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## Reflections of Personal Experiences in Lima, the La Joya of Peru

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## Reflections of Personal Experiences in Lima, the La Joya of Peru

### Cover Page Footnote

A note of acknowledgement and sincere appreciation to the Kennesaw State University Institute for Global Initiatives and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences for their assistance. Their combined commitment to global engagement and generous financial support made my Peruvian faculty professional development travel experience possible. In addition, I wish to extend my genuine appreciation to the peer reviewers and editors of The Journal of Public and Professional Sociology for the opportunity to reflect on the experiential significance of becoming a globally educated person.

Considering my allegiance to the mission of global engagement, it is important to note that Sterns (2009) documented the critical importance of turning American colleges and universities into global institutions of learning; this initiative will be one of the leading demands and priorities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the nation's higher education system. In March 2011, Dr. Daniel Papp, President of Kennesaw State University (KSU), received the Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization and stated, "This prestigious award signals that KSU is on target with the goals we established in 2007 to create an integrated, interdisciplinary, and multifaceted global learning environment at KSU" (McGriff, 2011). The KSU Country Study program was the instrument that helped KSU become an enriched multicultural, multifaceted learning community for students and faculty. The objective of the Country Study program is to develop and enhance the KSU global engagement initiative by selecting and studying a specific country for a full academic year to discover and explore the country from its initial history to modern-day events. Faculty and students through professional development and KSU Travel Abroad Programs are afforded the opportunity to gain international perspectives by actually visiting the country to experience and learn "firsthand" about the country, its diversified history, culture, and people. It is the belief of the KSU Country Study program that, in order to understand and appreciate other countries and cultures, one needs to employ a broad lens and engage the other country on a myriad of levels to break down stereotypes and connect across cultures (Kennesaw State University, "Connecting people," n.d.).

The KSU Institute for Global Initiatives and Country Study program uses a multidisciplinary approach to provide KSU faculty and student audiences a richer, more complex sense of community. This Institute and Country Study initiative inspired me to become an international academic Peruvian adventurer and future cross-cultural educator and researcher. My Peruvian experience has heightened my appreciation of the importance of global engagement and diversity when teaching about psychology and human behavior and has led to my initiation of and involvement in several activities to incorporate Peruvian global education into my courses, department, and university community. Two of these activities focus on new or revised undergraduate courses. First, I am designing a new permanent KSU course offering entitled Health Psychology: A Global Perspective. Second, my KSU Social Science colleagues and I are developing a pilot experimental research proposal to investigate incorporating global problems topics into the KSU General Education 2105 Critical Issues courses. Two additional activities highlight fostering interaction between KSU students and their Peruvian counterparts: (1) A student research buddy partnership, and (2) A Peruvian travel abroad experience for KSU students. Finally, I am creating an

international faculty exchange and guest lecturer series. Further details regarding these activities follow.

Insofar as new or revised courses, Health Psychology: A Global Perspective (PSYC 3300) will be a permanent KSU curricular course. PSYC 3300 will be offered in both traditional and online formats, to escalate students' insight into global diversity and problems. It will delve into such topics and Critical Issues from a comparative global health perspective: Nutrition, Obesity, and Eating Disorders, Chronic Life-Threatening Illnesses, Addiction, and Alternative and Complementary Medicine. Regarding the revision of the General Education Critical Issues Courses offered in five Social Science Departments, my colleagues (Assistant Sociology Chair and Associate Vice President and Chair of the General Education Council) and I are currently discussing a pilot research proposal with Pearson Publishing Company. We plan to incorporate four chapters centering on global diversity and problems into the course content and to evaluate the effectiveness of this change on students' comprehension of global diversity. If our research results show a meaningful increase in understanding of global issues as measured by the pre and posttesting, the new global education component could become a permanent part of the 2105 Critical Issues course curriculum. Such an addition would meaningfully enhance the global knowledge of all KSU students because completion of a 2105 Critical Issues course is a general education requirement for graduation.

To enhance interaction between KSU students and Peruvian students, the Psychology Department at KSU and the Universidad Peruana De Ciencias Aplicadas (UPC) are jointly designing the student research buddy partnership program. The objective of the program is to promote research that involves participants and student researchers from both Lima and Georgia, recruited by KSU and UPC. Each student in the program will work with a buddy to develop a topic, design research, implement cross-cultural data collection, analyze results, and communicate the findings. At KSU, the buddy partnership will be a curriculum offering for Psychology research credit (PSYC 4490) and available for KSU Psychology and Sociology majors. UPC students will receive credit for their research from UPC. The PSYC 4490 experience will culminate in journal submissions and in research presentations at the KSU sponsored Georgia Undergraduate Research in Psychology Conference (GURP). The UPC students and their professors will be invited to attend. UPC professors are supportive of the UPC-KSU buddy partnership program, the first South American-United States undergraduate Psychology student cross-cultural student research project. Those UPC professors who plan to attend GURP will be asked to offer guest lectures in Psychology, Sociology, and other classes to further extend global connections. These global research experiences will benefit the KSU Community and significantly fortify students' applications to graduate schools and jobs.

Moreover, plans for bolstering cross-cultural student interaction extend beyond the research project; a study abroad experience in Peru is also in the planning stage. With two Psychology colleagues, I am currently developing a proposal for a Psychology Peruvian Travel Abroad program for May 2013. We are currently working with Universidad Ad San Ignacio De Loyola (USIL) administrators on a budget for 18 days in Peru. The plan involves offering classes and a community engagement practicum in one of five site locations (Lima schools, Geriatric Centers, USIL Culinary School, or the Lima Womens Shelter), a service learning experience in the village of Cusco, and the historic Inca city of Machu Picchu. Tangentially, during our 2013 May Travel Abroad visit, we also have been invited to guest lecture in UPC Psychology and Sociology classes on the global engagement benefits of Travel Abroad programs, benefits of student-buddy partnerships for cross-cultural research, and global Critical Issues in Health Psychology.

