Sample Application for Walker Grant for Senior Research

Last semester, I spent 6 months on a study abroad program in Chile. While there, I became interested in the situation of Chilean exiles from the 1973-1990 dictatorship. Many of them had returned to Chile since democracy was restored, but they faced many difficulties. They encountered discrimination from society for being an exile, had grown children still living abroad, and experienced a changed Chile from the one they remembered. This understudied topic prompted me to write a senior honors thesis for Latin American Studies on the subject.

While studying abroad in Chile, I conducted three interviews with returned exiles. I propose returning to Santiago, Chile for three weeks this January in order to conduct additional field research. The approximate dates are December 31st through January 20th.

I have two main goals that I hope to accomplish on my trip to Chile. First, I will conduct more interviews with returned exiles. I have two contacts in Chile who have already agreed to be interviewed. One lives in Valparaíso, a city less than two hours from Santiago, so I propose spending four or five days there to interview him and other exiles that live in the area. I will ask my contacts if they know any other returned exiles that would also be willing to be interviewed.

Additionally, I will email the group Comité de Retornados del Exilio – Chile (Committee of Returned Exiles – Chile). They are the most important organization of returned exiles in Chile, and will likely be able to provide me with more contacts to interview. I plan to speak with their leaders to learn about how the group spreads awareness and helps other returnees.

My second goal is to obtain more academic information and resources relating to return from exile. I will utilize the resources at the Museo de la Memoria, or Museum of Memory, which houses an archive on issues concerning the military dictatorship. They carry information published by the Oficina Nacional de Retorno, which was the temporary resettlement agency set up after the return to democracy in Chile. I have been unable to find this important information anywhere else. I will also search the Biblioteca Nacional, or National Library, to obtain more scholarly works written on my thesis topic. This library contains newspaper resources, including records of El mercurio, an important periodical, which I will examine to learn about the media’s representation of returnees and whether they were interviewed upon their return.

The research that I will conduct in Chile will be integral to the successful completion of my senior honors thesis. The personal experiences and testimonies from interviews are vital to understanding the return from exile. The three returnees I previously interviewed had all been exiled in the US; I would like to expand my sample size to include returnees from other countries. The personal interviews are what make my thesis unique and allow it to contribute to the academic field of knowledge.

In Santiago, I plan to stay at Don Santiago Hostel and Andes Hostel located near downtown Santiago. My host mother from my study abroad program will be hosting another student, so I will not be able to stay at her house. Because it was difficult to find availability at a hostel for three straight weeks, I will switch hostels halfway through my stay. After doing careful research on hostels in Santiago, I decided upon these two because they are among the top-rated hostels in the city on hostelworld.com, both receiving a 91% overall rating from other travelers. I feel comfortable living in a hostel by myself in Santiago because I lived there for 6 months and know the area and transportation system well. I will use the same careful methods when picking my hostel in Valparaiso.

I give the Walker Committee permission to look at my financial aid status. I also permit the Walker Committee to post the report of my experience on its webpage and bulletin board.

Thank you for your consideration.