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**Cultural Geography: A Survey of Perceptions Held  
by Cultural Geography Specialty Group Members\***

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## **Cultural Geography: A Survey of Perceptions Held by Cultural Geography Specialty Group Members**

**Abstract:** As of the year 2000 the Cultural Geography Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers had 465 members and ranked 4th overall in total membership within the association. Furthermore, cultural geographers had the second fastest growing specialty group between 1993 and 1998 after the Geographic Perspectives on Women. In spite of this demonstrated overwhelming appeal among geographers, to date, no one has systematically analyzed the subdiscipline of cultural geography to determine such things as its: links to other aspects of the discipline, major scholarly contributions, most highly regarded publication outlets, notable practitioners, and most recognized departments. As the ranks of cultural geographers have swelled, the subdiscipline has become multifaceted. This paper contextualizes and interprets the results of a survey sent to members of the 1998-1999 Cultural Geography Specialty Group. Outcomes include Louisiana State University and the University of Texas at Austin listed as offering the strongest cultural geography departments, Wilbur Zelinsky is deemed the subfield's most outstanding living practitioner, and the Annals of the AAG best meets cultural geographers' needs. **Key Words: Cultural Geography, Strongest Departments, Distinguished Scholars, Publication Outlets.**

\* \* \* \* \*

Since its inception in the late 1980s, the Cultural Geography Specialty Group (CGSG)

has experienced a sharp increase in membership and since 1993 has consistently ranked among the top six specialty groups in total membership (Golledge 1999; AAG Newsletter June 2001). As of 2000, the CGSG had 465 members and ranked 4th in total membership. Furthermore, it has been the second fastest growing subdiscipline within geography since the early 1990s outpaced only by Geographic Perspectives on Women (Wheeler 1998; Golledge 1999). In spite of this demonstrated appeal among geographers, to date, no one has systematically analyzed the subdiscipline of cultural geography to determine such things as its most recognized North American departments, major scholarly contributions, most highly regarded publication outlets, or its notable practitioners. With the intent of providing a self-examination of the subdiscipline on the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this paper contextualizes and interprets the results of a survey sent to all members of the 1998-1999 Cultural Geography Specialty Group.

The present study is timely for a number of reasons. As the *Association of American Geographers* (AAG) readies itself to celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2004, it is appropriate to examine a large and dynamic subfield within the discipline. Secondly, cultural/historical geographers comprise the largest group of expected retirees by the year 2003 (Gober *et al.* 1995), so it is worthwhile to take stock in the field. Next, an analysis of the CGSG offers a glimpse at some of the issues that human geographers collectively are facing, namely increased specialization and growing diversity among its practitioners. Finally, “[J]ust about everyone, including many scholars interested in the field of GIS, have taken a crack at tackling sociocultural processes in their respective

research analysis” (Mitchell 1999: 667).

## **Background**

The introduction of specialty groups within the AAG began in 1976 when the AAG Council formed an *ad hoc* Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) to, among other things, explore the feasibility of semi-autonomous organizations within the association (Goodchild and Janelle 1988)<sup>1</sup>. By 1984, 35 specialty groups had been established in an attempt to unify association members and counteract the increasing fragmentation along subdisciplinary lines. Originally, specialty groups were formed as a means by which AAG members with shared topical, areal, or research interests could foster greater communication. By and large, the early speciality groups promoted specialization within the discipline and diminished communication between subfields (Goodchild and Janelle 1988).

In 1988 the CGSG was founded as a counter-movement to this over-specialized environment (Myers 2000). Since its inception, the CGSG has encouraged anyone possessing cultural interests to join its ranks. Its declared purpose is “[t]o encourage and facilitate intellectual exchange between scholars of all ages working in every branch of the subfield of cultural geography” (Guide to Programs in Geography 2000-2001). The CGSG prides itself in its all-inclusive nature as it embraces scholars who approach their research and teaching endeavors with great diversity. However, like the discipline as a whole, the eclectic interests of cultural geographers has, at times, led to unforeseen fragmentation and splintering (Cosgrove 1993; Duncan 1993; Jackson 1993; Price and

Lewis 1993a, 1993b).

