

People, Place, Praxis  
April 2010

QRSG 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

# QRSG Newsletter

## QRSG Board Members:

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**Deb Martin**, Clark  
University

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**Jennifer Fluri**

Web Design:

**Meghan Cope**

## Contents:

P.2: Announcements

P.3: QRSG Sponsored  
AAG Sessions

P.4: Publications

P.7: Special Forum on  
Qualitative  
Research

P.9: Notes from the  
Field

*Qualitative Research in Geography Specialty Group, Association of American Geographers,  
<http://www.uvm.edu/~mcope/QRSG/index.html>*

## Welcome from the Co-Chairs

Hello qualitative geographers!

We are looking forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming AAG annual meeting in Washington, DC. The QRSG is co/sponsoring 21 sessions with a great deal of geographical and topical variety. (See **Page 3** for a full listing.) We encourage you to attend as many of these as you can, as they should be engaging discussions touching directly and indirectly on the use of qualitative research in geography. We also want to draw your attention to two special events in honor of our group's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:

**Session 2512, Qualitative Geography: Retrospective and Prospects** will feature **Meghan Cope** reflecting on the developments that led to the formation of our group ten years ago, and upon the multiple perspectives and future directions of qualitative research in geography. Thursday, 4/15/10, from 2:40 PM - 4:20 PM in Park Tower 8206, Marriott Lobby Level.

And immediately following, in the same location:

**Session 2612, Qualitative Futures? A Celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the Qualitative Research Specialty Group** with panelists Stuart C. Aitken, Rachel Pain, Dydia DeLyser, Iain M. Hay, Pamela Moss, and David Butz.

Also, don't forget the business meeting, (which is out-of-date in the printed version of the program, but correct

online). The **QRSG Business Meeting** will be held on **Wednesday, 4/14/10, from 8:00 PM - 9:00 PM in Virginia Suite B, Marriott Lobby Level**. Please try to attend as we will finish our board elections, select committees for next year, and identify upcoming programs or initiatives. It's also a great way to get to know other qualitative researchers in geography!

A special thanks to this year's student paper committee members: Geoff Deverteuil (Chair), Chris McMorran, and Anu Shabhlok. This year's award winners are announced on **Page 2**. Please consider serving on the awards committee and encourage your students to apply for these research grants.

Finally, we must acknowledge the many contributions of Meghan Cope who ushered this specialty group into the world and continues to remain instrumental to its functioning by maintaining our website. Thank you!

With best wishes—see you in DC!

Deb Martin and Susan Mains,

Co-Chairs

**Happy 10<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary!**

## Announcements

### Vote in the QRSG Elections

This is your opportunity to participate, so please email your nominations by **Monday, 12 April, 2010** to Susan Mains ([susanroaming@yahoo.com](mailto:susanroaming@yahoo.com)) and Deb Martin ([demartin@clarku.edu](mailto:demartin@clarku.edu)).

**Positions to be elected:**

Secretary (2010-2012)

Treasurer (2010-2012)

3 Board Members (2010-2012)

More information about our activities can be found on our website at:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~mcope/QRSG/index.html>

## Congratulations!

### QRSG Student Research Grant: Winners Announced

The Qualitative Research Specialty Group is delighted to announce the winners of our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Student Research Grant competition for 2010. The winners receive a cash prize to fund their research and recognition at the AAG Annual Awards Luncheon.

At the PhD level:

**Zoe O'Reilly**, National University of Ireland—Maynooth, for her research on “Counter Topographies of Forced Migration: Narratives of Identity and Belonging.”

At the Masters level:

**Samantha Herr**, University of Kentucky, for her project exploring “Bicycle-Commuting: Greening the City and Citizen-Subject.”

Congratulations to both of you!

And, we would like to thank all of the students who applied for making this a stimulating and very encouraging demonstration of ongoing dynamic qualitative research!

