

Fulbright: An opportunity to emerge, to become

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"Hello _____, my name is Brandon Goodale, and I am a linguist..." is probably the most common phrase written in over 900 separate WhatsApp conversations during my US Student Research Fulbright to Uruguay in 2022. As a university student, I have studied Hispanic Linguistics for my BA, MA, and PhD. I have always felt like a student first, a language instructor second, and a researcher third. My nine-month Fulbright grant allowed me to put the first two on hold and be a researcher, a fieldworker, a linguist, and a student of experience.

The Fulbright application process was a learning experience. It forced me to learn to write and revise grant proposal documents repeatedly and interview effectively, even had I not been selected it would have been a valuable experience. My proposal was, without a doubt, ambitious, and if anyone doubted it could be done, I would not blame them; it was an enormous

undertaking. I proposed interviewing 54 people in Montevideo and 36 people in another 12 of Uruguay's 19 departments, totaling 486 people. I designed each interview to take approximately an hour. Why so many? To ensure a diverse population sampling, I planned to have even numbers of men and women across three age groups (18-35, 36-59, 60+) and three education levels (primary, secondary, tertiary). I knew from the start that I would not be able to analyze the speech of every participant for the dissertation; it just is not feasible given the amount of time my analysis takes. I thought to utilize these nine months to the max, interview as many as possible, and work until my body demanded rest. I knew this was likely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to carry out such extensive fieldwork. I sought to better my understanding, become a more competent linguist, and set myself up for success. This meant having an extensive and versatile dataset for subsequent publications, a foundation for future funding applications to hire graduate students to conduct analyses, and for future courses.

Having traveled to Uruguay numerous times before my Fulbright, I had already visited most of the historical sites and tourist attractions. I did, however, participate for the first time in the yearly *Marcha del Silencio* in Montevideo. I also attended a *Buitres* concert in Buenos Aires, Argentina, a tango music concert performed by Uruguayan musician Héctor Ulises Passarella in Montevideo at the SODRE, and a night club party for *Noche de la Nostalgia* at Lotus in Montevideo. Besides those events, I visited a few museums but mostly photographed the beautiful architecture of older buildings, cityscapes, well-maintained city plazas, dilapidated buildings, street art, the vast yellow flowered fields of rapeseed, the beautiful addition of eucalyptus plantations which add pleasing height to the mostly flat landscape, the incredible sunsets both in the country and at the beach, the starlit skies above the pitch black country roads, and the herds of peaceful, free-roaming cattle and sheep, all of which my pictures never seemed to do justice.



Figure 1: Marcha del Silencio—Montevideo May 20, 2022



Figure 2: Buitres, a Uruguayan rock band—Buenos Aires, Argentina July 24, 2022



Figure 3: Arboretum Antonio Lussich in Maldonado



Figure 4: Architectural ruins in Colonia del Sacramento overlooking the Río de la Plata.



Figure 5: Punta Ballena, Maldonado

There were many more cultural events I could have attended during my time in Uruguay, but I decided to leave those for much shorter trips in the future. Attending cultural events like concerts and sporting events, while entertaining and perhaps critical points of cultural differences, do not show how Uruguayans live when the party is over and they are back to the grind of everyday life. While focusing on linguistic patterns, my study solicited speech samples treating topics at the heart of what it is like growing up and living in Uruguay. While harder to summarize, given the differing and complex nature of lived experience, these conversations, while not always cheerful, were most enlightening. The oldest participant I interviewed was a 91-year-old man from Río Negro, he was such a delight to interview, and I was so impressed with his responses that I asked him if I could share a copy of the recordings with his children for posterity and he consented. My study consisted of three parts. First, the consent form and entrance survey to gather demographic information to create a linguistic profile of the participant. Second, a series of three recorded tasks. The first recorded section consisted of 9-10 open-answer questions treating topics about life growing up, the community and how it has changed, and what the participant does for fun where they live, among others. The second is a discourse competition task (DCT) designed to request specific sentences for intonational analysis. The final recorded task had the participant read a short fable titled *El viento norte y el sol* 'The North Wind and the Sun'. The last part was an exit survey about their linguistic opinions. Depending on participants' responses during the exit survey, some had the option to imitate Buenos Aires intonation and, separately, a singsong-like intonation called *cantito*, which some described as occurring in different regions of Uruguay. Each of the three recorded tasks differed in their spontaneity. I did this to understand how different degrees of spontaneity affected their speech patterns.

The recruitment process began before arriving in Uruguay. Recruiting strangers for a study that does not pay its participants for their time requires much work. There is a healthy amount of distrust in this age of scams, and I admit that despite my efforts to establish credibility, not everyone was convinced.

I began by creating a personal website for academic purposes (brandongoodale.com) so that information about me was easily accessible to those interested and an aptly named research-specific website (vocesdeuruguay.com) dedicated to informing and recruiting participants. Both websites have links to the other, to the dedicated Voces de Uruguay Facebook page, and the entities funding my research: the Fulbright Commission in Uruguay, the Lois Roth Foundation, and UW-Madison Graduate School and Department of Spanish and Portuguese. The Fulbright Commission also gave us business cards I had customized with a QR code leading to my recruitment website. They incurred zero risk by scanning it, opening it on my phone, and completing the prescreening survey with them on my device. Either at that moment or later, I would follow up via WhatsApp and make an appointment to conduct the interview.



While Uruguay is not a large country, 68,037 square miles, it takes 7 hours to drive from North to South and the same or more to drive East to West. To cover this amount of territory, it was not feasible to live in Montevideo or a more central location for the duration of the grant because driving three hours each way to interview someone at over \$7.50 per gallon of gasoline was unrealistic. The infeasibility of repeatedly traveling these distances meant I needed to move frequently to be closer to the communities I sought to interview. Since I only had nine months and had 13 departments to visit, I set out to divvy up my time accordingly to not overstay in any one area at the expense of others. I sought to interview two people per day, and at that rate, I would need to be in Montevideo for a month and a half and 20 days in the other departments. Logistically, this was a solid plan until I began looking for housing in each area. The main tourist areas of Uruguay are in the south; once venturing inland, the quantity and quality of AirBnBs plummets while those of any quality skyrocket in price. It became clear that renting for an entire month, and thereby often qualifying for a substantial discount, would be the only feasible way to rent housing. This unexpected need to live in each location for a month was at odds with my timeline. In some departments, I chose housing central to 2 or 3 departments and commuted on the days I scheduled appointments further from home.

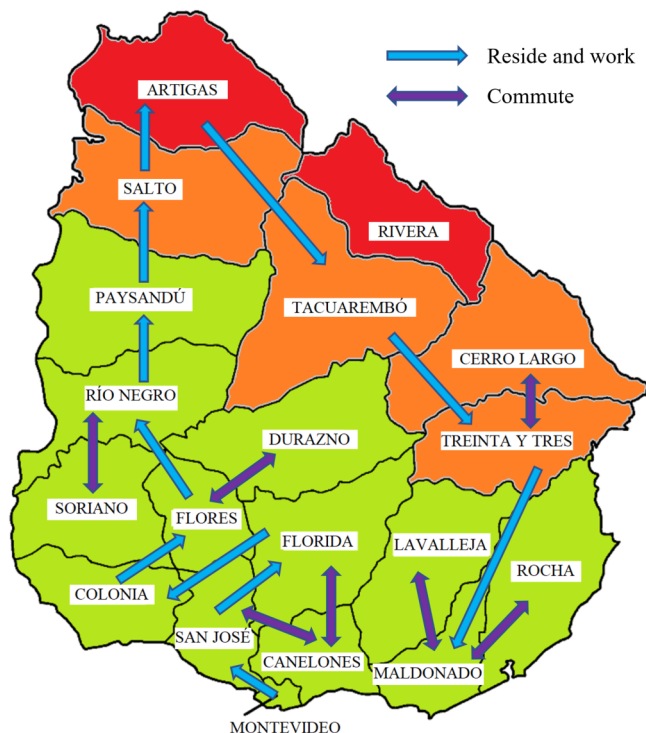


Figure 6 shows how I made my way around Uruguay. This figure demonstrates that I visited more than the original 13 departments (colored green). While living in Florida, the Fulbright Commission notified us that all 8 Fulbrighters could apply for supplemental funding from the Lois Roth Foundation. I applied and proposed to visit the departments colored orange in Figure 6. The committee ultimately split the funding between the other finalist and me. I used the additional funding to interview in these departments at an accelerated rate since I did not have additional time. Also, while in the North, I spent a few days interviewing in Artigas, but I needed more time to succeed. I had likewise considered interviewing in Rivera, primarily for personal experience and to test my study design but decided to skip it due to time constraints. However, I interviewed one person from Rivera who had recently moved to Montevideo to attend the university.