## Methods

To help examine the status of cultural geography at the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a four page survey was sent to all members of the 1998-1999 CGSG for whom names and contact information were available<sup>2</sup>. This article used the following questions from that survey instrument: *List the top 5 North American departments you feel offer the strongest cultural geography programs, List the top 5 most outstanding LIVING practitioners of cultural geography, Provide citations for 3 examples of outstanding cultural geography (This could be considered a list of “must read in cultural geography”), List the top 5 journals that you feel best meet the needs of today’s cultural geographers.*

Prior to data collection, the local compliance officer of the Human Subjects Review Board and the chair of the CGSG were contacted for permission and sponsorship. With the hopes of achieving the highest response rate possible, the survey was administered using two methods. First, members were directed, via e-mail, to a dedicated URL where a web-based version of the survey instrument could be found. During this first round members were asked to complete the questions on-line. All responses were automatically returned via e-mail and were printed and saved. It was speculated that the response rate would be higher if the survey instrument utilized the latest in internet and computer technology. Three weeks after initial contact, a

follow-up e-mail was sent to members who had yet to respond. After an additional four months a paper copy of the exact same survey questions was sent via regular mail to those who had not responded to the e-mail version. In this second round a postage paid return envelope was included. In addition to information garnered from the survey instrument, the *Guide to Programs in Geography in the United States and Canada 1999-2000* (the year which corresponded to the 1998-1999 CGSG membership) was consulted. The Guide publishes data on all AAG members including individuals' specialty group membership, areal proficiencies, current rank/position, and institution(s) where degree(s) was earned.

Of the 428 surveys sent via e-mail and standard mail, 114 members of the CGSG returned the questionnaire for a response rate of 26.6%. The profile of respondents closely matched the total CGSG membership (Table1). Respondents to the survey and total CGSG membership were in relative parity based on rank; the low response rate of Associate Professors and high rate of graduate students clearly reflect the specialty group's total membership. Females comprised 30% of the respondents, compared to 38% of the total CGSG membership. Finally, as one would expect, there were a disproportionate number of survey respondents with Ph.D.s, mirroring the CGSG membership.

## **Results and Discussion**

Every discipline has its leading scholars, departments, and journals. Earning a

Ph.D. from a prestigious institution can open doors that might otherwise remain closed. Likewise, publishing in a discipline's flagship journal commonly accrues scholarly admiration and respect (Brunn 1997). The discipline of geography is no different.

Periodically over the past four and one-half decades geographers have assessed a multitude of qualities within their discipline. Some have rated distinguished geographers (Thorntwaite 1961; Whitehand 1985; Wrigley and Matthews 1986, 1987; Bodman 1991) while others have systematically evaluated the merits of departments and journals (Raup 1961; Morrill 1980; Koelsch 1981; de Souza, Vogeler, and Foust 1981; Gatrell and Smith 1984; Lee and Evans 1984; Whitehand 1984; Turner II and Meyer 1985; Dunbar 1986; Morris 1987; Whitehand 1990; Martin 2001). A common theme underlying these studies is that they examined the discipline as a whole. An examination of an individual branch within the discipline, however, can reveal much about the strength of the entire tree.

The results section of this article begins by reporting the links cultural geographers have made with other fields within the discipline. The analysis of the survey results then turns to an assessment of cultural geography's most recognized departments, notable scholars and their 'must read' list. Finally, publication outlets deemed most suitable by today's cultural geographers are highlighted. Throughout the results section I provide contextual introductions for each of the subtopics.

### **Regional Proficiency and Specialty Group Links:**

North American cultural geography has its origins with Carl Sauer and his

'Berkeley School' proteges (e.g. Preston James, Yi-Fu Tuan, Wilbur Zelinsky). From the Pacific Coast, cultural geography diffused throughout the country establishing linchpin departments in places like Louisiana State, Oregon, Texas, Wisconsin, and California-Los Angeles. Grafted onto this Berkeley tradition is the work of the "mid-western" cultural geographers including Karl Butzer, J. "Fraser" Hart, Terry Jordan, Clarissa Kimber, and Peirce Lewis (Price and Lewis 1993a).

The early works of North American cultural geography were characterized as having a predilection for examining the attributes of rural, folk, pre-industrial societies within its own backyard and Latin America (Norton 1989; Foote et al. 1994; Wheeler 1998; Myers et al. forthcoming 2002; Peach 2002). The solid foundation and tested set of axioms laid by these 'traditional' scholars permitted cultural geography to expand well beyond its early interests in cultural-artifact diffusion and ecological interpretations informed through historical analysis. Some of today's renowned practitioners, including Daniel Arreola, Denis Cosgrove, James Duncan, Mona Domosh, Larry Ford, and Peter Jackson, have made names for themselves studying ethnically informed and socially contested issues in largely urban settings. Not only has this diversity added strength to the subdiscipline, but it has helped reinforce cultural geography's role as being a broad-based study area with links to most other subfields.

