Our field research focused on the effects of Peruvian government transparency on the political attitudes of Peruvian citizens. Peru has gone further than many countries in promoting and making information available to the public. Through websites referred to as “transparency portals”, detailed information about government operations on all levels has been made accessible to the public. Therefore, the objective of this project was to understand how these transparency efforts affect the level of support and political efficacy felt among Peruvians. Our team of students helped conduct five separate experiments where subjects would complete a survey following a video discussing publicly available information about the national, regional, and/or local government. While all treatment and control groups completed the same survey, each treatment differed in either the presentation or content of the information. For example, in one experiment we varied the context of regional social indicators that we presented to the subject. Information, such as the rate of malnutrition among children under age 5 and the percentage of households with electricity, was presented in a relative context in order to see if a positive or negative comparison affects one’s perception of their regional government.

With the tremendous help of our Peruvian surveyors, we managed to complete 1,430 surveys in two weeks. We traveled to various locations within the city of Lima in order to obtain a sample of individuals from different socioeconomic levels. It was fascinating to see the apparent differences in political perceptions. Professor Darren Hawkins along with several students have already begun the data analysis, and based on the cursory results, we hope to produce a paper on the topic over the course of the next year.

Due to the demands of the experiment, we became familiar with the city of Lima in a short period of time. Whether it was navigating bus routes or eating at the local “menu” (a Peruvian restaurant specializing in a certain list of dishes only served during the lunch hours), we made the effort to immerse ourselves into the lifestyle and culture. While the food was thoroughly enjoyed, some of us, including myself, had to endure the occasional stomachache in order to try foods of all variety. We came to know the Peruvian surveyors well throughout the project and were grateful for their work ethic and kindness shown on a consistent basis. The warmth and friendship that they extended to each of us was remarkable and they treated us like family from the beginning. While perhaps someone from another culture or upbringing would have perceived us as merely foreign employers, they viewed us as friends and sought to ensure that we made the most of our experience in their beloved country. Social norms, such as the abuse of the car horn among the crowded streets of Lima or the proliferation of room temperature soda, took some getting used to for us foreigners accustomed to a certain way of life. Nonetheless, working in Lima helped us gain a deep appreciation for its rich cultural heritage and loving, family-oriented society that treated us like one of their own.