Figure 6: Movement path throughout Uruguay

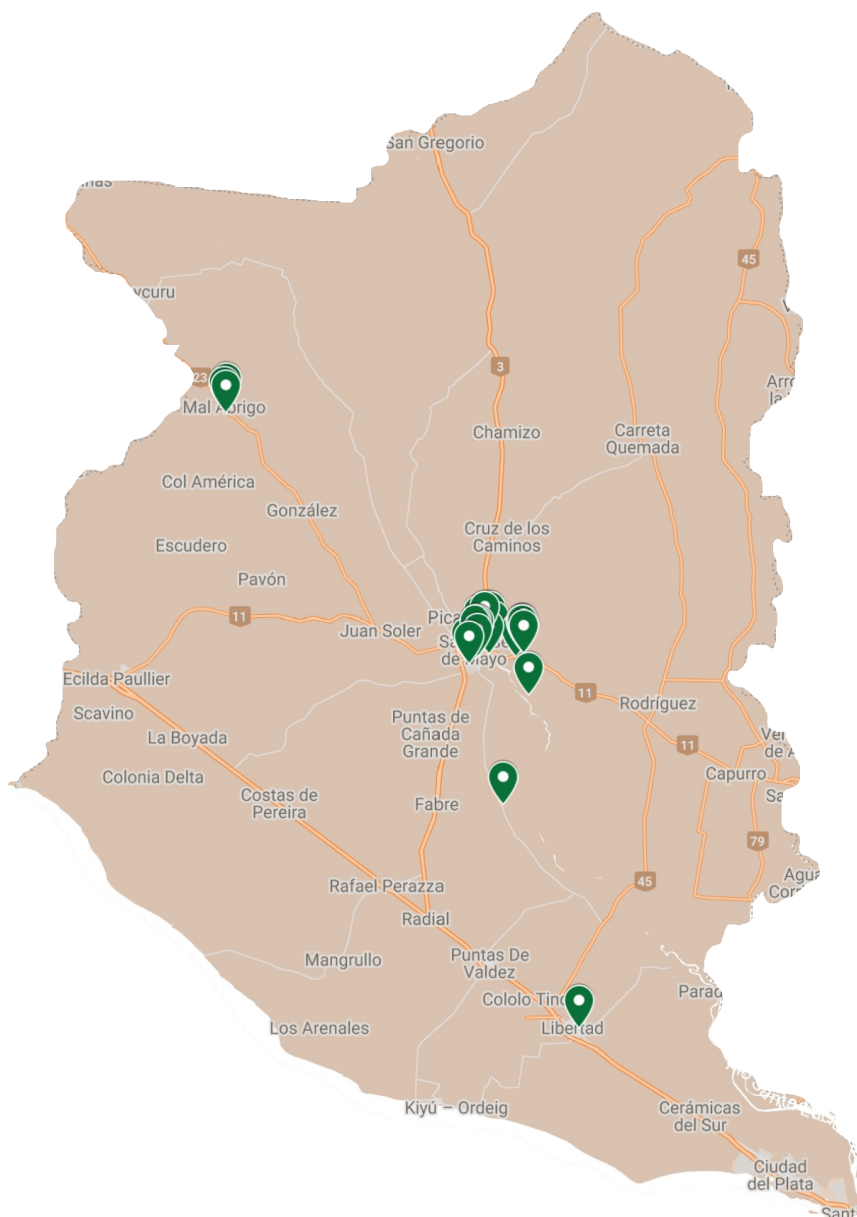


Figure 8: Geographic Distribution in San José



Figure 9: Cow in Raigón, San José



Figure 10: The Monument to Mate

While in Montevideo, I used public transportation, primarily buses, and the occasional Uber. While public transportation is common throughout the country, it would have hindered my ability to come and go rapidly, required a serious effort to determine bus routes and times, and limited my potential and reach while potentially impacting my health and safety should I miscalculate and find myself with no way home. So, before moving to San José, I rented a VW Gol for the remaining 7.5 months, an expense I incurred as an investment in myself and my future. During this time, I logged 15,000 miles across three different VW Gols.

Arriving in San José, I began to reach out to the limited contacts I had obtained while in Montevideo. Once depleted, I had to begin approaching people on the street. The butcher at the local grocery store participated and introduced me to his aunts, who, in turn, could connect me with others. I attended local religious services and found a few more participants. A local radio station learned I was in town, contacted me, and had me on their radio show. While the initial transmission did not flood my account with new recruits, I added this interview to my recruitment website, which increased my credibility. Based on participant feedback, most claimed to have listened to this particular interview over subsequent ones. While living in San José, I also commuted to the neighboring department of Canelones to interview. Though I worked to recruit and interview every day, I could not recruit fast enough to reach my goal for San José before my 30 days were up, and I had to move on to Florida. In the following months, I would occasionally return to San José for the day to interview recruits, one of whom had a cow that they taught me to milk.