As cultural geographers have built upon their traditional roots and incorporated many 'new' research approaches, knowing the extent to which cultural geographers have expanded their research scope beyond the Western Hemisphere would be worthwhile. Likewise, there is a desire to understand the relative influence of the

traditional cultural geography approach compared with the research contributions of the new cultural geographers. An effective way to assess the extent of interaction between geography's subfields is to examine cross-membership among its specialty groups (Bodman 1991). Revealing links between specialty group membership can be an indication of cognate research interests (Goodchild and Janelle 1988) based on topical similarities.

As expected, the United States continues to hold great interest among cultural geographers (Table 2). Outside North America, the next two most frequently declared regional proficiencies are Europe and Asia. Latin America still appeals to cultural geographers, yet the region appears to be less of a focus than it was in the past. These data suggest that cultural geographers have become much more regionally diversified. Table 2 also highlights underrepresented regions of study and specialization. Compared to its importance in the world economy, the Pacific Rim has attracted the attention of relatively few cultural geographers. This could be valuable information as cultural geographers conceptualize new research ideas or look to new study areas to test existing models.

A look at the other speciality groups to which CGSG members also belong reveals that some stereotypes are upheld while others are shattered (Table 3). There continues to be a close association between cultural and historical geography as well as cultural geography and the Latin American region. Cultural geographers comprise 31.9% of the Historical Geography Specialty Group while 20% of Latin Americanists profess a cultural bent.

Survey results also reveal that today's cultural geographers continue to maintain ties to a wide variety of the discipline's subfields. For example, cultural geographers comprise 47.3%, 36.0% and 35.2% of the membership in Ethnic, American Indians, and Geography of Religions and Belief Systems Specialty Groups respectively. Other groups where at least 20% of their membership is comprised of cultural geographers include Human Rights, European, and Values, Ethics & Justice.

Likewise, survey results indicate that the complexion of cultural geography is changing as a result of the "cultural turn" that is influencing much of human geography. Comprising 12.7% of the Urban Geography Specialty Group, cultural geographers have clearly expanded their scholarly horizons well beyond rural, pre-industrial societies. The relatively high proportion of cultural geographers in the Geographic Perspectives on Women (18.4%), Sexuality and Space (18.4%), and Political Geography (18.4%) Specialty Groups is further testament to the strong social theory current that is running through the subdiscipline.

Finally, a few cultural geographers have even developed connections with specialty groups focusing on geospatial techniques (e.g. GIS, Remote Sensing, Microcomputer) and physical geography (e.g. Geomorphology, Climate, Water Resources). While they comprise only 3.3% of GIS's total membership, it is promising to see 45 cultural geographers making that important link.

### **The Hearths of Cultural Geography:**

Each year popular periodicals including *U.S. News and World Report* list the

nation's top colleges and universities based on selected criteria. Likewise, now in its eighth edition, the Gourman Report (1997) ranks graduate programs within American and international universities. The results of these reports seemingly change little from one year to the next, yet administrators, scholars, prospective students, deep-pocketed donors, and high school guidance counselors are keenly interested in knowing who the institutional "leaders" are. Setting aside the obvious prestige factor, the content of these reports is valuable and, whether justifiable or not, wields much influence. The information is weighed when considering department funding or cutbacks, which departments will receive coveted external funding, and where students will apply to complete their studies (Koelsch 1981; Morris 1987).

In 1924 Miami of Ohio President Raymond Hughes conducted the first U.S. study comparing departments by discipline (including geography) (Koelsch 1981). A decade later, with sponsorship from the American Council on Education, Hughes repeated and expanded upon the first study. Between 1924 and 1980 at least seven more studies assessed the quality of geography programs in the U.S. (Koelsch 1981). The most recent report to rank geography departments was published by the National Research Council (NRC) (Goldberger *et al.* 1995). Reputational surveys or peer evaluations provided the method of data collection for each of the studies above. These "external evaluations" (Morris 1987), rely heavily upon the informed opinion of people most acquainted with a department (e.g. department chairs and faculty) or people served by them (e.g. students). The other most common approach to evaluate departments employs objective "internal evaluations" (Morris 1987) which assigns weight to a given

set of variables and a hierarchy is established based on the tabulated results. It is strongly asserted, however, that "... objective measures should complement, not replace, peer-based rankings" (Turner II and Meyer 1985:278).

