

Alejandra Vazquez Baur  
INT99 – Reflection Paper  
12 September 2016

This summer, I lived in Lima, Peru and worked in the Communications office of Save the Children Peru-Ecuador doing primarily translation work since the majority of the people in the office speak little-to-no English. I translated anything from emails and subtitles for promotional videos to long technical documents and articles for our websites. My work was transferred between our office and the international headquarters in London, sent to U.S. and European supporters and donors, to regional heads throughout Latin America and used for ads and social media purposes locally. I had a difficult time particularly doing the more technical work initially, since my near fluency in the Spanish language is limited to what was learned in the home and only a few years in the classroom. I kept a journal of technical vocabulary with me at all times and learned to ask for help from my colleagues, something I was not very good at doing before.

Living in Lima alone, I had many opportunities to engage in the local culture and community. My housemates were all Peruvians and other South Americans, so I was primarily speaking Spanish. In the workplace, all of my colleagues were also Peruvian and I only spoke Spanish there unless I was translating for them. With my friends and colleagues, I attended local music performances (one of my colleagues was a prominent South American female drummer in her free time so we always had places to go), festivals, celebrations in the city center, etc. For example, I was able to attend the Independence Day special celebrations with my friend and her band while they performed for the new President in the city center. I also spent a couple weekends during the summer volunteering with various service organizations, such as *Techo Perú* and Haku Tours, both which primarily do work in the extremely poor "villas" on the edges of Lima.

This summer added another layer to my overall CMC experience. I was able to live abroad again, but this time with completely new goals in mind. Peru differs from my Argentina experience because the focus was professional not academic; it was about finding a rhythm instead of finding every adventure imaginable. I learned to be an adult living in a big city, using public transportation and cooking for myself, all while being in a foreign country. I also learned an important fact about myself: that I am very dependent on the emotions and attitudes of those around me, and that I don't like being alone too much. I was alone very often in Peru. I lived alone, I commuted alone, and I did much of my travel on my own as well. And while the summer was an amazing experience, I did find myself depressed often by the fact that I was constantly in my own head. This is an important thing that I am keeping in mind as I start to think about my life post-graduation, where I want to live, etc.

I found that my opportunities to travel and learn the history of different indigenous groups were the most enriching for me during my summer. I love watching how a country or culture develops, and particularly in Peru (different than in many other countries in Latin America), the general culture is strongly influenced by its indigenous history. It was beautiful to me to learn about the influences that are less known, such as pre-Incan tribes, as well as to walk into sacred temples and meet proud descendants of

these groups. I have a number of pictures that documented those experiences and that I will always cherish.

This summer was an important breakthrough in my college career. Firstly, I feel much more confident in my decision to go into NGOs focused on human rights and development in Latin America. Also, for the first time, I felt completely independent, I got to a point in my Spanish where I feel comfortable claiming fluency, and I'm finally starting to put together a stronger sense of my Latina identity as a young Mexican woman traveling around Latin America. Without the financial help given to me through the Sponsored Internship Program, I would not have had the opportunity to live in Peru and grow the way I have. I am incredibly grateful to my benefactor for this summer.