

TEACHING IN SOUTH AMERICA

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Research Proposal

As a social science major, I find it important to have a social understanding of not only my surrounds but also those around the world. Every year thousands of college graduates leave there familiar surroundings to go experience the world around them through teaching, which some claim to be a valuable experience. In my research paper, I will address the educational, cultural, and economical benefits and disadvantages of teaching in South America. The research paper will essentially be split into two main categories: exploring the cultural benefits and complexities of teaching in South America and uncovering the processes and economic benefits and disadvantages of teaching in South America.

In the first category of my research I will examine the countries to teach in South America and the institutions available to teach in. I will look at the economic and political background of the country at a glance. This will give those interested in teaching, in one of the South American countries, a view of the countries as far as the political and economical climate. I will also look at different organizations online, that may help those interested in teaching in South America. These organizations will include both nonprofit and private schools. I will compare and contrast the disadvantages and advantages of teaching in various countries in South America. This may include pay incentives, insurance benefits, time allocated towards exploring the country, and the necessary credentials needed to teach.

The second category will explore the cross-cultural benefits and disadvantages of teaching in South America. The benefits will include the exploration of foreign cultures, languages, and environments. These benefits will also be analyzed as far as job skills and real world experience and how they relate to jobs in the United States. Another area of I will addresses in my paper is how the children, teenagers, or adults of the South American country

will benefit from those from North America who do teach in South America. The disadvantages will draw upon the realistic problems that may occur while in another country. This will include communication and cultural differences in comparison to those found in North America.

The research for my paper will be drawn from professional journals, online organizations' websites, and previous senior projects. In order to gain a perspective on peoples' prior experiences I will have to explore some blogs done by those who have taught, lived, or are currently teaching in South America. This paper is intended for those who are curious in teaching in another country and would like to have an understanding of the benefits, consequences, and possible risk involved in teaching in a South American country. I plan to use as much current data and perspectives, on South America, in order to provide an accurate picture of the environment of teaching in this continent.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Hall, Donald. "Why Professors Should Teach Abroad." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54.6 (2007): B20.

The author, Donald Hall, describes how his experiences of teaching abroad at the university level have benefits both his teaching and the experiences of his students in the U.S. As a result of these experiences his knowledge base in his subject has become deeper and more diverse and his capacity to broaden the narrow U.S. perspective on the issues addressed in his classes has been enhanced. The author suggests professors can benefit from immersion in different cultures. The author uses his own teaching abroad experiences to defend his argument. This journal article provides one of the necessary viewpoints I need for my research. This will allow me to further look into the cross cultural benefits of teaching abroad and to specifically explore the benefits to the students after the teacher has taught abroad. (151)

2. Garson, Bonnie. "Teaching Abroad: A Cross-Cultural Journey." *Journal of Education for Business*, 80.6 (2005): 322-326.

In this journal article the author, Bonnie Garson, explores the impact of culture on the process of adapting to academic employment and life in Cairo, Egypt. Garson also explores the broader meaning of her experience abroad as a professor. The author learns to relate with her Egyptian students but, she still finds conflict in the amount of cultural differences that appear during her visit. The author argues that experience with global travel may help instructors empathize more with foreign students. Though the author had her own personal fights with the Egyptian culture,

she came to the understanding the influence of her ethnocentrism. This journal article provides great insight for my teaching in South America senior project. Though the author did not spend her time in South America, this allows me to understand culture shock and other experiences teachers may encounter regardless of where they are located. (160)

3. Govardhan, Anam K.; Nayar, Bhaskaran; Sheorey, Ravi. "Do U.S. MATESOL Programs Prepare Students to Teach Abroad?" *TESOL QUARTERLY*, 33.1 (1999): 114-125.

English has become the world's most taught, learned, and used second language. The job opportunities for native English speakers interested in teaching English in foreign countries seem to be better than ever. The authors go further into the requirements of TESOL, which stands for, "Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages." Graduate students hoping to teach English abroad can easily be overwhelmed, confounded, and misled by the sheer profusion of programs and by their diversity in content and constituent structure. This article is important for my research paper because it critiques programs that prepare teachers to teach abroad. This is an excellent source to look into the necessary qualifications of teachers. The article also provides an interesting list of suggested preparatory programs to teach English abroad. (149)

4. Shank, Donald. "The American Goes Abroad." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 335 (1961): 99-111.

This journal article focuses on Americans teaching and studying abroad. Statistics regarding United States citizens who go abroad on educational projects are difficult to pin down. The author goes into the 5 main reasons Americans go abroad. These reasons according to the author include: seeing other countries, to learn something about the foreign culture, learn a foreign language, to acquire a specific skill, and to help in the development of foreign institutions. The American also goes through the three phases of adjustment, these include: spectator, personal involvement, and mastering the situation. The author's argument is that though there are faults in the system of going abroad, it still offers rich educational possibilities and opportunities. This article is important for my senior project because it presents a realist point of view. The author does not idealize going abroad. This will provide information for my teaching abroad senior project by better understanding the cross cultural benefits and disadvantages for those teaching abroad. (162)

5. George, Pamela Gale. 1995. "College Teaching Abroad." Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon

In this book the author goes into great detail describing college teaching abroad. Each year 50,000 American educators participate in international exchange programs. These very same ones discover that the instructional methods and techniques they are used to do not suffice when teaching a new culture. The book goes into detail of strategies to accommodate those being taught. The author drew her research on hundreds of Fulbright scholars and other overseas professors. Though this book does cover a college educator abroad I none the less believe this will provide a plethora of information in regards to cultural challenges of teaching English to non English speakers.