In 1939, C. Warren Thornthwaite led the search for an objective measure of department rankings. He categorized American geographers based on the number of times citations to their work appeared in Richard Hartshorne's discipline defining book *The Nature of Geography* (Thornthwaite 1961). Derived from his ranking of individual scholars, Thornthwaite compiled a rating of geography departments based on the number of quality scholars assembled in each department. In 1980 Richard Morrill undertook a less questionable approach employing a purely objective formula based on the enrollment productivity (including number of students per faculty member), graduate productivity (including number of graduate students granted degrees and number of former graduate students serving in Ph.D.-granting institutions), and research productivity (including number of professors in a department who published in selected journals) of graduate departments. Morrill reported that the results of his "mean-of-rankings" index more closely approximates the perceived status of departments than does a weighted index (Morrill 1980).

Since Morrill's trail blazing work many other objective-based studies have issued rankings of geography departments (Koelsch 1981; de Souza, Vogeler, and Foust 1981; Turner II and Meyer 1985; Dunbar 1986; Cosgrove 1987; Morris 1987). However, they have all focused on departments at the discipline level. Much could be learned from examining department rankings within a single subfield. As one of the largest non-

technical fields within the discipline, cultural geography makes for an ideal study.

I seek to answer: Which departments continue to have a forte in cultural geography? Has the Berkeley School and its spin-offs (LSU, Oregon, UCLA, Texas, and Wisconsin) maintained their prominence within cultural geography or has there been a transition as newer social theory research threads its way into the cultural fabric? Which departments currently have the most to offer graduate students seeking advanced training? It is hypothesized that top ranking departments also turn out the most number of Ph.D.s who specialize in cultural geography. This assertion is tested by comparing survey results of CGSG members (Table 4) against the institution from which practicing cultural geographers earned their Ph.D.s (Table 5).

According to survey respondents, the top two North American departments offering the strongest cultural geography programs are Louisiana State and Texas (Table 4). An examination of the *Guide to Programs* reveals that both LSU and Texas have at least eight faculty members on their staff that specialize in cultural geography/landscape studies. Additionally, these two departments are among the universities that trace their lineage back to the Berkeley School (Price and Lewis 1993a).

Three other 'traditional' cultural geography departments are also found among the top nine (California-Berkeley, Wisconsin, and California-Los Angeles). It is interesting to note, however, that Syracuse, Kentucky, and University of British Columbia are also among the top nine schools, but in recent years they have trended away from the Berkeley tradition to embrace social theory research.

If the departments listed in Table 4 are deemed by CGSG members to offer the strongest programs in cultural geography, are they also producing the most number of cultural geographers? According to data collected from the *Guide to Programs in Geography*, the three most productive departments are California-Los Angeles, Louisiana State, and Wisconsin-Madison (Table 5). Moreover, when cross-examining the schools listed on both Tables 4 and 5, Louisiana State, Syracuse, California - Berkeley, Wisconsin, and California - Los Angeles have leading reputations and are also top producers of practicing cultural geography scholars.

As Turner II and Meyer (1985) conclude, the relative clustering of departments is often more meaningful than their specific rank. There are many 'lower' ranked departments that produce outstanding cultural geographers. Mentors need to bear in mind that a student's success may rest more in the conceptual "fit" of a student with one or two members of a department than in how prestigious the department may be. For graduate students, a department's ranking may not be the best indicator of the quality of instruction and guidance offered. Sometimes, a single scholar can be more meaningful in a person's career than a basketful of distinguished specialists.