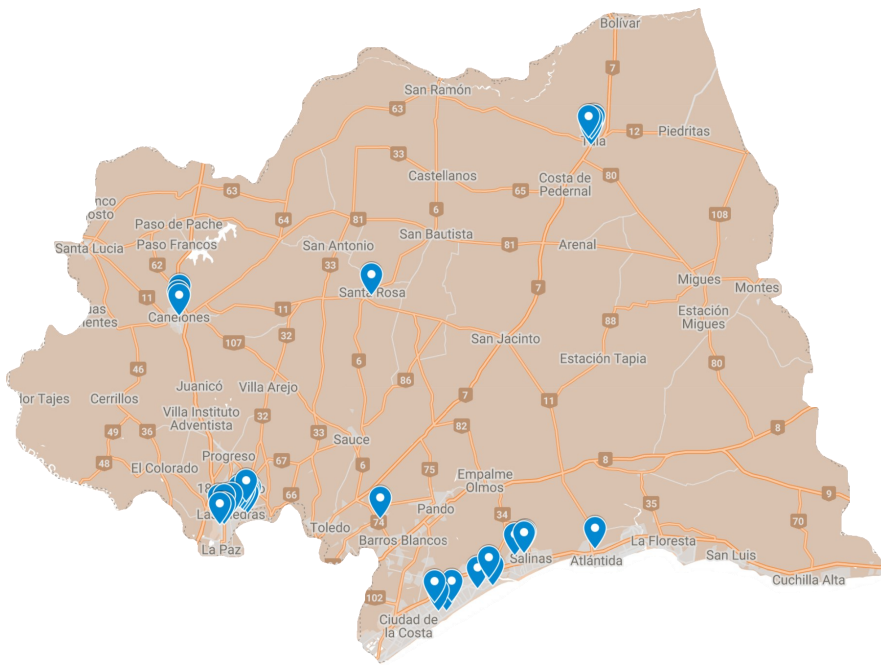


Figure 11: Geographic Distribution in Canelones

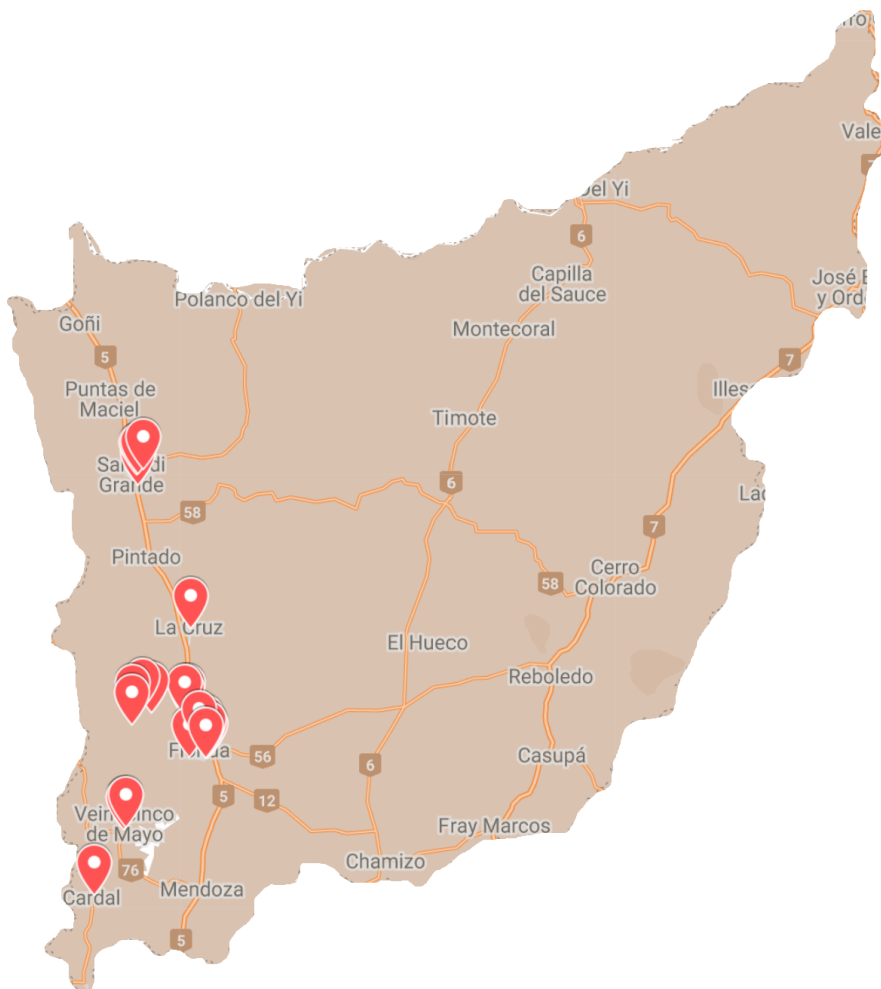


Figure 12: Geographic Distribution in Florida

While in Florida, I continued to travel to Canelones to interview, and due to my wife's family in that department, recruitment came rather quickly in their city. However, I needed more participants from other cities of the department. In Tala, a local man helped me coordinate appointments with several individuals. One of the families I met with invited me to stay for lunch. Upon arriving at my contact's house to end the day, he had all manner of pastries waiting, more than we could possibly eat. Fantastic people.

In Florida, I had the fortune of renting the apartment below the home of the department's museum director. He put me in contact with many people who, in turn, could find me additional participants. For the first time, I could interview truly rural speakers, and the experience was terrific, and their speech patterns were noticeably different. I again struggled to reach my goal of 36, but I did venture out of the department's capital city and visit distant small towns. It was the first time I covered significant ground inside a department.



Figure 13: Rancher (left), Ranch hand (right)

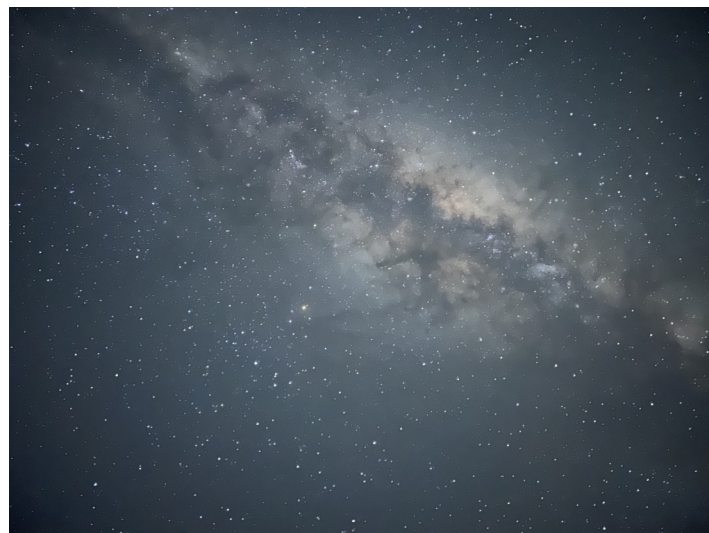


Figure 14: Plaza de los Toros—Real de San Carlos, Colonia

Figure 15: New moon sky over Colonia, June 28, 2022

From Florida, I moved to Colonia. Colonia del Sacramento is a popular tourist destination. My stay coincided with a new moon, so I took some country roads far from the city lights to star gaze late one night and managed to capture the milky way with just my smartphone.

Recruiting in Colonia was a struggle. Teachers at all levels were especially interested in my research and instrumental in my recruitment effort in every department. However, until Colonia, I had not visited individual schools to recruit or disseminate my recruitment materials. I previously shared my study information in WhatsApp group chats, and teachers would sign up. Teachers were also great about getting me in contact with teachers in other departments. This more direct approach led to several interviews. I toured the Plaza de Toros Real de San Carlos and recruited a tour guide. I participated in another radio show via Facebook Live in Carmelo, a city in northern Colonia, which went straight to my recruitment website. Connections at the radio station led to an intense effort to find participants for me that same day. As a result of their dedication on my behalf, I was able to interview several participants from a community music group. I strove to interview across the department in Colonia as I did in Florida. Due to some wandering through back

country roads while returning from an interview in the distant town of Tarariras, I manually recruited a few more rural speakers. Once I reached the threshold of 25 participants in a department, the remaining eleven proved extremely difficult to obtain, as if they had all agreed that I had enough.