6. http://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/living/living_abroad/living_in_south_america.shtml

This website offers country by country resources in South America for current expatriates and those considering living abroad. The website goes into such details as business and economy, education and study, embassies, housing and real-estate, and other travel information on the South American countries. This website will provide me important information on living in South America. The blog writers will of course have their biases, but as a way to gather information on various countries and on various view points this website provides a good base.

7. <http://www.expatsblog.com>

Here is another excellent site that offers forums on various questions such as cost of living. On the subject of cost of living, expatriates post the city they currently live in South America and the cost of rent and food and other utilities and taxes. This blog site offers great insight into the cost of living in South America. This is important to my research paper because it allows me to weigh the cost and benefits of living in South America. The majority of high priced living will of course be in the big cities, but this will also allow me to compare the cost of living in different regions of South America.

8. http://www.gapyear.com/volunteering/teaching/english_south_america

This website gathers different volunteer teaching opportunities around South America. From helping in villages in Ecuador to Bolivia, this site can guide those seeking to volunteer. This plays another important part in my research. This website will allow navigating to volunteer organizations and gathering data on available volunteer teaching work in South America. This site will also help me in learning the necessary procedures in teaching in another country.

9. <http://www.eslcafe.com/>

Dave's ESL café is another great resource in find jobs abroad. This website post job offers from various countries around the world. The website also host forums where prospective teachers can ask questions. This site will give me an understanding of the available paid jobs in South America.

10. <http://thelajoblist.blogspot.com/>

This website provides more information on jobs available in teaching English in South America. This site also list institutions within the countries of Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, and etc. The website also offers advice on making resumes.

11. <http://www.i-to-i.com/teach-english-in-south-america.html>

This site offers details in the type of teaching, accommodations, main regions, and the demand for teachers in various regions of South America. The website also goes into the hiring months, currency, and typical contract lengths in various regions in South America. It also provides information on necessary education background and teaching conditions.

Outline

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III. Conclusion

Introduction

Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. The US census has predicted that Latinos will become the ethnic majority in the United States by 2050 (Guarneri & Ortman, 2009). For future teachers in America, a cultural understanding of the Latino population will prove beneficial. As of lately, thousands of college graduates leave their familiar surroundings every year to go experience the world around them through teaching abroad. This research paper is aimed to acquaint future college graduates with the current available opportunities to teach in the countries of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In uncovering the teaching opportunities, I hope to create awareness for future graduates of the opportunities and benefits of teaching in one of these South American countries. The research paper will also examine the educational, political, and economical benefits and disadvantages of teaching aboard in each South American country. To examine this topic, the research paper will be split into two main categories: exploring the opportunities available in South America and examining the cross-cultural benefits of teaching in South America. The research for the paper will be drawn from professional journals, online teaching organizations' websites, and other online sources. In order to gain a perspective on teachers' prior experiences in South America, I will explore blogs done by those who have taught, lived, or are currently teaching in South America. I plan to use as much current

perspectives and data on South America in order to provide an accurate picture of the environment of teaching in each of the South American countries.

In examining the opportunities available in South America, I will touch upon multiple subtopics. The first subtopic will explore the general job description of an English teacher abroad and discuss the purpose of TEFL certification and the basic methods involved. The research will then explore the teaching opportunities in the 10 South American countries mentioned above. In order to glimpse into the environment where teachers work, I will look at the current political and economic climates each of these countries. I will also explore the different grade levels, from elementary to high school, available to teach. I will look at the different educational institutions to teach in each country. These institutions will include: private, public, non-profit, and language schools. In examining these educational institutions, I will explore the necessary credentials to teach in each one. I will examine the advantages and disadvantages of teaching in South America with the current pay incentives and the cost of living in the country. This part of the research will yield a general overview of the opportunities in South America. The second part of the research paper will explore the cross cultural benefits achieved through these opportunities.

One of the benefits explored will be the improvement of a second language, either Spanish or Portuguese. In living and teaching in South America, teachers will gain knowledge of the culture in the country they are teaching in. I will explore the benefits of understanding these cultures, with special focus on teaching in California. The last cross-cultural benefits I will explore in this research paper will be focused on the interaction of teacher and students. I will explore the benefits of those South American students who receive an education from an

American educated teacher and the benefits of American students who receive an education from a teacher who has taught in South America.

General Job Description

To start the investigation into the opportunities and benefits of teaching in South America an understanding must be made in analyzing the discipline of teaching. A teacher's roles, both domestic and abroad, serve three major functions. These three functions are: cognitive, affective, and executive. Cognitive functions performed by teachers refer to the process of learning. The affective functions refer to the preference of learning, and the third function, executive, refers to the learner's general conception of learning (Squires, 2004, p. 343). In fulfilling the cognitive function of a teacher, there is a responsibility to assemble the resources for learning and making these resources available to students. Teachers should always review the student's prior educational background so that they can take account of it, hopefully building upon it, and orienting the student to new learning, thus creating a cognitive focus. The discipline of teaching also requires the use of explaining materials and expanding on them. A large part of teaching involves the social dimension of interaction (Squires, 2004, p. 344). When teaching abroad, a large consideration has to be placed in knowing the abilities of your students. If you are in a school for a limited time, being a competent teacher will help your students learn far more efficiently. Social interaction also becomes a large part of teaching English to students abroad. When considering the executive function, we understand that teaching is not a matter of specific tasks and processes, but of general concepts and approaches. Teaching is concerned with the broader development of students over time (Squires, 2004, p. 345). In teaching English abroad, the ultimate goal is to give students the teacher's point of view. For graduates and other first time teachers, taking a TEFL course will teach them these functions. Many English

teaching institutions abroad will likely hire an American college graduate who has been TEFL certified. This certificate in particular can help teachers obtain a job in South America and other regions of the world.

