Welcome from the Chair

The Las Vegas AAG meetings are quickly approaching. I am excited to say that this year QRSG has sponsored 22 sessions including our featured author meets critic session (please see page 7 for further details). This session will discuss Andrew Tucker's book *Queer Visibilities: Space, Identity & Interaction in Capetown*, on Thursday March 26th from 5:20 to 7:00 pm in the Royale Pavilion 8, Riviera Hotel, 1st Floor.

The QRSG will also commence celebrating its 10 year anniversary during our Business Meeting, which will be held on Tuesday, March 24th from 7:00-8:00 pm in Capri 114, Riviera Hotel, 1st floor.

We will announce the election of our new co-chairs and board members. All are welcome to attend!

In addition to sponsoring sessions we continue to provide research funds to graduate students conducting qualitative research. A special thanks to this year’s awards committee members: Chris McMorran (Chair), Geoff Deverteuil, and Daniel Trudeau. One MA award was given to Kate Skaggs, Department of Environmental Studies, College of Charleston and a PhD award was given to Luna Vives-Gonzalez, Department of Geography, UBC (see more information on page 2).

Please consider serving on the awards committee and encourage your students to apply for these research grants.

Thanks to the QRGS board and membership for help with organizing sessions and we hope to see you all in Las Vegas.

Jennifer Fluri
Co-Chair QRSG

Vote in the QRSG Elections

This is your opportunity to participate, so please email your votes by Saturday, 21 March 2009 to Jennifer.Fluri@dartmouth.edu.

Positions to be elected

Co-Chairs (choose 2):
Susan Mains
Deb Martin
Harold Perkins

Board Members (choose 3):
Melinda Alexander
Hilda Kurtz
Kari Jensen
James Looney

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Publications and Projects of Interest


This is based on a project funded by the ESRC 'Overseas trained South-Asian Doctors and the Development of Geriatric Medicine'. (September 2007-August 2009; £188,939). Co-investigator with Joanna Bornat (Health and Social Care), both at the Open University.


QRSG Research Grant Competition Winners

The Qualitative Research Specialty Group is pleased to announce the winners of its student research grant competition for 2009. One M.A. and one Ph.D. proposal were selected. The winners receive a cash prize to fund their research and recognition at the AAG Annual Awards Luncheon.

The winner in the Master's category ($250) is Kate Skaggs, Department of Environmental Studies, College of Charleston, for the proposal titled "Implications of Emerging Neoliberal Politics on Conservation Governance in the South Carolina Lowcountry."

The winner in the Ph.D. category ($500) is Celia (Luna) Vives-González, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, for the proposal titled "Negotiating Boundaries: Gendered Transnationalism from Senegal to Spain."

This year’s proposals showed that students are making great progress with qualitative research methods, asking critical questions in innovative ways. We thank all of the students who applied to make this the most competitive year yet. Needless to say, the future looks incredibly bright for qualitative research methods.

Chris McMorran, PhD
Program for Teaching East Asia
Center for Asian Studies
University of Colorado
Fluid Knowledge and Transparency: 
Using the Web 2.0 to Promote Compassionate Consumption

Contemporary capitalism conceals the histories and geographies of most commodities from consumers. Consumers are usually only able to see commodities in the here and now of time and space, and rarely have any opportunities to gaze backwards through the chains of production in order to gain knowledge about the sites of production, transformation, and distribution. Over the past decades, the production of commodities has been globalized at a staggering pace, and yet our knowledge about the production of those same commodities has shrunk. The aim of WikiChains is, therefore, to encourage a different type of globalization: a globalization of knowledge that will harness the power of the Internet in order to allow consumers to learn more about the commodities that they buy.

A wiki website (www.wikichains.com) has been set up to encourage Internet users from around the world to upload text, images, sounds, and videos of any node on any commodity chain. All uploaded information will be licensed under the creative commons framework and made freely available. The hope is that ultimately a large enough body of data will be assembled to allow consumers to find out information about the chains of all mass produced commodities. WikiChains will not push any particular political, ethical, or environmental perspectives. Rather, it is hoped that by simply facilitating the free flow of information to transcend barriers of time and space, the project will encourage consumers to make informed economic decisions and be more aware of their economic, social, political, and environmental impacts.