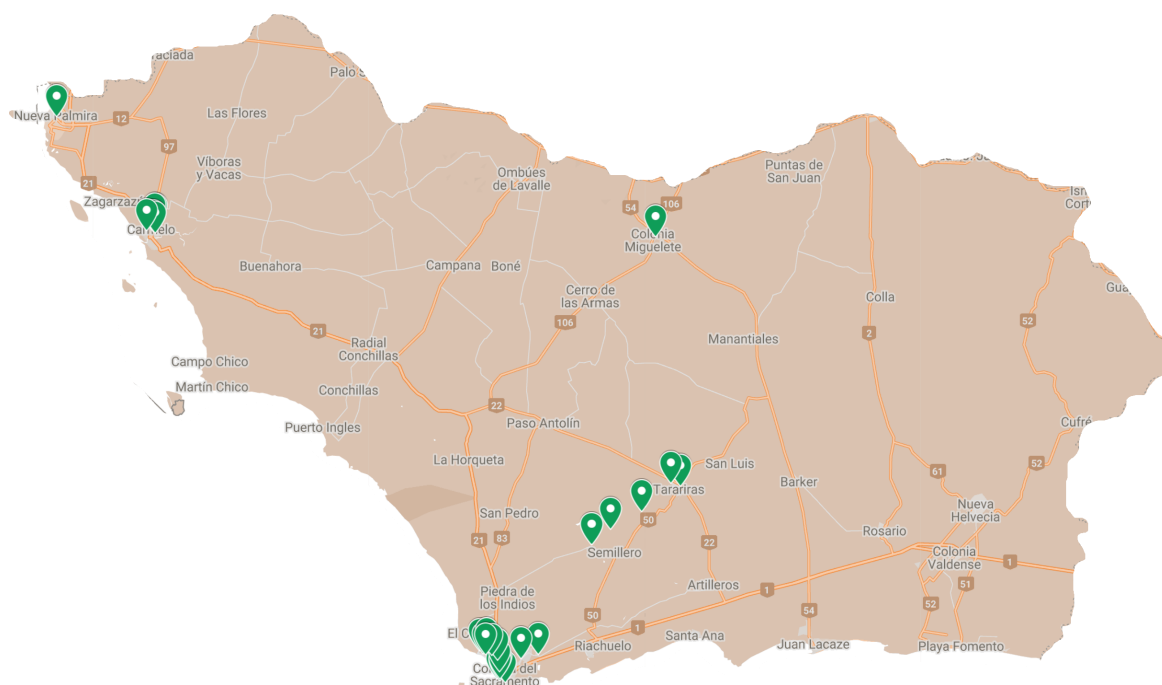


Figure 16: Geographic Distribution in Colonia

It is late July, and I have interviewed 182 people. Still, without a doubt, an enormous number of participants for any linguistic study and unheard of for studies on intonation, but I still had so many more departments to cover. In my final days in Colonia, I developed a bad throat cold that I could not shake. The Fulbright Commission had us return to Montevideo for a mid-way Fulbright Enhancement Seminar, where I needed to present my progress. I gave that presentation with the little voice I had left and went to the hospital to get checked out. Unfortunately, they told me to give it more time.



Figure 17: Enhancement Seminar—Montevideo July 20, 2022

From Colonia, I moved to Flores, and by the time I arrived, I had lost my voice entirely, and I could not interview. A local radio show heard I would be arriving and was excited to have me on, but I was literally speechless. I was a sitting duck for almost two weeks. Another trip to the doctor and an extreme shot of antibiotics got me on the path to recovery. This setback pressured me to make up for lost time and gave me time to rethink my recruitment strategy. I created a commercial Facebook page for my study, replacing the personal page I had, which I wish I had done sooner, and found that paid ads were relatively inexpensive. I ran my first Facebook ad on August 9, but I neglected to limit its scope to the Flores Department, and the ad got sizable activity. Two hundred seventy-one people from across the country registered for my study in August. Despite losing time being sick, I managed to be interviewed by the local paper and two local radio shows. I had my first national television interview, some of which I added to my website, granting me additional credibility. I managed to interview 27 people in Flores and 31 in the neighboring department of Durazno, totaling 73 people in August, by also returning to previously visited departments, predominantly Florida, to interview people who had signed up from the Facebook ads.

I continued to run targeted Facebook ads in upcoming departments so that I could hit the ground running. The contacts obtained through Facebook were less reliable than referrals from other participants, but I recruited those that followed through with minimal effort on my part, and it also provided me with a more



Figure 18: Geographic Distribution in Flores

diverse population sample because they were not from the same friend or workgroup. Naturally, I continued to ask for referrals through which I was able to meet even more remarkable people.

Date	Duration (days)	Target	Reach	Engagement	Reactions	Comments	Link Clicks	Shares	Cost
Aug. 9	6	Nationwide	6,100	1,534	142	92	178	33	\$12
Aug. 13	2	Nationwide	12,512	2,025	345	54	121	56	\$25
Aug. 13	6	Flores Durazno	5,601	1,083	42	28	152	23	\$10
Aug. 20	6	Rio Negro Soriano	10,196	1,982	89	16	286	36	\$20
Aug. 26	6	Paysandú	11,179	1,631	68	8	215	18	\$20
Aug. 26	10	Salto Tacuarembó Cerro Largo Treinta y Tres	19,291	4,174	234	40	549	62	\$30
Sep. 20	5	Salto Artigas Tacuarembó Rivera Cerro Largo Treinta y Tres	28,761	2,997	219	55	921	46	\$20
Oct. 10	8	Maldonado Rocha Lavalleja	17,522	3,284	178	235	586	63	\$32
Nov. 14	8	Lavalleja	11,383	2,327	94	55	330	28	\$23
TOTAL	57		122,545	21,037	1,411	583	3,338	365	\$192

Figure 19: Insights for boosted Voces de Uruguay Facebook ads, currency in US dollars

I ran Facebook ads for a total of 57 days, spending \$192.00. To simplify, we will say, though inaccurate, that all recruitment from August to December came from these ads. Such a supposition would mean that the cost of acquiring each of these 616 prescreening contact surveys was approximately \$0.31. Furthermore, the acquisition cost for the 357 finalized interviews from August to December was \$1.86 each. Because of this improved recruitment method, I interviewed 67% of my total participants during the second half of my grant period.

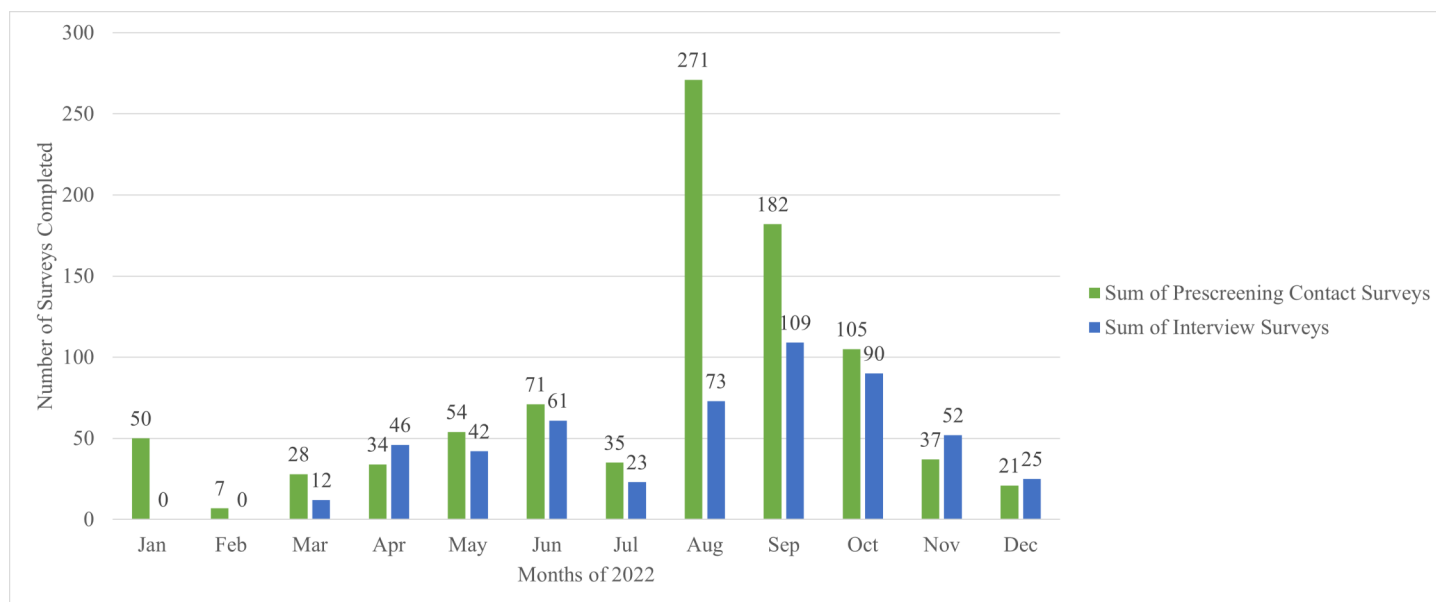


Figure 20: Prescreening contact surveys vs. Interviews conducted

With the new wind in my sails, I moved to Río Negro, and while living there, I commuted to Soriano. In both departments, I was able to cover significant ground, again visiting several towns of less than 3,000