Washington DC, AAG

**QRSG Sponsored Sessions at the Washington DC,  
AAG Annual Meeting**

**1821 Qualitative Research Specialty Group Business Meeting**

Wednesday, 4/14/10, from 8:00 PM - 9:00 PM in Virginia Suite B, Marriott Lobby Level

**1549 Spatial Analysis and Modeling in Professional Practices: Ethnographic Case Studies**

Organizer(s): [Kevin Leander](#) - Vanderbilt University, [Rogers Hall](#) - Vanderbilt University

Wednesday, 4/14/10, from 2:40 PM - 4:20 PM in Lincoln Room 5, Marriott Exhibition Level

**1632 Challenges in Children's Research: Bumps in the Road from Theory to Practice**

Organizer(s): [Elise Bowditch](#) - University of Washington, [Dena Aufseeser](#) - University of Washington

Wednesday, 4/14/10, from 4:40 PM - 6:20 PM in Marriott Ballroom Balcony D, Marriott Mezzanine Level

**2163 Reflexivities of Today / Geographies of Tomorrow: Graduate Students Reflect on Fieldwork**

Organizer(s): [Anna Cieslik](#) - Clark University, [Kevin Keenan](#) - College of Charleston

Thursday, 4/15/10, from 8:00 AM - 9:40 AM in Council, Omni Shoreham

**2217 Cyborg Spaces and Monstrous Places: Critical Geographic Engagements with Harawayian Theory**

(Panel) Organizer(s): [Maureen H. Hickey](#) - University of Washington, [Matthew W. Wilson](#) - Ball State University

Thursday, 4/15/10, from 10:00 AM - 11:40 AM in Park Tower 8219, Marriott Lobby Level

**2512 Qualitative Geography: Retrospective and Prospects ([Meghan Cope](#))**

Organizer(s): [Deborah G. Martin](#) - Clark University, [Susan P. Mains](#) - University of the West Indies-Mona

Thursday, 4/15/10, from 2:40 PM - 4:20 PM in Park Tower 8206, Marriott Lobby Level

**2612 Qualitative Futures? A Celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the Qualitative Research Specialty Group**

(Panel) Organizer(s): [Meghan Cope](#) - University of Vermont, [Dydia DeLyser](#) - Louisiana State University

Thursday, 4/15/10, from 4:40 PM - 6:20 PM in Park Tower 8206, Marriott Lobby Level

**3248, 3447, 3547 and 3647 Exploring the Geographies of Food I, II, III, and IV**

Organizer(s): [John R. Grimes](#) - Eastern Kentucky U, [Kathryn Morrison](#) - U of Victoria, [Garrett Graddy](#) - U of Kentucky

Friday, 4/16/10, from 10:00 AM - 11:40 AM in Lincoln Room 4, Marriott Exhibition Level; 12:40 PM - 2:20 PM, 2:40 PM - 4:20 PM, and 4:40 PM - 6:20 PM in Lincoln Room 3, Marriott Exhibition Level

**3419 Fieldwork in an African Setting I**

Organizer(s): [Ryan Zachary Good](#) - University of Florida, [Caroline Faria](#) - Dartmouth College

Friday, 4/16/10, from 12:40 PM - 2:20 PM in Thomas Paine, Marriott Lobby Level

**4412 and 4512 Rethinking Islandness I and II: Discursive Spaces and Tidalectics in Island Worlds**

Organizer(s): [Amy L McCleary](#) - U of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, [Joseph Palis](#) - U of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, [Matthew J. Reilly](#) - U of North Carolina - Chapel Hill

Saturday, 4/17/10, from 12:40 PM - 2:20 PM and 2:40 PM - 4:20 PM in Park Tower 8206, Marriott Lobby Level

**4424, 4524 and 4624 Critical Views of Militarism/ Militarization I and II and Panel**

Organizer(s): [Jennifer Fluri](#) – Dartmouth, [Lorraine Dowler](#) - Penn State University  
Saturday, 4/17/10, from 12:40 PM - 2:20 PM, 2:40 PM - 4:20 PM, and 4:40 PM - 6:20 PM in Harding, Marriott, Mezz Level

**5105 and 5205 New Frontiers of Post-Conflict Reconstruction I and II**

Organizer(s): [Erinn Patrick Nicley](#) - University of Illinois  
Sunday, 4/18/10, from 8:00 AM - 9:40 AM and 10:00 AM - 11:40 AM in Ethan Allen, Marriott Lobby Level

**5416 Qualitative Research in China**

Organizer(s): [Amy Zader](#) - University of Colorado - Boulder, [Melissa Yang Rock](#)  
Sunday, 4/18/10, from 2:00 PM - 3:40 PM in Park Tower 8216, Marriott Lobby Level