Teaching English as a foreign language certificate.

The acronym for TEFL means: teaching English as a foreign language. TEFL uses a number of different educating techniques ranging from reading to communication. In regards to reading, a popular TEFL technique is to use literature aimed at children and teenagers (“Teaching English,” 2008). This youth oriented material is often considered simpler and provides room for conversation. Children’s literature has shown to be particularly effective because of the subtle clues in pronunciation provided by rhyming and wordplay. A technique associated with this is the multi-pass technique. The multiple pass technique involves the instructor reading a book while pausing often to explain certain words or concepts (“Teaching English,” 2008). Another technique used by TEFL is communicative language teaching. Communicative Language teaching emphasizes interaction as a means of learning a language. Despite a number of criticisms, communicative language teaching continues to be popular in areas of Japan and Europe (“Teaching English,” 2008).

TEFL classes help prepare future English teachers with these and other techniques to be a competent teacher to students whose native language is not English. Teachers can earn a TEFL certification through four week intensive programs that are internationally recognized. These programs require a minimum of one hundred hours of training with six hours devoted to observing teaching practices (“Teaching English,” 2008). Such companies as *Oxford Seminars*, hold TEFL certification class all around the United States, usually in a local university. Generally the price will fall around one-thousand dollars (Oxford Seminars, n.d.). Teachers that

are considering teaching in multiple countries will find that being TEFL certified provides an extra incentive for employers to hire the candidate.

South American Countries

Understanding the basics of teaching and TEFL will allow us to proceed to examine opportunities in South America and the necessary qualifications that go along with them. In order to address the opportunities in South America I will now focus on the micro level of the various countries in South America. In each of these countries I will explore the general geographic, political, and economic backgrounds. From there I will then proceed to examine the availability and opportunities to teach in various institutions in each country. These institutions will include public schools, private schools, language schools, and non-profit organizations. In each of these institutions I will show current data on the cost-benefits and necessary qualifications necessary to obtain of a job in the institution.

Argentina

The first South American country to explore is Argentina. The country borders Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Chile. Argentina's main geographic characteristics are the enormous contrast between the immense eastern plains and the Andes Mountains range to the west. The Pampas, in the center of Argentina, is the largest best known area of plains. Agricultural and cattle ranching activities are performed in this area. The country's climate varies from subtropical in the north, sub Antarctic in the southern Patagonia, and mild and humid in the Pampas plains. Spanish is the official language of the Argentina (British Argentina Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). The ethnic groups that makeup Argentina is white and mestizo, with the majority of the population (92%) being religiously Roman Catholic (Argentina, 2010).

In terms of the economy, since the economic crisis of 2001, the Argentine economy has shown improvement. Several years of sustained economic growth have permitted the country to resume its development. Unemployment and job insecurity are still recurrent problems. Many Argentines still live below the poverty line. The currency used is the peso (British Argentina Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). In Argentina, the minimum wage was set at 1,250 pesos per month in 2008, which is currently around \$320 dollars. According to the chamber of commerce and industry, the rate of growth of GDP had consistently averaged between 8 and 9% since 2003. Inflation remains steady and high, around 10% (CCIFA, n.d.). Concerning the health care system in Argentina, the level of care will often depend on the social protection system you are covered by. The health care system is divided into three main sectors: the public system, the private system, and the “obras” system which operates for union employees. In general the public system is available to all. The public system provides free care in accredited hospitals (CCIFA, n.d.). The cost of living in a city like Buenos Aires will differ from life style to life style. Generally, a modest one bedroom apartment will cost an individual around \$300 dollars a month (“Cost of living,” 2009).

There are a number of opportunities to teach in Argentina. There are 30 bilingual educational centers in Buenos Aires alone. Buenos Aires is the first urban dwelling in South America to institute multilingual public schools. Learning English as a second language is especially common among the young. Opportunities include volunteering in orphanages to being a private tutor (Matthews, n.d.). According to a current resident and teacher in Argentina, Shanie Matthews, having a TEFL certificate comes in handy when applying for jobs in Buenos Aires. Though a TEFL certification is not mandatory, numerous teachers have found that being certified helps start their teaching career in Argentina. A teacher with more qualifications will

have an easier time finding a well paying job in Argentina. Teachers can expect to make around 25 to 35 pesos an hour, which is equivalent to \$6 to 9 dollars. For those interested in volunteer work, there are many programs that do not require any previous qualifications to participate in their teaching programs (Matthews, n.d.). An example of one of these organizations is *Travellers Worldwide*. *Travellers Worldwide* does not require any qualification besides meeting the minimum age requirement of 17. Durations for programs can range from 2 weeks to 1 year. This organization does include accommodations and food. The organization sends teachers to schools and orphanages where children are poor. These programs do cost money to participate, from \$1,300 to \$4,000 dollars depending on the duration (Travellers Worldwide, n.d.). Buenos Aires is not the only city in Argentina to find work.

