Warwick Venice Research Practicum

October – January 2011

What sort of information are we collecting?

- Qualitative data about the **whole** of the student experience of studying abroad in the Warwick Venice Programs. This includes positive and negative feelings, thoughts, observations, fears and expectations related to:
    - day to day experiences of living in Italy;
    - speaking and not speaking Italian;
    - managing shared accommodation;
    - attending and participating in classes and site visits;
    - completing assignments;
    - socialising with friends from Warwick and from Venice;
    - homesickness;
    - travelling in Italy;
    - anything else that you think is interesting or important about being a Warwick student in Venice.

KEY TERMS, PHRASES AND CONCEPTS:

Spend some time familiarising yourself with the following terms. These have particular meanings in contemporary university discourse and provide the theoretical context or framework for the bigger project that you are contributing to.

- **Study Abroad**: Have look at your university website to see what Warwick says about the value of studying abroad. Compare this with the websites of some other universities. Do you think the claims that universities make about the benefits of studying abroad are valid? Can you think of examples from your own experience or the experiences of others that provide evidence to support or challenge these claims?

- **Informal curriculum**: the learning experiences that the program provides outside of the formal course content (e.g. negotiating with a landlord in an unfamiliar country or language). Try looking up the work of Professor Elspeth Jones from Leeds Metropolitan University for a quick overview of how this concept related to the Study Abroad experience. Her work will also give you some insight into the equally important concepts of

    - **Intercultural competency**
    - **Global citizenship**
    - **Internationalisation in higher education**

 We will discuss these issues briefly when we next meet, so make sure you spend an hour or so getting to know the jargon! This is part of your research brief. Your understanding of these ideas will help to focus your research activities and define the outcomes of your work.

Why do we want this information?

- To help us identify what questions might be important and useful to ask Warwick alumni about the experiences that they had when studying in Venice and the long terms impacts of those experiences in their personal and professional lives.

- To better understand, evaluate and report on the variety of informal learning outcomes for students participating in Warwick Venice programs.

KEY TERMS, PHRASES, CONCEPTS AND TOOLS:

- **Qualitative and Quantitative Survey questions**: The online surveys we develop will collect some quantitative data, but as you might remember from the survey you were asked to fill in, there will also be opportunities for respondents to contribute qualitative data in the form of extended comments.

  Here is a link to an interesting reflection on the qualitative vs quantitative research methods. This author raises some helpful points about the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and the relationships between them.
  http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualdeb.php

- **Mixed methodologies**: Have a quick look at the article I sent you about mixed methodologies. This explores some of the rationales for combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The section on **triangulation** (p 3-4) is especially useful background. The quote in the methods section on page 4 about 'one night stands' could be useful to discuss in the context of the current short project. There are also some useful references listed in this paper if you want more information about a particular topic.

> Bazeley, P. 2002 Issues in Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Research
> Presented at: 1st International Conference - Qualitative Research in Marketing and Management University of Economics and Business Administration, Vienna
> 10th April, 2002 (Published in: R. Buber, J. Gadner, & L. Richards (eds) (2004) *Applying qualitative methods to marketing management research.* UK: Palgrave Macmillan, pp141-156.)

- **'Survey Monkey'** : Sign up to the free version (basic plan) of the online survey tool we are using so that you can get a feeling for how it works. You can put in a few sample questions and test it out on each other (you can select the language by scrolling to the bottom of the home page). We can look at this together when we meet.
  http://www.surveymonkey.com/

How will we collect the information?

We will use a combination of participant observation, interviewing and/or focus groups and textual analysis to develop an online survey for Warwick Venice alumni (ideally, this preliminary research would be done with a selection of alumni - the target audience, but for practical reasons you will be working with current Warwick Venice students instead).

Take some time to familiarise yourself with our methodologies. I have included some resources here to get you started but you can find other useful material online. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, is a useful online journal with free access that you might want to explore.
http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/index

You may also find that this site on the foundations of social research provides a helpful overview:
http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intres.php

KEY TERMS, PHRASES AND CONCEPTS:

- **Participant Observation:** The article I have attached by Barbara Kawulich is a great introduction to participant observation as a research methodology. In includes practical suggestions about what to observe, how to keep fieldnotes, and managing ethical issues amongst other things. Have a quick skim through and pick out the bits that seem most important to you for the task ahead. Think about how your experience might differ as an 'insider' or 'native' participant observer.