**5463 and 5563 B/ordering Europe: Internal and external borders in the European Union I and II**

Organizer(s): [Celia \(Luna\) Vives-Gonzalez](#) - University of British Columbia, [Maria Lois](#) - Prof. University Complutense  
Sunday, 4/18/10, from 2:00 PM - 3:40 PM and 4:00 PM - 5:40 PM in Council, Omni Shoreham

## Publications and Projects

***Qualitative GIS: A Mixed Methods Approach*** (Sage, 2009)

**Meghan Cope and Sarah Elwood (Eds.)**

Geographic Information Systems are an essential tool for analyzing and representing quantitative spatial data. Qualitative GIS explains the recent integration of qualitative research with Geographical Information Systems

With a detailed contextualising introduction, the text is organised in three sections:

**(1) Representation:** examines how researchers are using GIS to create new types of representations; working with spatial data, maps, and other visualizations to incorporate multiple meanings and to provide texture and context. **(2) Analysis:** discusses the new techniques of analysis that are emerging at the margins between qualitative research and GIS, this in the wider context of a critical review of mixed-methods in geographical research. **(3) Theory:** questions how knowledge is produced, showing how ideas of 'science' and 'truth' inform research, and demonstrates how qualitative GIS can be used to interrogate discussions of power, community, and social action

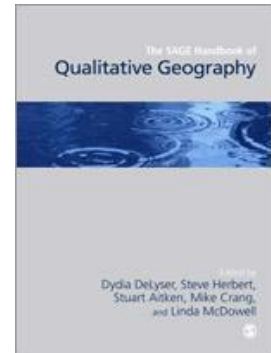


Making reference to representation, analysis, and theory throughout, the text shows how to frame questions, collect data, analyze results, and represent findings in a truly integrated way. An important addition to the mixed methods literature, Qualitative GIS will be the standard reference for upper-level students and researchers using qualitative methods and Geographic Information Systems.

'Qualitative GIS is coming of age, and this definitive collection explains why it deserves broad attention. These carefully selected essays by leading researchers, organized around a broad conception of qualitative GIS that extends beyond multi-media data integration to embrace new software tools and interpretive, situated epistemologies, will push readers to rethink not only their preconceptions about qualitative GIS, but also about GI science and critical GIS. GIS researchers, practitioners, observers and users will find much to chew on here' - **Professor Eric Sheppard, University of Minnesota, USA**

***The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*** (Sage 2009)

**Dydia DeLyser, Steve Herbert, Stuart Aitken, Mike Crang, and Linda McDowell (Eds.)**



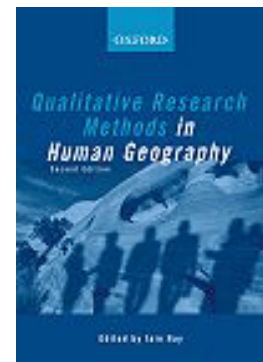
Exploring the dynamic growth, change, and complexity of qualitative research in human geography, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography* brings together leading scholars in the field to examine its history, assess the current state of the art, and project future directions. Moving beyond textbook rehearsals of standard issues, the **Handbook** shows how empirical details of qualitative research can be linked to the broader social, theoretical, political, and policy concerns of qualitative geographers and the communities within which they work. The book is organized into three sections: **Part I: Openings** engages the history of qualitative geography, and details the ways that research, and the researcher's place within it, are conceptualized within broader academic, political, and social currents. **Part II: Encounters and Collaborations** describes the different strategies of inquiry that qualitative geographers use, and the tools and techniques that address the challenges and queries that arise in the research process. **Part III: Making Sense** explores the issues and processes of interpretation, and the ways researchers communicate their results.

Retrospective as well as prospective in its approach, this is geography's first peer-to-peer engagement with qualitative research detailing how to conceive, carry out and communicate qualitative research in the twenty-first century. Suitable for postgraduate students, academics, and practitioners alike, this is *the* methods resource for researchers in human geography.

***Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*** (Oxford University Press, 2010)

**Ian Hay (Ed.)**

The third edition of *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography* edited by Ian Hay has just been published (Feb 2010) by Oxford University Press, Toronto. The success of the book's earlier editions in North America saw publication shift from Oxford (Australia) to Oxford (Canada) for this new edition.



