

## Research Process Reflective Essay

After completing History 228, Introduction to Latin American History and Culture II, last semester with Dr. Jonathan Foster, I knew immediately where my topic for History 451 would come from. Over the course of that class, I learned about the many times the United States (U.S.) had involved itself in the internal affairs of another country. Throughout the 20th century U.S. political, military or economic intervention would touch virtually every Latin American country. The hypocrisy of American foreign policy was something that I was astounded by. I cleared this topic with Dr. Ward and began to start thinking of where to start.

Being a non-traditional student, returning to a major university after nearly seven years out of school, I had a vague idea of where to start in the library. It was suggested by Dr. Ward that I meet with Priscilla Finley, the subject Librarian for history. My meeting with Dr. Finley was the key to my entire research trail. During that meeting Dr. Finley showed me how to access and utilize several historical databases. We walked through the procedures for utilizing Link Plus and where the major sections of the topic information could be found, such as book stacks, media, and special collections. The wealth of information on a subject as broad as U.S. hypocrisy in foreign policy through intervention was overwhelming and I felt as if there was no way I would get through this course. Talking with Dr. Finley and Dr. Ward made me realize that I had to really focus and narrow my topic. I looked at the various incidents of U.S. intervention to see if one particular incident stood out. At this point I realized that the best possible example was the overthrow of a democratically elected president, thus Chile and Salvador Allende became my example. This incident is a complete example of the violation of the founding principles of our Constitution and international agreements to the right of self-determination that the U.S. has agreed to. The study of this particular incident involves historians in the study of Cold War policies that still seem to hold sway on our government even today, in actions taken against Iraq and Afghanistan, albeit under the guise of the "war on terrorism," instead of Communist containment. My research provided a wealth of information that could lead prospective readers to possibly changing their perspective and opinion of the U.S. and its government. I know that my own perspective and opinion of my country and its government went through a drastic change.

As a result of my meeting with Dr. Finley, I started to accumulate secondary sources through UNLV linked databases such as JSTOR, America: History and Life, and Historical Abstracts. I utilized Link Plus loans from Cal-Poly as well as Cal State Fullerton to gain access to more recent secondary sources not available at UNLV. Secondary sources spanning the years since the coup were found in the university collection itself.

As I began to read through and analyze my secondary sources, I began to see the evolution of the subject. The early secondary sources dealing with the overthrow of Salvador Allende focus on limited or no involvement of the United States in the coup. Through Link Plus I was able to obtain Peter Kornbluh's book *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and*

*Accountability*, The New Press, 2004. These secondary sources included journal articles from *Foreign Policy*, *Political Science Quarterly*, and *Worldview* as well as monographs. Early scholars on the subject included Paul Sigmund, Elizabeth Farnsworth, and James Petras and Morley Morris. In the early 1970's Sigmund was adamant that there was no involvement of the U.S. government in the coup. Paul Sigmund specializes in political theory and Latin American politics at Princeton University. He is currently working on a collection of interviews with ex-guerrillas in Latin America. Scholars from this timeframe tended to rely on newspaper articles, and documents from hearings from the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations conducted in 1975. Documents released at this time, possibly would have been heavily redacted and biased in favor of the government to protect the individuals involved.

From the late 1970's to the mid 1990's more information about U.S. involvement in the overthrow of Allende began to leak out or be released through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Secondary sources from this period began to show a trend of scholars moving away from the Nixon administration party line to one of showing the public that the United States was indeed involved in the coup. It is in this time period that we also see a change in the works of Paul Sigmund. Sigmund originally stood adamantly behind the Nixon administration, but as more information began to come to light his own works show a change in position.. Sigmund's works during this time are a good example of the change. They show a much wider range of sources, many directly from Chile, such as Chilean newspapers, and government policies and programs from the respective parties. Sigmund utilizes local sources as well, such as American newspapers and documents from the government.

During the Presidency of William J. Clinton, the U.S. government released over 24,000 pages of documents relating to the overthrow of Salvador Allende. Secondary sources published after the release of these documents show the incredible extent of the involvement. Scholars from this time frame include Jonathan Haslam, Lubna Zakia Qureshi and Peter Kornbluh, whose book was extremely valuable in understanding the timeline and origins of many of the Chilean project documents. The predominant methodology of these scholars was the study and use of the declassified documents of the Chilean project.

The Lied Library's own collections, historical databases, as well as the Link Plus loans were all part of my compilation of secondary sources. Other secondary sources from the library collection provided much needed background material on U.S. foreign policy and Salvador Allende. These sources included works by Edward Boorstein, T.G. Fraser and Donette Murray, as well as UNLV's own Dr. Thomas Wright, Distinguished Professor of Latin American History.

On one of my many visits to the library I stopped in special collections to see if there were any sources related to my subject. Due to the fact that my essay relied and focused on primary sources not included in our own Special Collections at Lied Library, I was directed by a staff

member and Dr. Ward to look at the National Archives online. The primary sources that I gained access to when searching for National Archives links all surfaced out of the National Security Archives at The George Washington University. These primary sources are the documents released during the Clinton administration. These documents clearly show the extent of U.S. involvement and the fact that it was ordered by President Nixon. In order to get a good grasp on the documents and to analyze them thoroughly, I read them over with my father, who holds a Masters Degree in History. Together we filtered out a lot of the briefing and meeting notes to come up with what we both felt was the major points and quotations that would highlight the involvement of the U.S. in the coup. Not all documents that we analyzed were complete, as there are still large amounts of redacted material. Some documents that are on the National Security Archives website have some redacted words or names written in above. This is a result of information not being omitted in other documents. I quickly recognized that because of this newly released information, I needed to concentrate on secondary and primary sources that were written or made public after President Clinton's release of the Chilean documents.

As the history of past events begins to outlive its participants, more and more government documents are being declassified and released. For many events there remains a need to balance national security and the safety and reputations of those involved, against the desires of the public and historians to have access to what the government knows. Events like the assassination of President Kennedy, Roswell, and the Cuban Missile Crises may never see their government sources and documents released. In the study and research of history, primary source evidence like declassified government documents are playing a larger role in the evolution and truth of all studies of past subjects. In the case of my research, it played a valuable role in setting the record straight on U.S. involvement. It may also open the doors for possible legal actions against those involved, similar to Spain's attempt to prosecute Allende's replacement, General Augusto Pinochet, for crimes against humanity.