### **Cultural Geography Scholars:**

Led by the likes of Brian Berry and David Harvey, and referred to by any number of names including 'centurions' (Whitehand 1985), 'new centurions' (Wrigley and Matthews 1987), or 'master weavers' (Bodman 1991), they are the prodigious publishers who are responsible for a disproportionate amount of published scholarship;

their work effectively fashions and shapes the discipline's research agenda (Whitehand 1985; Wrigley and Matthews 1986; Bodman 1991). Interestingly, the areas of expertise of these influential authors are becoming more diverse; no longer do they originate in geography's subfields of urban, economic and quantitative methods. Andrew Bodman (1991) found that there has been a growing number of 'master weavers' coming from the ranks of cultural geography. The March 2001 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, for example, features an article titled "Lost in Place: Yi-Fu Tuan May Be the Most Influential Scholar You've Never Heard of" (Monaghan 2001). It came as little surprise to many geographers that the piece highlighted the distinguished career of one of cultural geography's foremost practitioners.

The compiling of most lists of geography's distinguished scholars relies heavily upon citation counts from the Science Citation Index (SCI), Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI). Citation counts provide a means of assessing both the influence of a work (and subsequently the author) and its visibility within academia (Turner II and Meyer 1985). Whitehand (1987), however, identifies at least three flaws with citation counts: 1) they do not consider if the information is cited accurately or is misleading, 2) the citation may be overly critical and does not support popular visibility of the author behind the work, and 3) the citation may indicate a fundamental dependence on the cited work or it may be merely perfunctory. In other words, citation counts speak to quantity, but not quality.

In response to concerns over citation counts, Bill Mead (1987) suggests that a more viable method to determine notable practitioners and classic works would be to

survey members of the association asking them to make a list. The criteria for compiling the authors and their 'classic statements' would then be the frequency with which particular works appeared on the assembled list (Mead 1987). He admits that this would be an incredibly onerous chore to undertake at the discipline level. Such a list however, could prove fruitful at the subdiscipline level. A list of recognized scholars and seminal works within a subfield would go far to explain major research interests among its membership, the core themes within the subfield, and any structural changes that might be taking place.

Along these lines, I asked each member of the CGSG to name the scholars they felt were the "most outstanding living practitioners of cultural geography" (Table 6). Leading the list is Wilbur Zelinsky. Next are Peirce Lewis, Donald Meinig, Yi-Fu Tuan, Denis Cosgrove, Terry Jordan and James Duncan. Of these seven geographers who received sixteen votes or more, all but Denis Cosgrove, Terry Jordan, and James Duncan earned their Ph.D.s before 1960. Thus, the success of these highly productive scholars may rest not only in the fact that they have turned out superior quality work, but that they have remained highly productive throughout their lifetime.

Of that same top-tier group of cultural geographers, all but two (Denis Cosgrove and James Duncan) are considered 'traditional' cultural geographers. This is an indication that the work of traditional cultural geographers is still highly regarded within the subdiscipline. However, a closer look at the remaining scholars who received at least seven votes reveals that there is a mixture of 'traditional' practitioners and those using social theory approaches in their research.

When looking at the university from which the notable cultural geographers earned their Ph.D.s, California-Berkeley stands out. Of the fourteen most highly regarded scholars, four (29%) earned their doctorate from the department known for Carl Sauer. This supports Whitehand's (1985) assertion that the most productive scholars tend to come from a select few Ph.D.-granting departments.

Considering the growing popularity of the Geographic Perspectives on Women Specialty Group among cultural geographers (Table 3), it is curious to find that only two females (Mona Domosh and Anne Buttner) appear among the list of cultural geographers receiving at least three votes. Little appears to have changed since Andrew Bodman (1991) found that women are very poorly represented among the ranks of notable scholars. Perhaps the outstanding contributions of female geographers will be better recognized in future surveys. How long can the discipline, or the CGSG, ignore these persistent patterns?

In addition to asking CGSG members who they felt were the subfield's most notable practitioners, respondents were asked to provide citations for three examples of outstanding cultural geography. Given the great latitude and numerous choices with which respondents could have answered, it is revealing to find the prevalence of monographs and anthologies on the compiled list of "must reads" (Table 7). Of the top nineteen seminal works, all but three (84%) are books. The only articles to be listed among the outstanding examples of cultural geography are Carl Sauer's "Morphology of Landscape" and Peirce Lewis' "Axioms for Reading the Landscape", and "Small Town in Pennsylvania". This tends to support the commonly held assertion that books are the

more valued medium of exchange within cultural geography and have a more lasting effect upon the readership.