Bolivia

Bolivia is located in central South America. Bolivia is a landlocked country bordered by Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, and Peru. Bolivia is one of the poorest and least developed countries in South America. Bolivia's terrain varies from the rugged Andes Mountains, the highland plateau (Altiplano), hills, and the lowland plains of the Amazon Basin. Climate similarly varies from humid and tropical to cold and semiarid, depending on the altitude. The population is made up of around 55% Amerindians, 30% mestizo, and %15 white. Religiously, 95% of Bolivians are Roman Catholic. Bolivia officially has 3 languages: Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara (Bolivia, 2010). The national use of Quechua and Aymara reflect the impact of the indigenous population. The currency used in Bolivia is the boliviano. Bolivia has had a history of economic instability; the period of 2003 to 2005 was one of political instability, racial tensions, and violent protest. A decline in commodity prices that began in late 2008, poor infrastructure, and suspension of trade benefits with the United States has presented challenges

for the current economy. The current Bolivian president, Morales, has pushed the country towards socialism (Index Mundi, 2008).

There is a great deal of poverty in Bolivia. For many Bolivians learning English is of minor importance. The poorest are the indigenous people who speak the native languages, Aymara and Quechua. Those who are indigenous are more concerned with learning Spanish. The few professionals that work in the country earn comparatively little. For many, to learn English is a sign of prestige, English is either studied at a very low grade levels or not at all in public schools. One teacher, Chris Bradley, found it relatively hard to find a job teaching English in Bolivia. There are only a handful of large private institutes, which of course lie in the main population centers of La Paz and Santa Cruz. An interesting venture noticed by Bradley was a school designed to teach the less fortunate for the purpose of tourism. The school taught Basic English for cab drivers and other tourist related employees. This school in particular only was able to afford the payment of \$0.60 an hour. The main language school across the country is the Centro Boliviano Americano. This institution offers better pay for teachers (Bradley, n.d.). There are organizations that exist that depend on volunteers to help students in the country. Such organizations, like *Projects Abroad*, aim to help students learn Basic English. They are positioned in either the elementary level or at a university. Hours are around 18-20hrs a week. The price for a program like this can be up to \$4,000 dollars for a 3 month stay (“Projects Abroad,” n.d.).

Brazil

Brazil is the largest country in South America, bordering all of the South American countries except Chile and Ecuador. Brazil lies in the eastern portion of South America, bordering the Atlantic Ocean. Geographically Brazil is immensely diverse. Such contrasting

areas include: the Amazon Basin in the north and west; the Guiana Highlands in the north; and the Brazilian Highlands in the southeast (Rosenberg, n.d.). Brazil's population is certainly as diverse as the landscape, comprising of many races and ethnic groups. The national language is Portuguese. Brazil is currently South America's leading economic power and regional leader. The economy is characterized by well developed agricultural, mining, manufacturing, and service sectors. There remains a highly unequal distribution of crime and income in the country (Brazil, 2010). Over the past years Brazil has seen continued political stability with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

There is a current boom in the Brazil market for English teachers. Most Brazilian institutions do not require TEFL certification. If you're hired by a Brazilian company or school, they will require you to go through an in-house training program. A college degree and a working knowledge of Portuguese are recommended for those interested in teaching English in this country. Working visas are very difficult to get in Brazil. In order to get a working visa, an immigrant needs a sponsor. Most of the time employers are unwilling to be sponsors. The majority of teachers that do teach in Brazil use a tourist visas (Simmons, n.d.). The pay is generally around \$800 dollars a month for new teachers (www.onlinetefl.com). Depending on the region cost of living can vary. For Rio De Janeiro a one bedroom apartment can cost around \$400 dollars a month (Numbeo, 2010).

Volunteer programs are available all around Brazil. An example of one of these organizations is *Volunteer Adventures*. *Volunteer Adventures*, like other volunteer programs in Brazil, aims to teach English and mentor underprivileged youth in Rio de Janeiro. A typical program such as this cost around \$3,000 dollars for 4 weeks and includes accommodations, food, and sometimes Portuguese classes (Volunteer Adventures, n.d.).

Brazil is an enormous and diverse country with numerous amounts of things to do and see. There is a great deal of teaching opportunities available; volunteer work plentiful. Brazil is a wonderful mixture of cultures and is ecologically beautiful. Teaching English in Brazil has its few disadvantages and obstacles, such as obtaining a work visa, but is clearly a country worth teaching in.

Chile

Chile, a country bordering Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru, has similar teaching opportunities and issues as Argentina. Chile is home to a diverse variety of climate. The climate ranges from the driest desert in the world, the Atacama, in the north, to the Alpine Climate in the south (www.news.bbc.co.uk). Spanish is the official language spoken in Chile. White and White-Amerindians make up the ethnic majority in Chile with 95.4 % of the population. The national currency is the Chilean peso (Chile, 2010). Chile is one of South America's most stable and prosperous nations. It has been relatively free of the coups and arbitrary governments that have blighted the continent. There was the exception of the rule of General Augusto Pinochet, whose dictatorship left 3,000 people dead and missing (www.news.bbc.co.uk). The cost of living in Chile is around \$300 dollars a month for a one bedroom apartment in Santiago, Chile (Numbeo, n.d.).