people. I was able to interview around 5-6 people per day. I discovered that at six interviews per day, I was at capacity. However, a few times, I interviewed 7. The only downside I found to interviewing so many people in such a short time was how mental exhaustion affected my ability to recall details about individual interviews I had done. Apart from the fantastic people, I was able to tour the Ex-Frigorífico Anglo & Industrial Revolution Museum, which was a fascinating and educational experience.



Figure 21: Geographic Distribution in Durazno

I was able to wrap up Río Negro and Soriano a week early. I could have taken a break and crossed the bridge to Argentina to look around, but instead opted to move to Paysandú a week early. Before the move, the Paysandú newspaper El Telégrafo



Figure 22: Ex Frigorífico Anglo & Industrial Revolution Museum

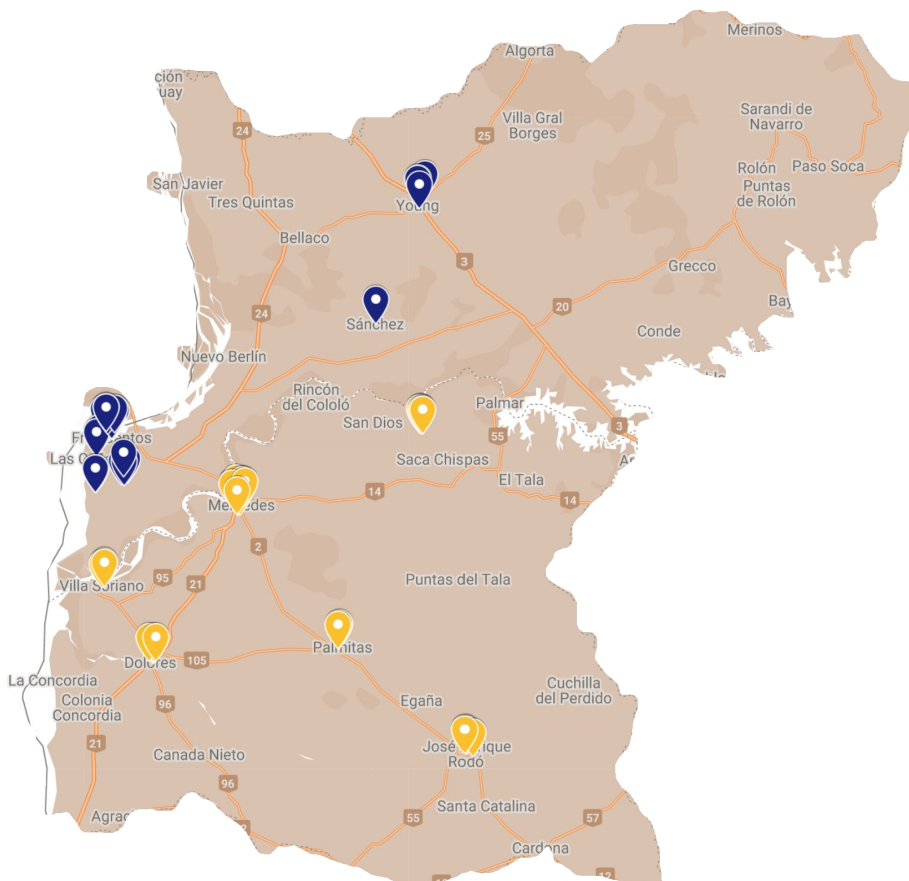


Figure 23: Geographic Distribution in Río Negro (navy) and Soriano (yellow)

either of us, we sometimes spent an hour at the beginning or the end just talking about anything and everything, giving rise to many amazing conversations.

contacted me and offered to announce my study and participation dates in the department a week in advance. On top of my targeted Facebook ads in Paysandú, this announcement allowed me to interview 30 people that week. In September, I managed to interview 109 people. I admit that some of these interviews ran longer than the allotted hour. When time was not an issue for

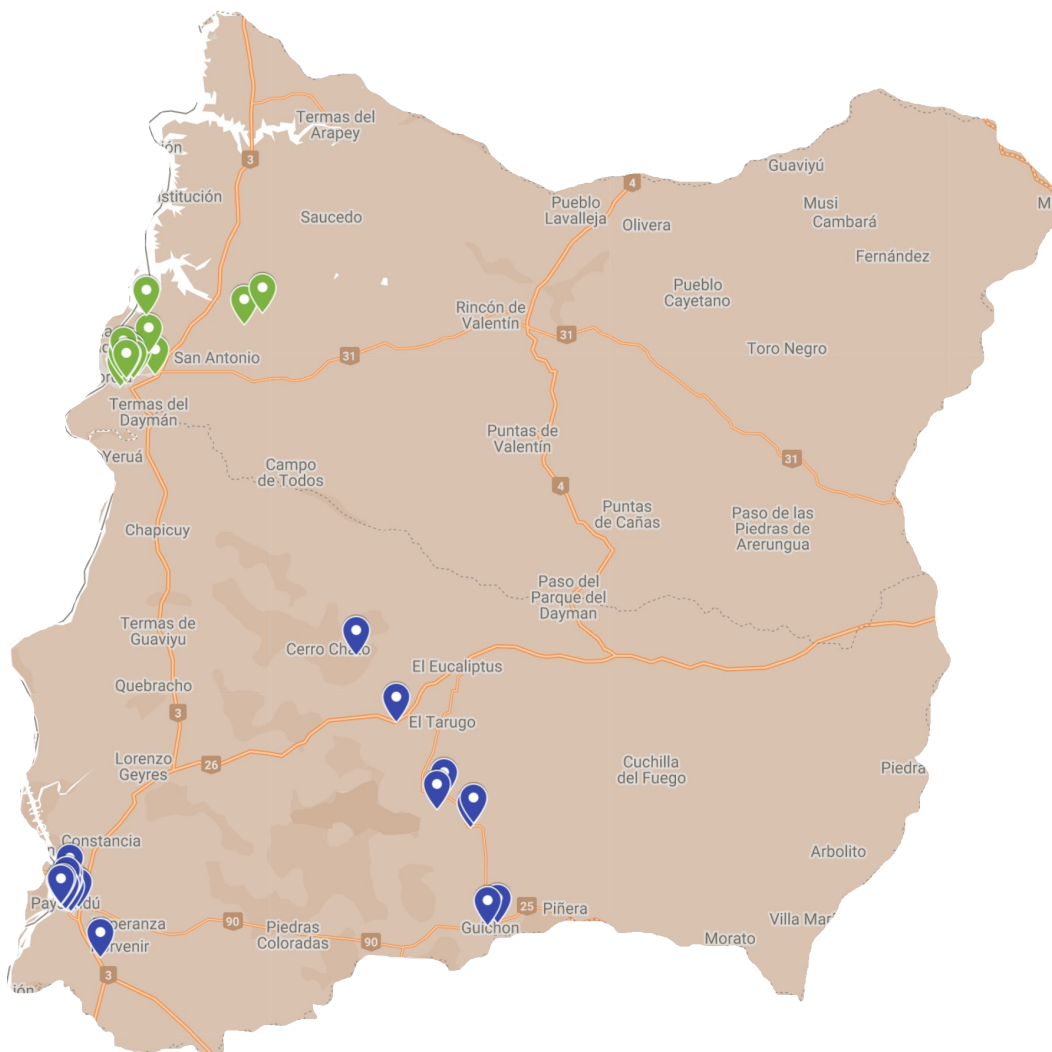


Figure 24: Geographic Distribution in Paysandú (blue) and Salto (green)

