation of the Yogyakarta Principles ([www.yogyakartaprinciples.org](http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org))
- Strengthening governmental data collection policies for diverse populations defined by sexual orientation and gender identity/expression
- Supporting policies that provide access to jobs, housing, health care access and education without regard to sexual orientation/gender identity or expression; e.g., employment non-discrimination bills based on sexual orientation/gender identity and expression; language

protecting sexual orientation/gender identity and expression in municipal, provincial, and state charters and constitutions

- In the US, repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), strengthening civil marriage and domestic partnership laws especially in regards to health care, death and inheritance rights and obligations, including the passage of Social Security benefits to a surviving partner, and making permanent the removal of immigration restrictions based on HIV/AIDS status.

Our members' projects demonstrate that anthropology is well-positioned to provide community-level involvement for policy issues—e.g. facilitating town hall-type meetings, voter registration drives, lending technical support to community-led policy initiatives. Additionally, they demonstrate the value of publicizing anthropological insights on timely policy concerns and of translating them to make specific policy recommendations.

2. What potential conversations, collaborations, and/or synergies can you envision around public policy issues?

In accord with our mission, we wish to:

- “Promote anthropological research and education on homosexuality, bisexuality, transgender/transsexuality, and other sexual and gender identities and expressions, and their intersections with race, class, disability, nationality, colonialism and globalization.”
- Incorporate attention to sexual and gender diversity throughout the public policy arena, including within the AAA, by ensuring that culturally-specific ideas regarding sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, sex and sexuality appear in any policy response. Gender and sexuality are inseparable from all other qualities of human life. Therefore, to define a public policy issue without attention to gender and sexuality is to functionally erase how these inform the issue, and how the issue impacts them: notably, for people who are marginalized by their experience or practice of gender and sexuality. AQA can assist public policy institutions and the AAA Executive Board in compiling experts on such topics to assist in crafting culturally-appropriate policies, programs, and legislation.
- AQA specifically stands ready to collaborate with other AAA sections and members who wish to address social inequalities in public policy from an integrated and intersectional approach. We draw on longstanding ties with other AAA sections organized to represent and address social minorities, inequality, and diversity, and we continue to invite collaborations with sections old and new to the AAA.

3. How can CoPP best help your section pursue its policy interests?

Ensure that AQA is called upon when matters of public policy are presented to the AAA for action; and notably, whenever matters invite considering gender, sexuality, and their intersection with diverse forms of social inequality. While we will not hesitate to raise issues that concern us, we wish CoPP to take initiative to identify and advocate for issues in a spirit of collaboration and mutual responsibility.

More specifically, we invite CoPP to assist AQA in advancing the importance of sexual and gender diversity to the next AAA Public Policy initiative (succeeding The Race Project) whether

or not gender or sexuality appear to be named in that future initiative's title. CoPP can identify and investigate this connection in its own right, and it can invite our expertise to explain how sexual and gender diversity are constitutive of the issue.

Additional CoPP initiatives that would assist not only AQA but the AAA membership as a whole could include the following:

- Provide web conference hosting services to allow collaboration and public involvement in policy research, meetings and the dissemination of findings.
- Train anthropologists in how best to collaborate with, conceive and package studies for policy makers and governmental agencies.
- Create a tool for the dissemination of these findings to the media.
- Support media training for anthropologists in regards to communicating studies with policy aspects to the media.
- Create a rapid-response team for contacting anthropologists to comment on legislative breaking-news to both highlight the opinions of anthropology on timely topics and elevate policymakers and the public's understanding of anthropology as a discipline.

4. Could you please identify a permanent contact person -- preferably on the board -- with policy interests, so that we may communicate with him or in the future?

Michelle Marzullo <michelle.marzullo@gmail.com>