The book now includes a new chapter by Jamie Baxter on 'Case Studies'; a completely rewritten chapter by Gordon Waitt exploring Foucauldian discourse analysis; and extensive modifications to other chapters to reflect the ways in which new technologies are changing qualitative research methods. More details about the book, including full contents and author details, are available at: <http://www.oupcanada.com/catalog/9780195430158.html>.

Digital Literary Atlas of Ireland, 1922-1949

Charles Travis

The *Digital Atlas of Ireland, 1922-1949* (<http://dho.ie/drapier/node/189>) site being constructed by Dr. Charles Travis (ctravis@tcd.ie) of Trinity College Dublin will host interactive literary, historical, and biographical Web 2.0 timeline maps featuring selected Irish writers of the period. This project illustrates the emerging potential of Humanities Geographical Information Systems (HGIS) as applied in the fields of literary and cultural studies.

By employing the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's EXHIBIT open source software in conjunction with Google Doc and Earth functions, readers of the atlas will be able to navigate the Donegal hills and Inniskeen drumlins represented in Peadar O'Donnell and Patrick Kavanagh's works respectively, and explore the 'Big House' parlours and provincial towns which anchor the prose of Elizabeth Bowen, Molly Keane and Kate O'Brien.

For example, readers will be able to chart the poetic wordscapes of Austin Clarke and John Hewitt, the Gaelic hinterlands of Máirtín Ó Cadhain and the spectral landscapes of Forrest Reid. In addition, Samuel Beckett's Paris and Louis

MacNeice's London feature in the atlas and can be analyzed in conjunction with Michael McLaverty's Belfast, Flann O'Brien's Dublin and Frank O'Connor's Cork. The atlas will also feature historical maps from Trinity's Glucksman Memorial Map Library, rendered by GIS software, and linked to interactive features in Google Earth. This will provide users with a digital geo-spatial research platform from which to undertake personalized surveys of the unique relationship between writers, culture and environment in Ireland during the early twentieth century.



(Right) A screen-shot sample of Irish Poet Patrick Kavanagh's page from the *Digital Literary Atlas of Ireland* web site. Kavanagh's page features a 'Chronotopic Map' of his native Parish of Inniskeen in County Monaghan. This was the site of his early poetic inspiration.'



Dr Travis is Research Fellow with the Trinity Long Room Hub in the Digital Humanities and a member of the Irish Environmental History Network (<http://www.tcd.ie/longroomhub/iehn/profiles/travisc.php>). His book *Literary Landscapes of Ireland: Geographies of Irish Stories, 1929-1946* (<http://www.mellenpress.com/mellenpress.cfm?bookid=7844&pc=9>) has just been published by Mellen Press and examines the relationship between landscape and identity in the works of nine Irish writers who published English language novels between 1929-1946. Focusing upon the distinct experiences and depictions by these Irish writers, an engagement

with Mikhail Bakhtin's 'Historical Poetics' sets the periodicity of early post-independent and partitioned Ireland in rhythm with the distinct senses of spaces of culture to which each writer's works give birth.

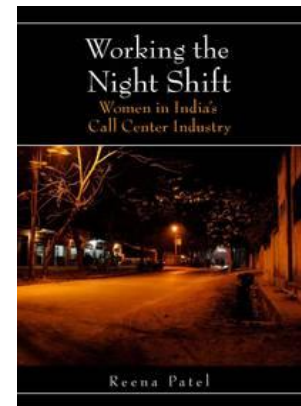
## Qualitative Research Forum: Thoughts from QRSG Board Members

As part of our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reflections on the role and changing influences of qualitative research in geography, we asked members of the QRSG Board to share with us their own research experiences. These are included below and provide thought-provoking examples of the varied opportunities and challenges posed by qualitative—and mixed method—methodological approaches.

**Reena Patel** (reenap\_70@hotmail.com), [www.working-the-nightshift.com](http://www.working-the-nightshift.com)

"Call center job equals call girl job!"—This theme and others such as "Who will marry her?" emerged during the course of research on India's call center industry. Without a doubt, qualitative methods were central to the emergence of such surprising findings, at least they were a surprise to this researcher during the initial stages of fieldwork.