A few years ago the government made English mandatory for fifth graders and up in public schools. Most private schools start teaching English from kindergarten. The ministry has been promoting scholarships for teachers and students to study abroad and a foreign volunteer program to assist local English teachers in class (Zammuto, n. d.). The hiring period for schools is in late winter or early spring, the best time to apply is between November and January. Having a TEFL certificate is helpful, but not necessary. Most institutes pay by the hour,

anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000 pesos an hour, this is roughly \$5 to \$9 dollars. This wage, though not extravagant, provides a comfortable living in Chile (Carpenter, n.d.). Some places guarantee a fixed number of hours a week, but this guarantee is not set in stone. Some companies require you to teach in multiple locations throughout the day; this could mean you have to spend a significant amount of time and money on transportation. Classes range from one to 12 students. A full-time schedule requires odd hours. Most teachers work split shifts between mornings and evenings. Nearly all institutes ask for 1 year commitment (Zammuto, n. d.). There are also various volunteer programs available in Chile. One highly recommended non-profit organization is *World Teach*. This organization is partnered with the Chilean Ministry of Education and the Chile Patagonia Sur program. With The Chilean Ministry of Education volunteers teach English at either public or semi-public schools from grade 1 to 12. Chile's Ministry of Education offers year long and semester opportunities for volunteers, each costing around \$4,000 dollars (www.worldteach.org).

Colombia

Colombia is a country located in Northern South America. Part of the Pacific ring of Fire, the region is dominated by the Andes mountains. Columbia also has flat coastal lowlands, central highlands, and eastern lowland plains (Colombia, 2010). Colombia is a free market economy with major commercial and investment ties to the United States. Despite difficulties presented by serious internal armed conflict, Colombia's economy has grown steadily. The current president, Alvaro Uribe, is under his second term (www.traveldocs.com). The majority of the population (58%) is Mestizo. Similar to many of the other South American Countries, the Spanish language and Roman Catholicism remain the dominant language and religion in this country (Colombia, 2010).

Colombia is a beautiful country, often overshadowed by its political problems. Perhaps there is food for thought in considering working in Colombia in the fact that it is the third happiest country in the world. Though Americans have generally avoid Colombia for a number of reasons, including violence and drug problems, a number of teachers have taught English in the country. Current resident and teacher, Larry Lynch, has put into perspective the violence that is occurring in Colombia. According to Lynch, most conflicts occur in the country side, while the major cities like Bogota feel little impact and live normally. Concerning the drug problem, the majority of the drug production is exported, so besides warring drug factions in the coca growing areas, there is little every day impact. Native English speakers are scare in Colombia. Most teaching positions require an applicant to be a native speaker and have a university degree. Interviews are typically in English (Lynch, 2002).

Work can be obtainable at bilingual colleges, language institutes, and universities. Smaller language institutes offer hourly rates that equate to 800,000 pesos per month, or \$350 dollars. Bigger institutes pay between 1,200,000 and 2,200,000 Pesos, equivalent to \$520 to \$900 dollars. Teachers spend between 20 and 25 hours in the classroom each week, but most classes are early in the morning and late in the evening. Similar to Brazil, a work visa is required, but most work illegally on a tourist visa. There are volunteer programs such as one's ran by *International volunteer HQ*, in which the organization focuses on teaching in underfunded schools and communities in Columbia (International Volunteer, n.d.). Applicants for this volunteer program do not need to have a college degree, a TEFL certificate, or be an experienced teacher. The cost for this volunteer program is from \$270 to \$2,380 dollars; making it the one of the most affordable volunteer programs in comparison to the other South American countries (www.goabroad.com).

Ecuador

Ecuador lies in the western portion of South America on the equator. The country is bordered by Colombia and Peru. Ecuador is home to the world famous Galapagos Islands, located off the coast. Ecuador has three main geographic regions: the coast, the highlands, and the Amazon. Ecuador is one of the seventeen mega diverse countries in the world according to Conservation International (“Ecuador,” n. d.). The majority of the population is mestizo (65%), with 25% being Amerindians. Spanish is the official language of Ecuador, with some indigenous speaking Quechua (Ecuador, 2010). Ecuador is the only country in South America to use the US dollar for its currency. The Ecuadorian economy is based on petroleum production, agriculture production and manufacturing is aimed mainly for domestic consumption. The Ecuadorian economy contracted in 2009, mainly due to the global financial crisis, and also the sharp decline in world oil prices and remittance flows (“Travel Document Systems,” n.d.). The cost of living in a city, such as Loja, is around \$400 dollars a month for a 1 bedroom apartment.

There is currently a massive demand for English teachers in Ecuador. The main regions are Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca. There are generally private language schools that teach general English, Business English, and teach younger learners. The average salary for an English teacher is around \$450 to \$700 dollars a month. Although there isn't a need to get a TEFL certificate, the market is maturing and a good English qualification will make it easier to find a well paying job. Teachers can expect to teach around 25 hours a week. Similar to the other South American countries a work visa is necessary, but an employer can help get a teacher a cultural exchange visa (Teach English Abroad, n.d.).

For teachers, like Newley Purnell, teaching in Ecuador provided a rewarding experience. He describes Ecuador as a great place to live, where the people are very welcoming and warm.