Considering his prominent position atop the list of notable cultural geographers, it comes as little surprise that Wilbur Zelinsky's *Cultural Geography of the United States* (1972/1992) is voted the most outstanding work in cultural geography (Table 7). Zelinsky's piece is followed by Meinig's anthology, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (1979). The fact that Carl Sauer's 1925 "The Morphology of Landscape" article is still so highly regarded speaks of the profound impact Sauer has had on the subfield and his influence in guiding the profession.

A closer look at the list of 'must reads' reveals that Donald Meinig, J. B. Jackson, Peirce Lewis, and James Duncan all appear twice on the list. Meinig, Lewis, and Duncan are each voted among cultural geography's most outstanding practitioners (Table 6). J. B. Jackson did not appear on that list because CGSG members were specifically asked to consider "living" cultural geographers only. The results of Table 7 suggest that J. B. Jackson, in all probability, would have appeared among the list of notable cultural geographers had he still been alive.

As discussed above, while 'traditional' cultural geography remains a core part of the subdiscipline, there is more than ample evidence that social theory-based approaches and the influence of the "cultural turn" are making substantial contributions to cultural geography. Six (32%) of the nineteen 'must reads' are examples of the 'new' cultural geography. Cultural geography can only benefit from continued diversity among its practitioners and is that much stronger when it embraces relevant new approaches in

its research milieu.

### **Publication Outlets For Cultural Geographers:**

A key measure of success for a scholar's career is based not only on the quantity and quality of their publications, but also on where they publish their work. As a result, an author's decision on which journal to submit a manuscript has far-reaching implications including an impact on earning tenure, receiving promotions, salary adjustments, research assistance, and professional status (Lee and Evans 1984; Brunn 1997; Martin 1998). As Stanley Brunn (1997) reports, getting published in a discipline's flagship journal can instantly bolster one's professional reputation.

Because of the vast career implications, many disciplines have established rankings for the field's journals and everyone knows which outlets are more revered (Lee and Evans 1984). No official ranking exists for geography journals and most geographers would agree that the discipline is much too diverse to impose a single hierarchy of journals upon the entire field. This has not discouraged some scholars from attempting to do so, however. Interest in the ranking of geography journals began with David Lee and Arthur Evans (1984) when they randomly surveyed 500 geographers asking them to rank the discipline's American journals based on quality and familiarity. The landmark study reported that the *Annals of the AAG* was the foremost journal followed by the *Geographical Review*, *Professional Geographer*, *Economic Geography*, and the *Journal of Geography*.

Subsequent studies have tended to employ more objective assessments to the

rankings of geography journals. A straightforward approach has been to compare average rejection rates among journals. Four of the more sophisticated methods employing data obtained from SCI, SSCI, and A&HCI include: 1) Journal Impact Factor, 2) Citation Impact Factor, 3) Mean Annual Immediacy Index, and 4) Sending/Receiving Ratios. A journal's impact factor is a measure of the frequency with which an article has been cited in a particular year, controlling for journal size and publication frequency (Turner II 1988). Despite concerns, the journal impact factor is deemed the best single indicator of a journal's influence within a discipline (Whitehand 1984; 1988). Citation impact factor has been a second frequently used method to rank journals. It gauges a journal's importance by measuring the number of citations in a given year of the articles published in the preceding two years (Martin 1998). The immediacy index measures the extent to which articles are cited in the same year they reach print; journals with high visibility will also have high immediacy index ratings (Whitehand 1990). The sending/receiving ratio assesses a journal based on how linked (according to cross citations) it is to others within the discipline; the more linked, and therefore more visible a journal is, the higher its ranking (Gatrell and Smith 1984).

The objective measures highlighted above have creatively quantified the value judgements made every time a scholar submits a manuscript for publication consideration or makes a recommendation to a colleague. These algorithms however, tell only part of the story. What is needed is to hear from the common wisdom of geographers to determine which journals best meet their needs. The information gleaned can help: 1) scholars identify which publication outlets are most appropriate for

their subject matter, 2) administrators evaluate the perceived quality of a geographer's work, 3) indicate which journals may assist in advancing one's career, and 4) list which journals one should keep a watchful eye on so as to stay abreast of the latest developments within the subfield.

Members of the CGSG were asked to list the top three journals that best meet their needs. Topping members' list is the discipline's flagship journal, the *Annals of the AAG* (Table 8). This is somewhat surprising considering that such a high opinion of the *Annals* comes at a time when many members have felt the most disconnected from the publication (Monaghan 1999). It appears that the *Annals'* visibility and prominent position within the discipline weighs heavily in cultural geographers' minds.