Beyond the classroom, it is also hoped that by simply facilitating the free flow of information to transcend barriers of time and space, the project will encourage consumers to make informed economic decisions and be more aware of their economic, social, political, and environmental impacts.

The project has clear pedagogic as well as research benefits. In the introductory human geography course that I teach, I am encouraging groups of students to research and then represent commodity chains from the points of production in the Global South to the points of consumption in the Global North. Representations of these commodity chains will include not only statistics and maps that measure the intensity and direction of flows, but also pictures, videos, stories, comments and critique. Instead of building representations around static facts, the wiki framework allows represented knowledge to take on a fluid and changeable form. The student projects will therefore not provide a hands-on way to learn about economic geography, but also illustrate the ways that debates and links to supporting data are used to resolve disagreements about how chains should be best represented. The website can also be used to teach students how transparency, knowledge and interventions can affect development at any node on a commodity chain.

Mark Graham, Ph.D. 
Department of Geography 
Trinity College Dublin

For further information please email mark.graham@tcd.ie

Ráquira, Colombia (Photo: S. Mains)

"Contemporary capitalism conceals the histories and geographies of most commodities from consumers."

"The project has clear pedagogic as well as research benefits."
Our university has recently agreed to focus on Writing Competency in the core curriculum and I sought to meet that goal in two World Regional Geography classes by having students develop small group research posters. These posters would a) focus on writing competency with a special focus on thesis development and writing for a general audience, and b) extend the concept of writing competency to include developing peer evaluation techniques. In the fall of 2007 I developed a group poster assignment in two World Regional Geography classes that were also First Year Learning Community classes with a cap of 24 students.

Having returned from a Fulbright Faculty Seminar on “Contemporary South Africa” the previous winter, I wanted students to explore any element of AIDS they found interesting. I told my students that I was not an AIDS expert but that my trip had raised some profound issues for me about the global AIDS pandemic and I hoped students would share that interest. Rising to the challenge, poster topics ranged from contrasting AIDS infection rates in the four Caribbean nations, comparing rates of child infection in four African regions, describing role of four major secondary infections in AIDS deaths, and the role of the individual business and the business community in addressing AIDS. Together students worked on a theme, thesis, introduction, conclusion, and bibliography while individually developing their own element of the project. I assessed their work with a group grade, an individual grade, and a grade that combined an evaluation of their own and others engagement in the project.

Students organized in groups of four and worked together on their project twice during class time with the able assistance of four trained peer tutors from our Writing Center. During the first visit tutors helped students brainstorm topics and develop theses while I moved between the groups giving comment. At the second visit they provided a critical review of the poster’s first draft. Students also received excellent mentoring from our World AIDS Day speaker Dr. Myriam Vučković (Georgetown University). Dr. Vučković flew in to talk about the global public health perspective on AIDS.

She also agreed to spend the morning visiting every poster and talking with student groups about their work. This interaction gave students a sense that they were engaging in a much broader dialogue in global AIDS concerns.

In asking students to write reflectively on what worked best about the writing process, they mentioned that they liked to work collaboratively, blending ideas, and helping one another with research while having separate and clearly defined tasks. Indeed, one student commented that they liked: “Getting everyone to put together a thesis and helping to tweak every little component.” When asked what could have been better about the process, students focused primarily on poor group time management and group communication. When I asked students for “other comments” they were uniformly positive: “My group mates really worked hard and we got the job done,” “I would work with these guys again,” “I was really surprised at my group members, they were absolutely excellent” and “I believed everyone in my group worked to the best of their ability and we worked together effectively.”

(Continued on following page)
Inside World Regional Geography and World AIDS Day Group Posters (Contd.)