He also mentions the natural beauty of the country. Most Ecuadorians talk with a slow and clear accent, so the country is a popular destination for Spanish learners. The best English schools in Ecuador require a TEFL certificate. If you have an undergraduate degree in education and are certified to teach in the United States, you may be able to find work at an international school. On the low end of the pay scale you can make \$3 to \$5 dollars an hour in the classroom. This is the typical wage at a chain private English school, where you can get hired without a university degree or a TEFL certificate. Interestingly, as opposed to other parts of the world, English teachers in Ecuador are often not required to sign contracts (Purnell, n.d.). Volunteer opportunities are numerous in Ecuador. Volunteer jobs allow teachers to explore more exotic regions of Ecuador (Leduc, n.d.). For those seeking to be a volunteer English teacher, there are several organizations that pair teachers with schools and English language programs in Ecuador. A highly regarded international volunteer organization, such as *World Teach*, can provide teacher training and Spanish classes. These organizations usually require a commitment of one year, and volunteers receive a stipend to cover living expenses during that time.

The advantage of using a volunteer organization to start teaching English in Ecuador is that they have already built relationships with schools and communities in need of teachers, so they know where the jobs are available. Some organizations, however, require volunteers to pay for the training and support they receive in Ecuador (Green, 2010).

Paraguay

Paraguay lies between Argentina, Brazil, and Bolivia. Paraguay has generally grassy plains and wooded hills east of its Rio Paraguay. The Gran Chaco region to the west of Rio Paraguay is mostly a low, marshy plain near the river with dry forest everywhere else. Paraguay has one of the largest amounts of mestizo in South America, with 95% of the population.

Similar to the previous countries, Paraguay is dominated by Roman Catholicism. A large percentage of the population (26.5%) derives its living from agricultural activity, often on a subsistence basis. Paraguay is the sixth largest soy producer in the world. The Paraguayan currency is the Guaraní. Paraguay has recently seen decline in their annual GDP because of droughts and the global recession. Though the current president, Nicanor Duarte, shares a similar socialist agenda as Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia, he has not been able to transform the country because of the right wing Paraguayan Congress. Spanish is the official language of Paraguay (Paraguay, 2010). In terms of cost of living, renting a one bedroom apartment in the country's capital, Asunción, is around \$200 dollars a month (Numbeo, 2008). This is by far the one of the lowest cost of living in South America.

Paraguay is a relatively unknown destination for many teachers. Andrea DiBenardo, ESL teacher that has worked in Paraguay, has described the region as not the best destination for first time travelers. TEFL credentials are appreciated, but not required in Paraguay. Teachers looking for a more comfortable life style can focus on the private sector. The private sector caters to the small but very influential Paraguayan elite. The capital of Paraguay, Asunción, provides the most job opportunities. Private schools boast attractive gated facilities with air conditioning, cultural activities, stocked libraries, computer labs, and English speaking staff. Class sizes range from 1 to 15 students. In terms of the Public sector, funding is limited and conditions are not ideal. Teachers may have 40 to 70 students in one room and no materials. Average weekly wage is around \$60 dollars (DiBenardo, 2007). In terms of volunteer work, the Peace Corps has had programs in Paraguay since 1967 that work in multiple sectors of the community: agriculture, education, environment, health, small business development, and urban youth development (www.peacecorps.gov).

Peru

Peru, a country famous for the ruins of Machu Picchu, is located on the western portion of South America. Peru is bordered by Ecuador and Colombia in the north, Brazil in the east, Bolivia in the southeast, and Chile in the south. Similar to Ecuador, Peru has a diverse landscape with the Andes, the Amazon, and the coast. Peru's main economic activities include agriculture, fishing, mining, and manufacturing. The main language spoken in Peru is Spanish, with a significant number of Peruvians speaking Quechua. The Indigenous of Peru make up 45% of the population with Mestizos accounting for 37% of the population. The majority of population (81.3%) is also Roman Catholic, with 12% Evangelical (Peru, 2010). The Peruvian currency used is the Nuevo sol. Peru's economy has experienced significant growth in the last 15 years. Peru's economy is well managed; it was one of the few South American countries to have positive growth rates during the 2008 global financial crisis (Travel Document Systems, n.d.).

The main regions to teach in Peru are Lima, Cusco, and Arequipa. A single bedroom apartment in Lima can range from \$275 to \$400 dollars a month (Numbeo, 2008). Salaries can range from \$400 to \$800 dollars a month. Private schools generally provide higher wages. A full time contract will involve about 25 hours of teaching each week. Similar to the other South American countries a work visa is necessary, but difficult to obtain. Most teachers are able to work by using a tourist visa (Teach English Abroad, n.d.). American and British schools in Lima sometimes hire teachers of math, biology, and other subjects. These schools pay better than language schools (Lonely Planet, n.d.). Schools will often agree to arrange a working visa if you sign a one year contract. TEFL certification is not necessary in Peru, but looks far better on a resume (Teach English Abroad, n.d.). Based on geographic factors, there are a number of different areas to teach in Peru. Many jobs aren't advertised and are filled by word of mouth.

Volunteer teaching opportunities are available in Peru. Volunteering can be expensive, some organizations charge up to \$2,000 dollars. There are affordable programs, such as *Awaiting Angels* (“Teaching English in Peru,” 2008).