  > Kawulich, B. B. 2005. Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research.* 6 (2): Art. 43. http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/466/996

- **Focus groups**: You have the option of running a focus group with your peers as part of this practicum. This is good experience and can provide valuable research data. Read the article I have attached about focus groups as a methodology in health-related research. Think about how you might apply these techniques to a group of your classmates.

  > Kitzinger, J. 1994 The methodology of focus groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness* 16(1):103-121.

- **Interviewing** (open-ended, semi-structured, structured): Different types of interview techniques can be used to collect different types of data. An excellent source on qualitative interviewing is Steiner Kvale's book entitled *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing.* (1996, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage). You can access parts of this book online through Google Books (or via Amazon.com). I have also attached the introduction to a special issue of *FQS* on interviews which a raises some interesting issues - the authors provide some insight into the process of planning, undertaking and analyzing interviews.

  > Cisneros-Puebla, C.A., Faux,R. & Mey, G. 2004 Qualitative Researchers—Stories Told, Stories Shared: The Storied Nature of Qualitative Research. An Introduction to the Special Issue: *FQS* Interviews I . Forum: *Qualitative Social Research*. 5 (3): Art. 37

- **Textual analysis**: This is a research method that you will probably be very familiar with from History and Art History. It is frequently used in contemporary social research because it is important for researchers to understand the texts that research participants read and produce as pat of the social context (e.g. facebook exchanges, blogs, advertisements).

- **Reflexivity**: A reflexive approach to research involves being aware of one's own positioning and biases as an individual and as a researcher. Have a look at the article I have sent you about my first experience of doing fieldwork. This is an example of reflexive writing. The detail of the case study is not important – think instead about the thoughts and feelings and conflicts associated with the research process and how these were negotiated and incorporated as a part of the overall project.

> Mulcock, J. 2001 Ethnography in Awkward spaces: An Anthropology of Cultural Borrowing. *Practicing Anthropology* 23(1): 38-42. (re-published in In W. Haviland, R. Gordon & L. Vivanco (eds) 2005 *Talking About People: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, 4th Edition, McGraw-Hill, Illinois, Ch 8.)

There are many good reflexive accounts of conducting social research available. You may be able to find some that relate to topics you are particularly interested in by searching on Google Scholar or through your library databases.

You should also do a quick online search on the following concepts if you are not already familiar with them. These ideas are important for thinking about the qualitative research you are about to undertake.

- **Insider Ethnography**: You are an 'insider' or 'native' ethnographer because you are collecting information about a group that you are part of. You already have an 'emic' perspective on the study abroad experience. Your challenge is to step back a bit from from your group, to achieve a 'critical distance' so that you can also understand the experience from a more 'etic' perspective.
- **Emic and etic perspectives**: the terms emic and etic come from linguistics (phonemics and phonetics). An emic perspective can only be achieved by being on the inside of the social experience while an etic perspective is achieved by being on the outside and looking in. Participant observation involves a combination of these perspectives depending on the researcher's personal social position in the research setting, past experiences and relationships with the research participants.
- **Autoethnograph**y: Have a look online for the work of anthropologists Kirin Narayan and Ruth Behar and sociologists Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner. These and many other authors experiment with ways of presenting personal experience as research data. They are 'insiders' in their research settings.

The following philosophical perspectives relate to the construction of knowledge. You have probably encountered all of these in other contexts over the course of your degree. It is very helpful to have some basic understanding of these ideas as a foundation for understanding the value of critical reflexivity in your research practice.
  - **Objectivity, empiricism, and positivism,**
  - **Subjectivity and phenomenology**
  - **Ontology and epistemology**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are some links to freely available online dictionaries and glossaries of terms commonly used in anthropology and other social sciences. They vary in quality and detail so you may want to try a few different sources or do some Google searching yourself for specific terms.

- http://www.anthrobase.com/Dic/eng/
- http://bitbucket.icaap.org/dict.pl
- http://www.glossarist.com/glossaries/humanities-social-sciences/anthropology.asp
- http://www.alphadictionary.com/directory/Specialty_Dictionaries/Anthropology/

For more background and extra resources you might also like to have a look at these websites. Similar sites can be found for Sociology. Education is a key theme in both disciplines.

- International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences
- Anthropology.net
- Public Anthropology
- Society for Applied Anthropology
- World Council of Anthropological Associations
- Annual Review of Anthropology
- Virtual Library of Anthropological Referecnes
- BUBL LINK Catalogue of Internet Resources
- Indian Anthropological Association
- American Anthropological Association
- Australian Anthropological Society