crossing the Oueguay Grande River. Route 4 is rough for over an hour until it intersects with Route 26. I thought my poor VW Gol would shake apart. Nevertheless, I reached all my destinations and met with various rural individuals, some linguistically more rural than others. Since I completed my interviews in Paysandú before I anticipated being there, and with the help of additional funding from the Lois Roth Foundation, I used the 20 days I had set aside for Paysandú to visit five additional departments. At this point, I became a nomad, or what I imagine life on the run would feel like; it was not much fun, but it proved productive. I stayed for five days in Salto, interviewing 25 participants. Given this limited timeframe, I could not venture outside the city of Salto, a school teacher mentoring another Fulbrighter recruited those that live outside, and I interviewed them at her house in the city. One of these participants, a 60-year-old man, is an excellent example of rural speech.

The majority that signed up in Paysandú were from the city of Paysandú. One woman signed up from the small town of Guichón and put me in touch with a radio station popular among rural workers, and this secured me an additional participant. However, the referrals that came directly from the radio host proved to be more helpful. I could only rent the house in the city of Paysandú for 5 days. For the other two, I moved to Guichón. I only needed a place to stay but ended up treating myself to an early birthday present and stayed at Hotel Salinas del Almirón. While I was mainly there to eat and sleep, I tried out the pools fed by a natural saltwater spring. Going north out of Guichón, Route 4 becomes a very rocky dirt road after



Figure 25: Open views to a valley of rapeseed fields—Rural Paysandú

I spent two days in Artigas interviewing only a few people. I was going to visit Rivera, where many people had signed up, but I did not have enough time to interview them all and instead chose to dedicate a little extra time to Tacuarembó. I stayed in Tacuarembó for 7 days, in a house in the capital city by the same name. Tacuarembó is the largest department, and the distance between the main cities is not ideal for commuting. The owner of my Airbnb in Río Negro lives in Paso de los Toros, Tacuarembó, and offered to let me stay at his house for a couple of days to interview there. Coincidentally, it was also my birthday, and he, his husband, and I went to a local restaurant for dinner. It was so kind of them to make my day special.



Figure 26: The Monument to the Bull—Paso de los Toros, Tacuarembó



Figure 27: Camp ground—Paso de los Toros, Tacuarembó

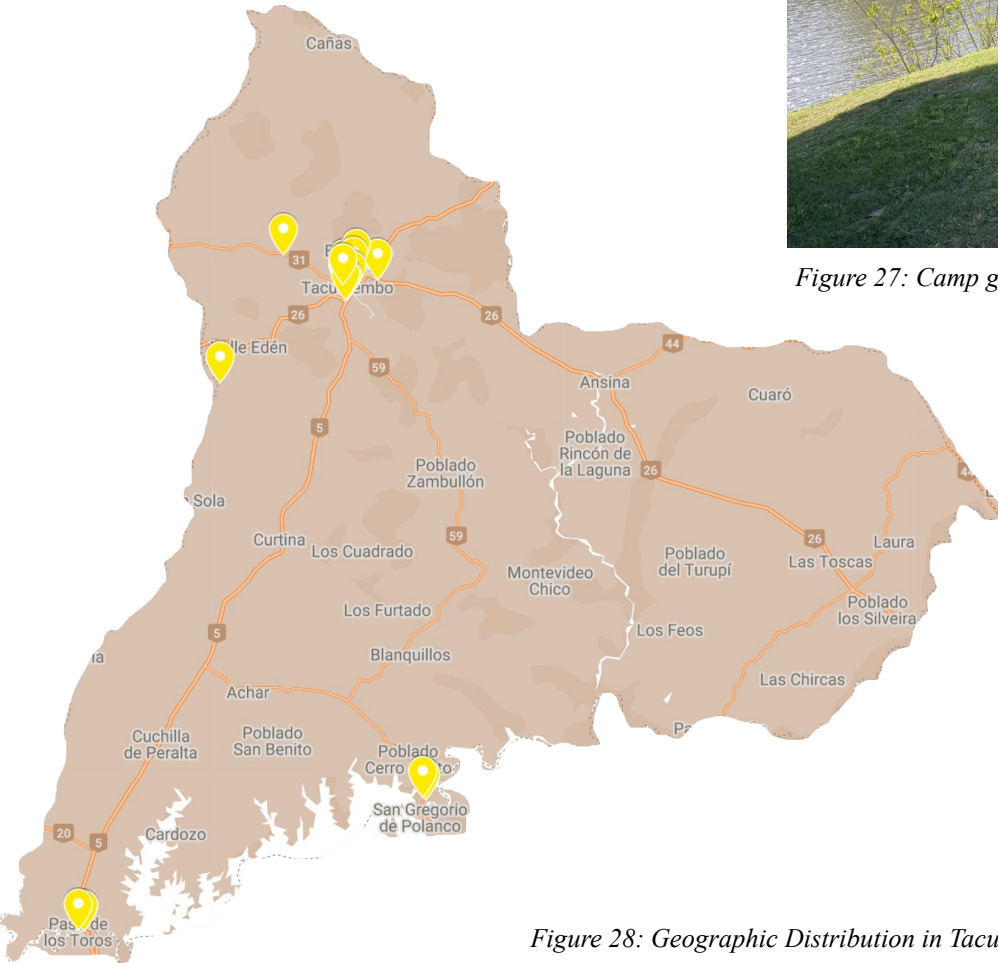


Figure 28: Geographic Distribution in Tacuarembó

After visiting a beautiful park along the bank of the Río Negro, I left Paso de los Toros and traveled to San Gregorio de Polanco to interview two educators, this is a popular river vacation town, but in October it is mostly empty.

From Tacuarembó, I drove to Treinta y Tres where I resided for nine days. During this time, I commuted north to Cerro Largo where I interviewed 22 participants. Despite having lived in Treinta y Tres, I only completed 15 interviews. Getting people to sign up was not easy, and I did not have the luxury of time as I did initially. Since renting my car, I have driven so many highways and city streets that I knew the condition of the roads better than many of the people I interviewed. I often talked and laughed about road conditions with the locals like it was the weather. The drive between Treinta y Tres and Cerro Largo is beautiful. After entering the department of Cerro Largo from the south on Route 8, around the town called Arbolito, to the west, there is a 'cerro' or hill with windmills on top, that is the 'cerro largo' or long hill.



Figure 29: Geographic Distribution in Cerro Largo (orange) and Treinta y Tres (brown)

my sisters visited me in Uruguay for 12 days, and I showed them around all the southern departments. We also took a two-day trip to Buenos Aires. I had seen most of these places on previous trips, but seeing them through their eyes was a rewarding experience. After their departure, I returned to business as usual, scheduling interviews in both Rocha and Lavalleja departments. I would spend the entire day in a distant city interviewing, arriving home late at night. I spent little time in my apartment, but waking up to the sight of the ocean made it worth it.