In my upcoming book, *Working the Night Shift: Women in India's Call Center Industry* (Stanford University Press, Spring 2010), the qualitative methods I drew from—such as focus groups, structured interviews, and participant observation—were central to uncovering how the globalization of customer service affects the lives of women employed in this rapidly-expanding industry. From leading me to re-think how "feminization of labor" narratives are conceptualized to understanding how night shift employment affects a woman's worth on the arranged marriage market, the use of qualitative methods that allowed me to expand the scope of this book in ways that I otherwise would not have anticipated.



**Live it up any shift day or night!**

Welcome to Supersight Ceequence, an International contact center catering to clients across the globe.

We are currently expanding our relationship with a leading UK based financial services company specializing in the mortgage sector and are looking for experienced telesales people. (night shifts)

For all those who are tired of the night shifts, you also have the opportunity to work in a regular day shift catering to our Australian client who is specializing in fund raising for several leading Australian charities.

We offer an International working environment coupled with a highly incentive oriented remuneration and superior growth opportunities. For the above two clients we require

**Telesales Representatives**

- ◆ You must have 6 months + experience in Telesales in an International call center
- ◆ Excellent Communication Skills
- ◆ Exceptional Sales and listening skills

Walk-in interviews on 10, 11, 12 & 13 Dec 2003 between 10 a.m. & 6 p.m. at  
66-67, Gowdia Mutt Road, Royapettah, Chennai - 600 014.

Software programs designed for qualitative research have also been central to my call center research. NVivo 7, for example, allowed me to perform a narrative analysis based on coding and categorizing interviewee responses. I was also able to integrate research notes taken during participant observation as well as newspaper accounts, journal articles, and popular fiction relating to women's participation in the call center industry into this narrative analysis. This level of coding allowed me to analyze the data across a broad spectrum of issues as well as sources (e.g., from interviews to newspaper reports). In essence, by centralizing all the data sources I was able to uncover themes and patterns that I had failed to give consideration to at the beginning stages of the research.

**Heather Castleden** (heather.castleden@dal.ca), **University of Victoria**

Visual data is now recognized as an effective method and medium for shared interpretation in community-based participatory research. It is also recognized as having the ability to assist individuals with recording and reflecting on community issues, encouraging group dialogue on these issues, influencing policy-makers, and instigating change. In my doctoral research on understanding human-nature relationships, I modified Photovoice to engage Aboriginal participants in a culturally-meaningful production and storying of visual images in an effort to create participant ownership over, and democratization of, the research process and results. Findings suggest that this process can also extend the observational aspect of Aboriginal knowledge by coupling imagery with stories, and can offer a means by which cultural continuity can be established.

As a methodologist, I am eager to develop, apply, and test other innovative research methods that will complement the ways that social/environmental justice and postcolonial approaches create a platform for marginalized peoples to speak. Consequently, part of my postdoctoral program involved training in the use of digital storytelling, which is emerging as a powerful tool for effectively accessing, analyzing, and sharing stories in the health sector. Digital storytelling is an approach that emphasizes personal voice and experiences by weaving narrative, images, motion, and music, creating a multi-dimensional story. I see this format as a possible extension of the postcolonial utility of Photovoice to communicate, from a social/environmental justice framework, amongst stakeholders who are engaged in contentious decision-making processes, a method that has the potential to particularly resonate with many Aboriginal practices of oral history. I plan to use digital storytelling in a proposed study on access to clean and safe drinking water for Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

In a second study, I (co-led with Valorie Crooks, Simon Fraser University) am proposing to engage Aboriginal artists in a study on palliative care. Artists will be asked to produce a piece of art (e.g., painting, carving, weaving, etc) that represents their respective cultural beliefs regarding the life cycle, and particularly the end-of-life stage. In the second part (once their art piece is complete), they will be asked to participate in an interview with the two-fold goal of: (1) documenting their stories relating to the finished artistic creation, and (2) exploring their perspectives on the value of using art as a therapeutic intervention for creating a sense of wellbeing for Aboriginal people who are dying and their caregivers. This exercise, we are referring to as “ArtiSTory”, is also an alternative extension of the processes and outcomes associated with the Photovoice approach. Following the interviews, an art exhibit will showcase the artistic creations associated with death and dying. A survey distributed to exhibition attendees will document their perceptions of the value and effectiveness of art for making sense of and supporting the death and dying process. The survey will also ask for perceptions of the cultural applicability and relevance of using Aboriginal art in Aboriginal-focused health research.