I have repeated this assignment with the theme of Human Well-Being fall 2008 with good results. With more recent budget cuts our First Year Learning Community class size has expanded by almost 100 per cent. I’m still tinkering with the group writing process and look forward to creating a modified version of the assignment in the future.

Amanda Rees, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of History and Geography, Columbus State University
Email: rees_amanda@colstate.edu

Spatially Enhanced Mixed-Methods Research Approaches

I was selected as a 2009 Visiting International Scholar at the Institute of Social Research (ISR), University of Surrey (UK). I plan to visit from mid-May to June this coming year. I will work with various researchers in the Institute, particularly the Director, Dr. Nigel Fielding. The goal of this collaborative research is to build on more spatially enhanced mixed-methods research approaches by incorporating GIS and Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). The ISR promotes cutting-edge methodological development in the social sciences in general, and it is home to the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) sponsored CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) program. CAQDAS is a kind of software that has emerged in the past twenty years to assist researchers with the management and analysis of qualitative data. Increasingly, researchers in the CAQDAS community have been showing a strong interest in spatial (geographic) knowledge in social research, particularly ways of linking locational data with qualitative data within the CAQDAS system. I have been very interested in the qualitative uses of GIS, especially a potential integration of GIS with qualitative research in order to produce mixed-methods research.

Jin-Kyu Jung, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Geography, University of North Dakota
Email: jinkyu.jung@und.nodak.edu

“Increasingly, researchers in the CAQDAS community have been showing a strong interest in spatial (geographic) knowledge in social research.”
My postgraduate research examines the ways in which the Caribbean diaspora employs Caribana carnival to claim space and identity in the city of Toronto, Canada.

Given the nature of my research undertaking, I was placed in a position where it was necessary for me to carry out "preliminary fieldwork." The aim of this undertaking was twofold: 1) to prepare a contextual base upon which the essence of my research could be constructed (since Trinidad Carnival is known as the "Mother Carnival" which spawned diasporic Carnivals such as Caribana in Toronto, Canada), and 2) to establish contact with persons involved in diasporic organizations, both in Trinidad and Toronto. Connections were also made with key persons from groups involved in the main elements of carnival: mas (masquerade and dance), calypso and pan (steelband).

This preliminary fieldwork was undertaken in Trinidad during the months of January and February 2009, deliberately coinciding with the Pre-Trinidad Carnival and related events.

The approach taken in attempting to realize the objectives I had set out for myself, was very hands-on; I attended most of the traditional Carnival events, such as Panorama, Dimanche Gras and the Parade of the Bands. These events were strategically chosen in the hope of establishing links with key individuals in the various event arenas. In addition, I obtained a "pass" from the officiating body of Trinidad Carnival--The National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago--which allowed me to access otherwise restricted areas, and where I was permitted to take photographs of the happenings at the various shows.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the professional photographers at these events who were very gracious in accepting this "student researcher" into their ‘fraternity.’

I was able to make some invaluable connections with persons in Toronto through these photographers. It was quite apparent that at this point the traditional methodology of snow-balling taught in the classroom was being manifested practically.

This fieldwork also took me to the St. Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies, where in addition to utilizing the library, I was also able to have some informal talks with local academics who are versed in the area of culture in Trinidad and Tobago. From these talks I was also able to verify some information in the antecedent literature read. I cannot fail to mention the interest that was sparked in the persons I spoke to with regard to my thesis research topic.

I feel that my research has provided an excellent opportunity to actively engage with a fascinating area of qualitative research and Cultural Geography.