After a long nomadic 20 days, I was eager for a break. With spring in the air and summer approaching, I planned to spend my last two months near the beach in the department of Maldonado. It was a well-deserved treat. While living in Maldonado, I traveled to the neighboring Rocha and Lavalleja departments. I also returned to Montevideo and the Canelones coast a few times to interview people from select demographics. During my first ten days in Maldonado, I interviewed most of my participants in the department. I worked quickly to buy myself some time off. Two of

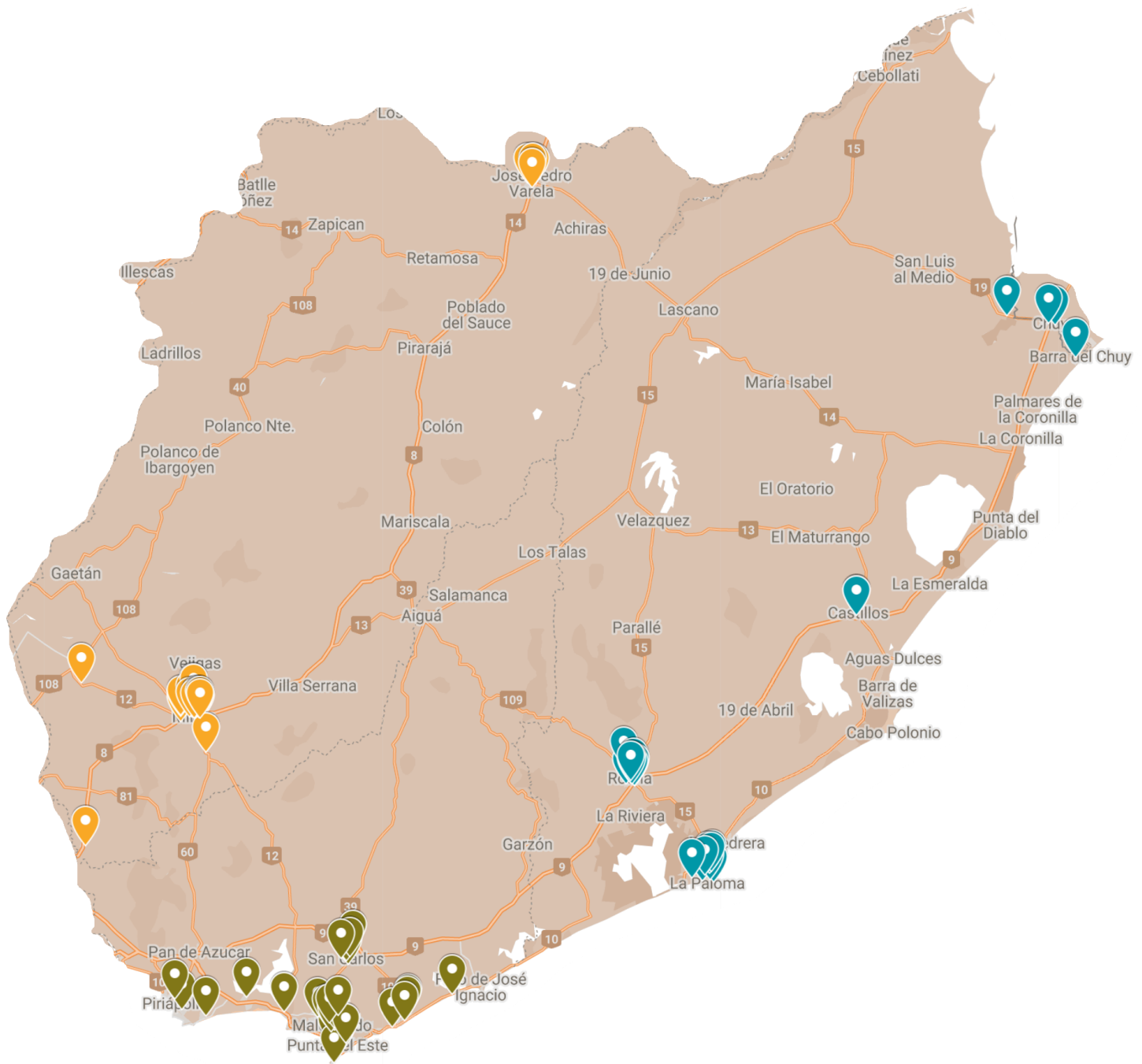


Figure 30: Geographic Distribution in Lavalleja (orange), Maldonado (light brown), and Rocha (turquoise)

The population I sampled is not only geographically diverse but socially diverse. While obtaining equal numbers of each demographic is ideal, I could only interview those that wanted to participate. Many people were eager to participate either to represent Uruguayan speech or because this would be a new experience for them. I did not turn anyone away if they met the criteria, and we could coordinate a meeting. I would have liked to have recorded more rural speakers, but they proved the most difficult to recruit. In fact, on my final day of interviewing in Uruguay, I was in Maldonado, interviewing a man initially from rural Lavalleja. After concluding our interview, we talked about my research, and I told him that I would have liked to have interviewed more rural speakers. He told me he has rural contacts in Mariscal and Colón, Lavalleja, that I could have interviewed. Had I met him sooner, we could have arranged it. Figure 31 details the social distribution of the participants.

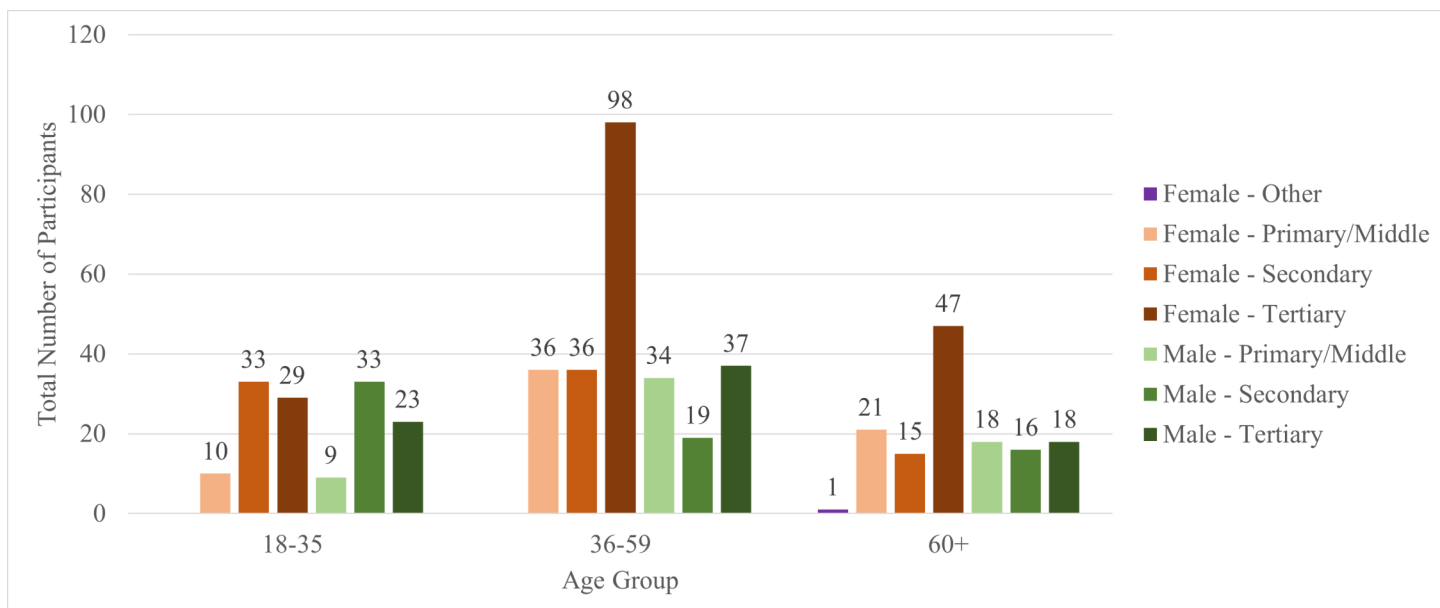


Figure 31: Social Distribution of Participants

By the time I left Uruguay, on December 13, 2022, I had interviewed a total of 533 participants, 326 women, and 207 men, across all 19 departments. I did interview more than the 486 participants I expected, but that is because I covered additional departments. I surpassed my goal for Montevideo; however, not all were born and raised in Montevideo. I surpassed my goal for Canelones but otherwise came up short in the other departments. I do not see this as a problem in the slightest. With 533 total speakers and 150 GB of audio recordings, I have plenty for such a small country.