Uruguay

Uruguay is one of the smallest of the South American republics. Uruguay borders Argentina and Brazil. The landscape is made up of hilly meadows broken down by streams and rivers. Most of the country is used as grazing land for sheep and cattle (Travel System Documents, n.d.). The majority of Uruguayans are white (88%), with an existing small minority of Mestizos and Blacks. Interestingly, 23.2% of the population belongs to a nondenominational religion, with only 47.1 % classifying themselves as Roman Catholic. The language spoken in Uruguay is Spanish, which was heavily influenced by the Italian immigrants. The Uruguayan currency is the peso (Uruguay, 2010).

Uruguay is a top tourist destination for Argentineans, Brazils, and other foreigners. In terms of cost of living, a one bed room apartment will generally cost between \$300 and \$450 dollars in Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay. Many teaching positions in Uruguay and South America are done on a volunteer or missionary basis. A desire among the country’s people to learn English has increased the number of teachers needed in the relatively small nation. A bachelor’s degree is not a necessary qualification to teach in Uruguay, but a TEFL certificate is. The majority of teaching jobs are in foreign language schools. The students mostly consist of business professionals that are eager to improve their English. The Average monthly salary for English teachers is around \$400 to \$600 dollars. The average amount of teaching hours per week is around 20 to 25 hours (“Teaching English in Uruguay,” n.d.)

Venezuela

The final country on the research paper to explore is Venezuela. Famous for having President Hugo Chavez, Venezuela is a country in the north of South America, bordering Brazil in the south and Colombia in the west. Venezuela has a variety of landscapes including: the Andes Mountains, Maracaibo lowlands, central plains, Caribbean coast, and the Guiana Highlands. Spanish is the official language in Venezuela, but there are numerous indigenous dialects. The Venezuelan currency is called bolivar fuerte. Venezuela remains highly dependent on oil revenues to fund the federal budget. Inflation has been a growing problem in Venezuela (Venezuela, 2010). The cost of living in the capital, Caracas, alone is in the thousands. Caracas is currently the costliest city to live in Latin America. It is also pricier than London or Dubai (Kristof & Romero, 2009).

Qualified teachers have the best chance of getting a job, yet it's still hard to arrange work once in the country. It is necessary to have a work visa in Venezuela. The best chances are at private schools or linguistic departments at universities (Lonely Planet, n.d.). The current political and economic situation is rather turbulent and as a result Venezuela is perhaps not as desirable a destination for teachers these days. The English language is still a valued commodity and a number of agencies continue to recruit teachers for in company language training (TEFL International, 2008).

For one teacher, Tracey Chandler, teaching English in Venezuela had both its negative and positive experiences. In some of the smaller cities, like Merida, Chandler grew to like the community feel and relationships she built between members of staff. However, outside of Caracas, Chandler experienced teaching jobs with long hours, poor pay, and unpleasant atmospheres. The cost of living in Venezuela is incredibly high; salaries do not match these costs. Most teaching English jobs outside of the capital require the teacher to work illegally. It is

a much better option financially for the various schools to employ their staff off of the books.

This means that they pay less tax and it also means that the teacher doesn't have to contribute any tax. However, this does present some inconvenience, English teachers don't really have any rights and have to continue to leave the country every three months to renew their visa. Chandler found that the lack of official contracts and paperwork does allow for a lot of freedom. Teaching English in Venezuela therefore can be a viable option for someone who does not want to commit long term (Chandler, 2009).

After examining the various countries in South America it can be said that generally the opportunities to teach are innumerable. From teaching in a private school sector to volunteer teaching in a small community center; each teaching opportunity is available in South America. Now that I have addressed the occupational opportunities in South America there is one last question to ask, what intangible benefits can be arrived from teaching and exploring the cultures of South America? In the next section of the research paper I will explore the cross-cultural benefits of teaching in South America.

Cross-Cultural Benefits

The aim of my research paper up to this point has been to ultimately convince future and recent college graduates who are interested in teaching to teach abroad in South America. I am convinced that there are multiple benefits for future teachers in living and teaching in a country that is geographically and culturally different from the U.S., especially in a region like Latin America that is ethnically linked to the future majority of the United States, Latinos. One of the most difficult parts of this research has been to find case studies related to the benefits of teaching abroad. There are hundreds of anecdotes of people teaching in other countries, but very few of these can hold their creditability in front of a case study. I have been fortunate enough to

find two relatively recent case studies involving preservice teaching in a foreign country. The first case study I will examine, by Holly Pence and Ian Macgillivray, is titled, “The impact of an international field experience on preservice teachers.” The second case study I will examine, by Erik Malewski and JoAnn Phillion, is titled, “International field experiences: The impact of class, gender and race on the perceptions and experiences of preservice teachers.” Before I take a closer look into these case studies, it is crucial to understand what a “preservice” teacher is and how it relates to those interested in teaching.

In its most basic sense, a preservice teacher is one who desires to be a teacher, but does not yet have the training to be a qualified teacher. Typically, most future and recent college graduates who want to teach fall under the category of preservice teacher. Preservice teachers will generally engage in the necessary steps to become a teacher, these steps can include: teaching observations, teaching internships, or student teaching experience alongside a mentor teacher before licensed as a professional educator (www.education.com). Teaching abroad can fulfill most of those requirements necessary to becoming a qualified teacher. The case studies below will examine the collective experiences preservice teachers had when immersed in regions that differed in great contrast to the United States.