**Harold A. Perkins** (perkinsh@ohio.edu), **Ohio University**

I have only been conducting qualitative research for about eight years. I'd like to take a moment to write about the concerns I've been struggling with in doing qualitative research methodologies, instead of writing about the projects I've completed during this time. In my relatively short career I've come to the conclusion that we practitioners of qualitative research methods are quite fortunate because our work often brings us in direct contact with many different kinds of people. Not just other academics- I'm talking about those folks frequently referred to as 'research subjects' that we interview and observe. We often depend on them to provide us with data and insights that further our own careers. But working with these people comes with important obligations we must fully consider. First and foremost we have to make certain that our work will not harm those who provide us with valuable data. Human subjects testing and internal review boards serve an important purpose in this regard. But the ethical considerations they measure are circumscribed. As researchers we still have to self-regulate the roles we play in relation to

the people with which we come into contact. Shall we, as privileged academics, consider ourselves to be voices for the disempowered people that we interview? Or are we to be interpreters? By extension, to what degree should our research benefit the very people who participate in our studies?

I first became aware of the profundity of these kinds of questions when I was interviewing a man who had suffered longstanding injustices in his workplace. He broke down and cried during our interview as he recalled years of racial discrimination by his supervisors. He hoped that his interview with me would somehow help him find justice. At that point I had to reiterate my research goals and explain to him that I intended to publish the findings of my research, including excerpts of his interview, in an academic journal. I had to be honest with him that I was skeptical that my work would directly improve his circumstances. He told me he understood and we continued the interview. That meeting really got me thinking about how I might profit as an academic from someone else's difficulties. I admit I felt some guilt when the paper with the respondent's interview was eventually published.

These kinds of concerns were debated at the first Summer Institute in the Geographies of Justice in Athens, Georgia during the spring of 2007. Consensus on these matters was not reached during our group discussions. But there was general agreement that it is necessary to conduct research that not only gives voice to oppressed groups, but also interprets the geographic contexts in which people wage their struggles. Qualitative methodologies provide much potential for activist-oriented research in this regard, but such research poses problems for ethnographers who must continuously 'prove' the legitimacy of their methods to their peers. Therefore, we continue to balance our work on a tightrope. On the one hand we have to be accountable to our academic peers to survive in the university. On the other, we should strive to do research that pays back the people that help us achieve our own research and career goals. How do we engage in qualitative research that makes a difference beyond the ivory tower? It's a complicated question for sure. But I know I need to keep thinking about it because I would not be sitting in this office if not for the people who kindly gave me their time and insights as part of my ethnographic research. I sincerely hope that we as a qualitative research community continue to vigorously pursue these important questions.

## Notes from the Field

### **Gender and Urban Public Space: Some Explorations from the Field**

**Tanusree Paul** (paul.tanusree@gmail.com), **Jawaharlal Nehru University**

My M.Phil dissertation is based on a primary field survey in Kolkata (December 2007- February 2008). The study aims to understand whether the public places in the city are embedded in the existential gendered connotations of space. Engendering of space is a complex process, which is enforced by dominant social discourses; produced and reproduced by bodies embedded in space, time and culture through their everyday behaviour. Since such behaviour is often unconsciously generated and acted out by individuals, I assumed that only face-to-face questionnaire survey might appear to be inadequate to unearth the causative reasons that lie in the hindsight of such behaviour. Consequently, I used both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The former included cognitive mapping, focus group discussions and capturing people's 'act' of using space through photographs at various functional areas of the city and during different times of the day; and the latter included structured questionnaire surveys. Some of

the qualitative methods have been adapted from the 'Gender and Space Project' by PUKAR, Mumbai. I selected Kolkata because it is considered to be a relatively safer city in the Indian social space.

To understand some sense of people's cognitive mapping, a group of about 50 boys and girls in the age group of 22–25 years were provided with a hypothetical map that showed stable features of the cityscape. The participants were asked to map the location of the following groups of people in the morning (at about 9 am) and in the evening (at 7:30 pm): young children, teenage boys and girls, middle-aged men and women, both mobile and stationary. Another 50 women aged 20–25 years were asked to trace their path on a given map and also to chart out the reasons for following the specific routes. Sequential photographs provided information on people's movement and occupancy of space at different locations as well as times. Information from the photographs was collated and mapped with the help of Arc Map software. In addition, about 180 women from different socio-economic backgrounds were interviewed through structured questionnaires. This particular survey was exploratory in nature and the samples were selected through stratified random sampling.