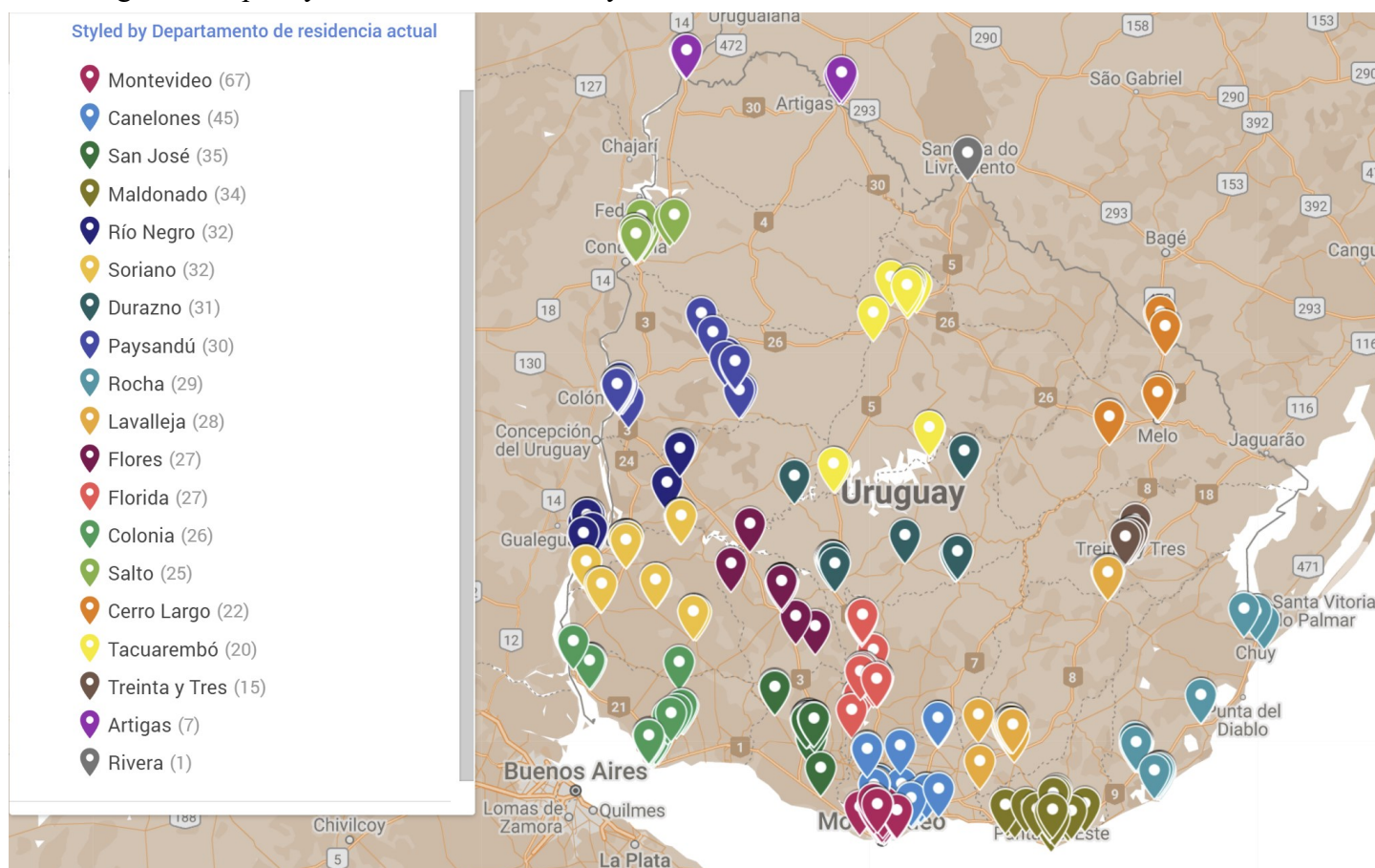


Figure 32: Nationwide Geographic Distribution

I planned to give my all, and I did, and I have no regrets. That is not to say that I would not have changed anything if I were to do it again. It was a learning experience, and I have learned a great deal. Mainly I would utilize my most effective recruitment tools earlier in the process. Doing so would have allowed me to work faster, take frequent breaks, or find more speakers from specific demographics. I also would have added a storytelling task. While some people naturally told stories in response to specific questions, others were relatively brief, and a task designed to tell a story could have proved useful. Thanks to this experience, I have learned much about study design and how to interview effectively.

I immensely enjoyed meeting and interviewing complete strangers. Only in Montevideo did I interview the majority at the university. Outside of Montevideo, if the participants were willing and their homes quiet, I would meet and record them there. Such was the case for most participants; I interviewed in over 400 homes. I would reserve a school, church, community center, museum, or workplace for those who preferred recording elsewhere. In every department except for Montevideo, I even interviewed participants in the house I was renting. Sometimes, I even picked them up from their house and drove them to mine to be interviewed, returning them home after we finished. Of course, I understand risk is inherent in these decisions, yet I was never in any danger.

At the start of my Fulbright grant in March 2022, COVID-19 restrictions were still partially in effect, and masks were still required on public transportation and at the university. Health and measures to preserve it were certainly on our minds. I logically sought to maintain my health and safety and took some specific precautions. Everywhere I went, I carried an insulated bottle of cold water, and when offered something to drink, I would politely decline and assure them I had water. It is common for people to offer food or drink when visiting their home; one man in Durazno even offered me whisky once. While rejecting these items can be offensive, I got along very well with everyone and do not think I offended anybody. There were some exceptions to this rule.

Some participants offered to feed me lunch during my visit, and though they were strangers, I accepted, and the meals they shared with me were fantastic. One woman in Maldonado invited me to have delicious rice and lentil stew. She gave me leftovers to take home, which were equally tasty. A man in José Pedro Varela, Lavalleja took it upon himself to recruit additional contacts for me in his town, afterwards I had lunch with him and his family. In San José, a family invited me to stay after for great crispy chicken sandwiches. An additional precaution I took at times was to send my GPS location to my wife, just so somebody else knew where I was. Taking such risks may not be for everyone, but I would do it again. I only met great people; I wish I could have spent more time chatting with each of them. I remember thinking that if I were to move to this city, I could definitely be friends with this person. Unfortunately, maintaining long-distance friendships is hard, and 533 is impossible. Since I knew this would not be possible, it was not my goal. I value the time I got to spend with each of them and treasure how it makes me feel to remember those moments. I am grateful to have their voices recorded so that perhaps listening to them may remind me of the interview.

In all, your Fulbright experience as a researcher is what you make it. I insisted on making mine a stepping stone toward a bright future by creating an entire linguistic corpus for Uruguayan Spanish. I will use this corpus for years to come and look forward to using it in the classroom, as well as the foundation for future funding applications to hire graduate students to conduct analyses and publish jointly.