In the case study undertaken by Macgillivray and Pence, they address the question, “What is the impact of an international field experience on preservice teachers?” The pre-service teachers were expected to work in the classroom with homeroom teachers and students at a private American school in Italy. (Macgillivray & Pence, 2009, pgs. 14-17). They were observed several times by the school faculty supervisors, provided with feedback and ideas for improvement, and debriefed after each observation (Macgillivray & Pence, 2009, pgs.17-19). Using constant comparison and analytic induction as well as theme analysis, Macgillivray and

Pence grouped the pre-service teachers' responses following Willard-Holt's categories of preconceptions; observations of the school: curriculum, culture, and students; personal and professional change; negative impact; and faculty support and feedback (as cited in Macgillivray & Pence, 2008, p.19)

Macgillivray and Pence's findings suggest that all the preservice teachers benefited positively as a result of this international field experience. The benefits included both professional and personal changes such as increased confidence, a better appreciation and respect for differences of others and other cultures, and an awareness of the importance that feedback and reflection play in professional and personal growth. These findings support those of related studies of Willard-Holt who found that students overwhelmingly reported benefits and experienced significant personal and professional changes as a result of the trip (as cited in Macgillivray & Pence, 2008, p.23). These preservice teachers were able to gain a greater sense of personal change thorough teaching and interacting with the students, community, and the surroundings. Though the study was taken in Italy, it does offer an interesting view on teachers submerged in a foreign culture and country. The next case study will observe another program for preservice teachers that take them to a primary school in Honduras.

The case study by Malewski and Phillion was carried out over a period of 5 years, with 37 pre-service teachers who were all participants of a Honduras study abroad program. The program took place at the Esperanza School in Honduras which was a private bilingual primary school (Malewski & Phillion, 2008, pgs. 53-54). Weekly course meetings were held while abroad; these meetings were all recorded. In addition to informal observations and interactions with the preservice teachers, other data sources included course assignments: reflective journals, reading logs, an autobiography focused on their educational histories, an educational philosophy

paper, and a life portrait of one teacher from the Esperanza School. These data sources were used to triangulate the findings from the individual and focus group interviews, as well as from the researchers' field notes and informal observations. Data analysis involved coding the experiential descriptions found in participant interviews so as to isolate thematic statements. Once the overall thematic structure was established, the researchers compared their findings with literature that addressed the effects studying abroad has on cultural learning (Malewski & Phillion, 2008, p. 54).

In contrast to the previous study, this study revealed that study abroad does not invariably lead to shared cultural understandings or interpretations. Pre-service teachers' experiences are shaped by the ways they are positioned in the host community and by their peers. Consistently across all 5 years, preservice teachers delivered engaging testimonies focusing on how their thoughts and perspectives had changed over the span of the program. For some preservice teachers, the meeting became a highly emotional event, possibly because engaging in a study abroad program in Honduras forced a confrontation with the difficult conditions under which the majority of people in "developing" countries live (Malewski & Phillion, 2008, p. 58).

Malewski and Phillion provide an interesting view on preservice teachers teaching abroad. Environmental pressures from both living conditions and peers can be detrimental to any individual. Malewski and Phillion do not completely exclude the benefits of teaching abroad, but I do believe their research seems to utilize variables that require biasness when analyzing. In Macgillivray and Pence's case study, they lack the quantity of data I feel would have made their arguments for teaching abroad stronger.

Conclusion

From the numerous amounts of websites I have had to click through, read through, and pull information from, I have noticed over and over again that those who taught in a Latin American country were the ones who gained the benefits of teaching abroad. I can't put the websites into a quantitative table, analyze the data, and prove that there are physically benefit to teaching abroad. What I can say is that it only takes a rational person to realize the personal benefits that awaits those that do take the journey to teach in a foreign country. Whether one achieves self-reliance, tolerance for ambiguity, or sensitivity to cultural pluralism in society, these are all characteristics that will translate into one becoming a better teacher. The benefits of being submerged in a culture that forces you to learn a second language like Portuguese or Spanish can only benefit oneself all the more. Knowledge of a different culture, a global perspective, is something that can't be solely learned in a classroom. The future teachers in America that have these global perspectives and second languages under their belt will be able to effectively teach a student, whether he or she is Black, White, Cambodian, Thai, or Ecuadorian , because they have obtained the skills of a teacher who has taught abroad. I stress teaching in Latin America because not only is there a vast land of varying geography and cultures with many opportunities, but also because the Latino population currently plays a large role in our lives as Americans. In concern to California, there are many circumstances where understanding and knowing the language and culture of a South American country can be useful. Most teachers will explain the troubles in teaching students who have difficulty speaking English because they were born in another country. Many of these children are Latino and they make up a growing number of students that fall into an achievement gap where they are among the ones who fail to achieve. A California teacher needs to be able to connect with these students, both through language and culture. In doing so, a teacher can hope to help a Latino student achieve

educational success. There are also opportunities for teachers who do know Spanish to teaching in emerging bilingual schools. These schools have been growing in popularity over the years and provide a bridge for both English and Spanish learners. With the Latino population forecasted to become the majority around 2050, it will take teachers who are familiar with their culture, their language, and their country to successfully teach future them, the future of America.

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