

Carly Slack

April 8th, 2021

Library Award: Reflective Essay

After studying abroad with my professor, he/she asked me to join him/her in researching the culture they created when leading students abroad, crew mentality. This was my second study abroad trip and I felt like the crew mentality had a positive effect on my experience as well as our overall group cohesion. The crew mentality is the main focus of my research project. I did an independent study in the Fall of 2020 and we utilized his perspective as an experienced professor and study abroad faculty led and mine as a student-athlete and study abroad participant. My professor and I conducted general research and implemented a survey to 554 students. After analyzing results and conducting more specific research, it became clear that there was something to be written about and shown. I wanted to write something I was passionate about and could relate to, instead of something that just showed results, so I was happy my data reflected this. I wanted to tell a story and make it be meaningful to other people, their lives, and our current situation, COVID-19, which has affected me greatly.

Throughout my research, the main tool I utilized was the CSUSM library database. I was happy to already know how to find scholarly articles and journals because of my previous classes and library sessions. I've used scholarly articles/journals and have had library workshops with Judith Opdahl in multiple classes such as Business 302 and 444. These workshops and resources are always very informative and although some of it takes a while to get a hang of and understand, I find the CSUSM library database very useful and definitely my favorite research tool. By this time in my college career, I've worked with the library's resources and looked over

the worksheets on conducting searches and formatting APA quite a bit, so I was able to jump into using it. I found some work initially on Google Scholar but mainly with the CSUSM database. I reflected on my experiences and interviewed other students who have studied abroad or who want to study abroad. I found this very helpful to help figure out what direction to go with the research and survey. For the survey, we utilized Qualtrics and worked with CSUSM's Global Programs office to send it out. To analyze the qualitative data, I used Excel and SPSS. I've learned how to use excel through my Business Statistics and Analytics courses but this was my first time utilizing SPSS.

To start, we needed to find a range of information from the benefits of studying abroad to cohesion amongst groups. We had a hard time relating existing research on groups to our project but I found that the research on sports teams and group cohesion were applicable. Since a crew mentality is a new concept we used some existing scale questions and also created our own. We positioned ourselves within a gap of study abroad research as not many focused on the faculty led or how to develop short-term programs. My professor was my guiding professor throughout the whole process, contributed a lot to the survey, initial research, and provided helpful feedback to my work.

Some may say the concept of my research project, it's all about people, and our mentality of emphasizing others is obvious and apparent. Of course, if you look out for each other in a group, there will be a better culture. While this may be apparent, it's not always implemented or used. I've been on countless teams and groups that have had poor culture because there was not a focus on the group and everyone only looked out for themselves. Along with this, my research also shows that caring for other people ultimately improves your own experience as well which is not as obvious or common.

Throughout this project, I've loved looking at the big picture ideas and also at the little details the data provides. As a student-scholar, I see how I have developed into this. Although it may seem boring and repetitive writing countless essays and referencing sources in classes, it provides a very solid foundation for researching, analyzing data, writing reports, and being a creator of new information. With this experience in mind, I just started a new job as a market research analyst and I am happy to say I am prepared for that role!