Second among members' ranking is the *Journal of Cultural Geography*. Considered by some to be the flagship journal of the subdiscipline, the popularity and success of this journal stems from the efforts of its founding editor, Alvar Carlson, and to the quality of article submissions. However, if it is to maintain its high ranking, the journal must catch up on its publication schedule. The third of the leading cultural geography journals is *The Geographical Review* which is long recognized for publishing quality and thoughtful pieces; it currently has an acceptance rate of between 16% to 18% (Starrs 2001).

A sizeable gap exists between the top three and the remaining thirteen journals (Table 8). Within this second tier of highly regarded cultural geography journals, three stand out. Considering that its first issue did not appear until 1994, the success of *Ecumene*<sup>3</sup> among cultural geographers is outstanding. Clearly a void existed within the

subfield and *Ecumene* has aptly filled it. Equally outstanding is that *Ecumene* has quickly become more highly regarded than the older and more established outlet for critical-theory research -- *Antipode*. The other two relatively young journals that have made notable showings among cultural geographers are *Gender, Place, & Culture*, and *North American Geographer*. These two journals were founded in 1994 and 1999 respectively, yet they have achieved substantial recognition in their short tenure.

## Implications

This article presents the results of a survey completed by 114 members of the Cultural Geography Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers. Identified are the subfield's leading departments, living scholars, and journals. Based on the fact that cultural geographers have maintained links to every other subfield within the discipline, much can be learned from surveying those geographers affiliated with one of the discipline's largest subfields.

First, from the survey results it is evident that the most highly regarded departments within an individual subfield are those that have multiple practitioners. When a department has multiple active researchers working in physical and intellectual proximity (what Jeremy Whitehand (1985) calls the 'snowball effect') learning and scholarly progress can be advanced more effectively. While the advent of the internet has increased the distance permitted between scholars, the strongest departments within a subfield seem to be those which have a critical mass of faculty who profess a

strength in one particular area.

Second, it is clear that the development of new approaches and innovative designs are normally in the hands of a small and select band of scholars (Bodman 1991). The survey results suggest that to be considered an outstanding practitioner within the discipline takes the better part of one's career. Wisdom achieved through experience in the profession is something to be revered as a source of strength, not dismissed as outdated.

Lastly, from the data presented in Table 7 it is clear that in some of geography's subdisciplines, books rather than articles tend to be the 'must reads'. They seem to have a longer lasting appeal and go farther to bolster one's name recognition. With this in mind, maybe books should carry considerable weight in the tenure and promotion discussion for geographers in such subfields. The evidence also suggests that anthologies, while onerous to compile, are highly regarded by social scientists.

It is hoped that this article will assist prospective graduate students as they decide what to read and perhaps where to complete their studies. Moreover, the ranking of publication outlets can be used to influence library acquisitions so that practitioners can remain abreast of the latest research developments in the field.

To borrow the words of Garth Myers (Myers *et al.* forthcoming 2002:2) "There are many signs of strength for cultural inquiry in geography". The number of recently established journals in cultural geography (e.g. *Ecumene*, *Gender Place & Culture*, *North American Geographer*, *Social & Cultural Geography*) is only one. Another sign was found at the 2001 annual AAG meeting in New York City where the Cultural

Geography Specialty Group sponsored a special session entitled “Meet the Editors: Trends in the Practice of Cultural Geography”. The well attended panel discussion featured editors from *Ecumene*, the *Geographical Review*, *Gender Place & Culture*, *Journal of Cultural Geography*, *North American Geographer*, and *Social & Cultural Geography*. The editors all affirmed that the lines between new and traditional cultural geography have eroded and cultural geographers are reveling in the diverse ways in which they conduct their research. Building on a strong foundation, the future looks bright for cultural geography in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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1. For an in-depth discussion of the background of AAG specialty groups please see the 1988 article entitled “Specialization in the Structure and Organization of Geography” by Michael Goodchild and Donald Janelle.

2. Despite the fact that there were officially 458 members of the CGSG in 1998-1999, the list of names and contact information (addresses and e-mail addresses) provided to me by the AAG central offices in Washington, D.C. contained only 428 members.

3. The title of *Ecumene: A Journal of Cultural Geographies* changed to *Cultural Geographies* in 2002.