A content analysis of the photographs as well as the cognitive maps demonstrates that while men occupy public spaces at rest as well as in motion, women occupy these spaces in purposive movement. The study also shows that places such as central business areas and wholesale markets—which provide the chief livelihood opportunities as well as recreational places—appear to be more masculine in nature. Mapping people's perceptions re-iterates these observations. At all times of the day, women are perceived as outnumbering men as moving bodies in public spaces (except in office spaces). Places like shops, markets, schools, etc., where women are perceived to be moving, are those places that entail purposive movement. Such perceptions are contingent upon societal reticence regarding women's presence in public places as purposeless loiterers—they are more acceptable in public places with a legitimate purpose. On the other hand, 'hang-out' spaces, such as lottery shops and roadside tea stalls, are perceived to be overwhelmingly occupied by men in leisurely acts.

My questionnaire survey also reveals intriguing revelations; in the absence of potential physical threats to women in the city of Kolkata, the latter's mobility in public spaces is remarkably proscribed through 'socially produced' fear and normatives about 'ideal femininity'. Women's legitimate right to use public spaces varies with time of day as well as their socio-economic characteristics. Purposeful utilization makes women mere restricted users of space and not legitimate owners. In addition to purpose, women's forms of occupancy and utilization of public space, can gain legitimacy over time (in addition to being influenced by factors such as, age, marital and economic status). The idea that women are sexually vulnerable, gets reflected in females' greater fear in public spaces and, consequently, their limited power over these locations.

My study, therefore, contributes to understandings of the ways space shapes individual identity and in turn, itself gets constituted by these social identities. It also emphasizes the importance of employing mixed research methods for a holistic comprehension of social and behavioral issues.

### **A Qualitative study on Human perception of Black Bears in Mammoth Lakes**

**Rachel Davis** (rhd901@gmail.com) and **Mike Nichols** (mdnlbc@gmail.com),  
**CSU, Long Beach**

In November 2009, the community of Mammoth Lakes, CA provided the setting to conduct a study for a graduate course in advanced qualitative research methods at California State University, Long Beach. Our study consisted of interviewing groups representing a balanced cross section of the community in order to gauge ideas and perceptions of interaction with urbanized or habituated black bears. The results of the study illustrated a serious divide in the community, between wildlife management policy makers and the members of the local community who feel an emotional connection to the bears.

After interviewing members of the local government, wildlife management groups and community, it was clear that the bear issue has polarized these groups. The utilization of anthropogenic foods and the anthropomorphic representations of the bears in the media and community sentiments, seem to represent these bears as being near-human. This proved difficult for our research team because regardless of their hybrid status, bears cannot be interviewed. Motives, desires, needs and injustices can only be projected. To capture the role of the bear in the community, perceptions became our main source of data.

The majority of residents interviewed in our research perceived the bears as members of the community with a 'right' to live within it. Protection and non-lethal stewardship of the bears is a high priority. Bears in the community have also attained an iconic status. Attempts to implement bear management policies are becoming increasingly contested; exacerbated primarily by the media and a local bear advocacy group.

Several wildlife management planners that we interviewed consider this emotional connection to the bears as an opportunity to educate the community about ecosystem carrying capacity and anthropogenic food sources. Educating the community about the serious consequences of an oversubscribed bear population and providing unnatural food sources to the bears may very well change human behavior that has become naturalized. Showing the community explicitly how the bears are at risk of dying from starvation is a controversial idea that is also being considered.



(Right) Research participant in Mammoth Lakes community. (Below) Rachel Davis at a local post office where impromptu interviews were held.



Our team of four graduate researchers felt it best to split into smaller units to conduct our interviews. As a result not all researchers were exposed to the same discussions and interactions with the groups. Because of personal feelings or compelling cases, our research team found it difficult not to advocate for the interests and accurate representation of their separate interviewees. The question of whether or not bears are members of this community was not one that we were expecting to encounter nor do we have a clear plan for addressing it. However, this research has provided us with a truly rich experience of the bear management struggles in Mammoth Lakes and of the struggles within, and potential for,

qualitative research. The use of semi-structured interviews has provided us valuable insight into a community that is working to develop policies that are considerate of bears, the ecosystem and public safety. This study also expanded our views of how wildlife is managed in a rural, eastern sierra community.