My enhanced international perspective and ensuing translation of global experiences into activities involving students and faculty began in 2010. At that time, the Institute for Global Initiatives designated Peru as the focus of the Country Study program and The Year of Peru 2011-2012 was initiated. In February 2012, through these KSU initiatives, I was one of the three faculty members to visit Lima, Peru as representative of the KSU Psychology Department. The departmental objectives for the Peru trip were (a) speaking to educators at three Lima Universities to investigate educational accommodation possibilities for a KSU Psychology Peruvian Travel Abroad Program, and (b) discussing possibilities for a Peruvian community-engaged field practicum program for KSU Travel Abroad students and faculty.

My personal objectives were three-fold: (1) To investigate possibilities for cross-cultural research for students and faculty (2) To gather information to incorporate global perspectives into a new psychology course offering with a global emphasis and, (3) To build a cooperative faculty guest lecture and exchange program between KSU and UPC. I am currently Psychology Director of a KSU student research team that is engaged in cross-cultural research in the United States, Turks and Caicos, China, England, and now, Peru. I have taught primarily in the United States and presented guest lectures in five European countries, three Caribbean Islands, and two cities in Mexico. Traveling to Peru was my first travel experience to a South American country. Due to the opportunity afforded by the KSU Country Study program initiative, much to my revelation and resulting enlightenment, I explored a new country and have permanently and sanguinely expanded the direction of my academic research and personal pursuits. My adventure in Lima, Peru enriched and strengthened my dedication and commitment to the advancement of global engagement, diversity, and the prominence of international study for faculty and students. Reflecting on

this inestimable experience has taught me the importance of “on-location” global education for faculty and students and has challenged me to incorporate the international travel adventure into faculty professional development for the educational benefit of students and university communities. It is a priority to accept the challenge to become intellectualized global citizens of the world.

The global adventure truly began in February 2012, when two of my Psychology colleagues and I arrived in Lima, Peru. To gain full appreciation of Lima, Dr. Ernesto Silva, a KSU Year of Peru faculty representative, arranged for a Peruvian guide to show us, after our daily university meetings, what he called a “real cultural expedition of the sights of Lima and her people.” Reflecting back on this experience taught me the importance of actually visiting a country to increase global education for faculty who aim to become intellectualized citizens of the world. During our Lima tours, we weaved in and out of incredibly heavy traffic (if you can imagine driving in Atlanta with 75% less traffic lights) and discovered a magnificent city and people who are still entrenched in historical beauty and culture. Historians Strain, Degregori, and Kirk (2009) report that Lima, the capital of Peru, was founded by Francisco Pizarro on January 18, 1535. After surviving wars, revolutions, and natural catastrophes, Lima became the largest city in Peru, with 43 districts and a population of over 8,100,000 people, the 16<sup>th</sup> most populous city in the world. Currently, the majority ethnic group in Lima is about 70% Mestizo, which is a term for populations from European and indigenous Indians origins. Educationally, 43% of metropolitan Lima’s population 15 years or older has a higher education. Lima is home to the oldest university in the Americas, the National University of San Marcos, which was founded in 1551(Limaeasy.com, 2012). We viewed multiple historical sites that gave us a cultural sense of Lima and “her people,” including the Museo de la Nacion, Plaza de la Ancestros, Plaza de Armas, Palacio Torre Tagle, Mercado Indio’s, Iglesia de la Merced, and the Iglesia de Santo Domingo. After returning to KSU, as part of our faculty professional development, we presented a lecture and PowerPoint presentation about our Peruvian trip, which included the impact of the Lima historical sites on our Peruvian education. In fall 2012, we plan to incorporate the Lima PowerPoint presentation in multiple classes, including my 250 student section of Introductory Psychology (PSYC 1101), Critical Issues in Psychology (PSYC 2105), and three other psychology courses. Our intent is to educate students about the advantages of global education and entice them to enroll in the Peru or other KSU Travel Abroad experiences.

During our trip, we also met with Psychology faculty, administrators, and Vice Presidents of USIL, UPC, and Pontificia Universidad Catholica (PUCP) to begin discussion of the KSU Psychology Department Travel Abroad program. The conference meetings with USIL, UPC, and PUCP Universities were decidedly successful. It quickly became apparent during our trip to Lima that the

Peruvian University faculty and administrators share KSU's Year of Peru Country program belief that, in order to understand and appreciate other countries and cultures, one needs to employ a broad lens and engage the "other" on a myriad of levels (Year of Program, Kennesaw State University, 2011). My trip to Peru enhanced my knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of the country's vital history, culture, and modern day development. In reflection, with my newfound passion for global education and the country of Peru and its citizens, I am determined to ignite other faculty and students' passion for educated travel, appreciation of other countries, especially Peru.

While preparing this reflection for the Journal of Public and Professional Sociology on Faculty Professional Development Abroad, I rediscovered the significance of my travel abroad and how it enriched and strengthened my dedication and commitment to the advancement of global engagement and international study for myself and other faculty and students. The trip to Peru reinforced the importance of "on location" global education and of facing the challenge of incorporating international travel into faculty professional development to ultimately benefit students and the university community as a whole. We must support our students and faculty in their pursuit to become intellectualized global citizens of the world through professional development travel abroad programs and transpose this global knowledge into classroom and research domains.

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