Shiva Mohan,
MPhil Candidate,
Geography and Geology Department,
University of the West Indies, Mona.
Email: shiv3us@gmail.com
QRSG Sponsored Sessions at the Las Vegas, AAG Annual Meeting

Monday 3/23
8:00-9:40 am, 2158, Media Geography I: Engaging Media Geography (North Hall N119, Las Vegas Convention Center)
10:10-11:50 am, 2258, Media Geography II: Teaching Media Geography (North Hall N119, Las Vegas Convention Center)
1:00-2:40 pm, 2458, Media Geography III: Media and the Body 1 (North Hall N119, Las Vegas Convention Center)
3:10-4:20 pm, 2558, Media Geography IV: Media and the Body 2 (North Hall N119, Las Vegas Convention Center)
1:00-2:40 pm, 2431, Ethnography in Geography (Skybox 203, Riviera Hotel, 2nd Floor)

Tuesday 3/24
8:00-9:40 am, 3137, Locating the Multiple Politics of Food I (Skybox 209, Riviera Hotel, 2nd Floor)
10:10-11:50 am, 3237, Locating the Multiple Politics of Food II (Skybox 209, Riviera Hotel, 2nd Floor)
1:00-2:40 pm, 3411, Young People, racism and place I (Royale Pavilion 6, Riviera Hotel, 1st Floor)
3:10-4:50 pm, 3511, Young People, Racism and Place II (Royale Pavilion 6, Riviera Hotel, 1st Floor)
5:20-7:00 pm, 3620, Qualitative Data and GIS (Capri 107, Riviera Hotel, 1st Floor)
7:00-8:00 pm, 3642, Media Geography VI: Investigating the Practice of the Critical Geography of Film (Top of the Riv Ballroom South, Riviera Monaco Tower, 24th Floor)

Tuesday 3/24, 7:00-8:00pm QRSG BUSINESS MEETING (Capri 114, Riviera Hotel, 1st Floor)

Wednesday 3/25
8:00-9:40 am, 4126, Conducting, Analyzing, and Writing Qualitative Work (Capri 114, Riviera Hotel, 1st Floor)
1:00-2:40 pm, 4456, Media Geography IX: Geographies of Film and Television (North Hall N117, Las Vegas Convention Center)
3:10-4:50 pm, 4556, Media Geography X: Spaces of Imagination 1
5:20-7:00 pm, 4656, Media Geography XI: Musical YouTube

Thursday 3/26
8:00-9:40 am, 5155, Media Geography XII: Imaginative Spaces (North Hall N116, Las Vegas Convention Center)
8:00-9:40 am, 5158, Participation, social justice and theory 1: short papers (North Hall N119, Las Vegas Convention Center)
3:10-4:50 pm, 5527, Youth Participation in Neighborhood and Community Settings: Part I (US & Intl) (Capri 115, Riviera Hotel, 1st Floor)
5:20-7:00 pm, 5627, Youth Participation in Neighborhood and Community Settings: Part II (US & Intl) (Capri 115, Riviera Hotel, 1st Floor)
5:20-7:00 pm, 5613, 'Queer Visibilities: Space, Identity & Interaction in Capetown' by Andrew Tucker: Author Meets Interlocutors Panel (Royale Pavilion 8, Riviera Hotel, 1st Floor)

Friday 3/27
8:00-9:40 am, 6147, 'Aerographies I': re-thinking unthought elemental and metaphysical assumptions in recent human geographies (North Hall N108, Las Vegas Convention Center)
10:10-11:50, 6247, 'Aerographies II': re-thinking unthought elemental and metaphysical assumptions in recent human geographies (North Hall N108, Las Vegas Convention Center)
We’re Turning 10 in 2010!

Do you have ideas on celebrating the QRSG’s 10th Birthday in Washington, D.C. April 14-18, 2010?

Please come to the QRSG business meeting in Las Vegas-- on Tuesday, 3/24/09, from 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM in Capri 114, Riviera Hotel, 1st Floor. All are welcome!

Student awards will be announced in person, elections for new officers will take place (send nominations to Jennifer Fluri at Dartmouth, Jennifer.Fluri@Dartmouth.edu), and ideas for next year will be discussed.

QRSG: Our Mission

To promote the use and understanding of qualitative research approaches, methods, and tools for purposes of education, research, and public service in the discipline of geography. The group is to work closely with other specialty groups to promote common interests and develop interdisciplinary projects. The group is further charged with bridging the perceived gap between quantitative and qualitative research through dialogue, debate, and establishment of common ground for the purpose of enhancing rigorous research across the spectrum.