## Barriers of Unfamiliarity

**Tim Reynolds** (graypennell@gmail.com), **Union Institute and University**

Over the last few years, millions of people have been settling new colonies in virtual worlds. While there are many quantitative reports, or booster stories, about the virtual world of *Second Life* (SL), only the anthropologist, Tom Boellstorff's *Coming of Age in Second Life* (2008) tackles the culture of SL directly. He proclaimed it a pure expression of the Ancient Greek *techne*—applied science or art.

Finding his work intriguing, I question this universal statement and hope to examine it by studying three different regions in SL. One is *Caledon*, a *techne* land, embracing the subculture of *Steampunk* by creating a Victorian landscape of clockwork and steam. The second, called *Information Archipelago*, is run by an amalgamation of universities and libraries; its landscape is an expression of *episteme* or pure knowledge, the opposite of *techne*. Lastly, is *West of Ireland*, which embraces Irish culture to attract donors to the Irish charity, *Project Children*.

Despite the limited studies by geographers exploring virtual worlds, I have chosen a landscape approach to compare these three regions. I apply lessons from humanistic geographers like J.B. Jackson, Yi-Fu Tuan, David Ley, Paul Adams, and the more poststructural approach of Denis Cosgrove. The result is an ethnographic study, to identify what Geertz calls a 'thick description,' of the signs, symbols and signals of each of the regions' landscapes, in order to explore to what extent these regions successfully convey their iconography to viewers and users.

While my study uses relatively traditional methodologies, I have faced many difficulties in achieving approval for the study at the institutional level. I have found barriers of unfamiliarity with SL from students, professors, and the Internal Review Board hard to overcome. While I have cited many articles, I have found providing pictures--capturing the visual experiences of SL--to be the quickest way to overcome this wariness and an overemphasis on demographic data. Limited previous studies, a large volume of projected transcripts from interviews, and developing an efficient system of content analysis have also posed significant methodological challenges.

Despite these barriers of unfamiliarity, I find being on the cutting edge of an emerging area of research energizing. I hope to continue using ethnographic and landscape methodologies to discover creative communities in other contexts. Although the study is not yet finished, I predict that SL is not universally *techne*, but the parts that are create the most dynamic and vibrant landscapes and cultures.

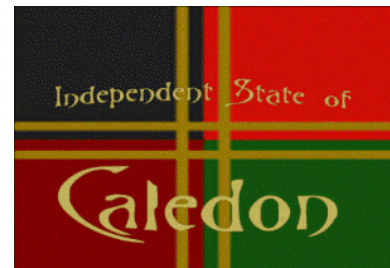
Boellstorff, T. (2008). *Coming of age in Second Life: An anthropologist explores the virtually human*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

*Caledon* <http://www.steamlander.com/community/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=2206>

*Caledon's Wiki* [http://www.steampunkwiki.com/index.php?title=Caledon\\_Wiki](http://www.steampunkwiki.com/index.php?title=Caledon_Wiki)

*Information Archipelago* <http://infoisland.org/>

*West of Ireland (WOI)* <http://www.irelandsl.org/>



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Discussion List:

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Meghan Cope for  
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**We're 10 in 2010!**

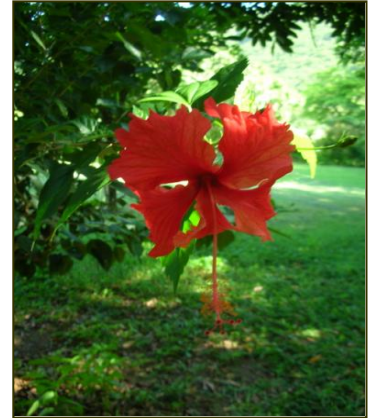
Come and join us for our 10<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary special sessions and  
Board Meeting at the AAG  
Conference in Washington, DC.

Student awards will be announced in  
person, elections for new officers will  
take place, and ideas for next year  
will be discussed.

Do you have ideas for upcoming  
activities or projects linked to the  
QRSG mission?

Please share them and come along  
to the QRSG business meeting in  
DC-- on **Wednesday, 4/14/10,**  
**from 8:00 PM - 9:00 PM in**  
**Virginia Suite B, Marriott Lobby**  
**Level.**

All are welcome!



**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 intra-disciplinary 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.

