**CHRHS Seed Grant Final Report**

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The CHRHS Seed Grant has supported the data collection for and completion of two empirical chapters of my dissertation, ***In Pursuit of Justice: Vigilantism, Policing, and Rights in Mexico***, described below. These chapters will be presented at two national conferences over 2022 and prepared for standalone publication at a peer-reviewed journal. A public-facing article based on the research has been published in the policy-oriented blog, *Political Violence at a Glance* over Summer 2021, [here](https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2021/07/28/what-gives-human-rights-a-bad-name-in-the-21st-century/#:~:text=Far%20from%20being%20universally%20endorsed,be%2C%20protected%20by%20the%20state.&text=Second%2C%20others%20believe%20that%20accused,and%20intimidate%20victims%20and%20authorities.). The overall project analyzes how citizens interpret, engage, and contest security and justice institutions during criminal wars with a focus on vigilantism and due process rights.

***Vigilante-state cooperation.*** This first empirical chapter examines attitudes toward increasingly common forms of vigilante crime control in Mexico. In contexts of criminal wars, ordinary citizens often must choose between seeking help from weak or predatory state security institutions and pursuing justice on their own. When do citizens prefer vigilante responses to crime? And when are they willing to seek formal, state-administered justice? First, drawing on original qualitative data from 48 focus groups carried out in the state of Michoacán, I identify an understudied mode of vigilantism: extralegal citizen’s arrests that usurp key police functions and use physical force against alleged perpetrators while also seeking state intervention to control crime. I call this mode of behavior “vigilante-state cooperation” where citizens use extralegal force in an attempt to capture alleged criminals as well as engage the police in responding to crime, rather than replace state authority entirely. Second, based on experimental evidence from a nationwide survey vignette, I find that the average citizen perceives vigilante-state cooperation as relatively fair and effective at addressing crime. In contrast, more extreme forms of vigilantism such as lynching and beating are perceived to be less fair and effective relative to both vigilante-state cooperation and just calling the police. Among citizens with low trust in security authorities, positive appraisals of vigilante-state cooperation persist while negative perceptions of both beating and lynching diminish or disappear. The mixed-methods analysis reveals a persistent demand for legal, state-provided security alongside a sense that citizens often must intersperse legal behavior with vigilantism to achieve security, and even force state authorities into action. A draft of this chapter is complete. I am presenting this chapter at the International Studies Association in March 2022 in order to receive and incorporate feedback and submit the paper to a peer-reviewed journal. The CHRHS Seed Grant supported both the transcription costs of qualitative focus groups and the costs of the original phone survey that serve as the evidence base for this chapter.

***Human rights backlash.*** The second empirical chapter asks: what explains variation in perceptions of human rights? Why do some citizens view ostensibly universal human rights protections not as protections at all, but rather as threats to their own security? Despite its ostensibly benevolent and universal application, the term “human rights” has an increasingly bad reputation in Latin America. Far from being universally endorsed, basic human rights are the subject of intense public debate over who is, and who should be, protected by the state. This chapter argues that more robust rights protections introduced by judicial reforms in Mexico are often viewed by the public as a tool to protect perpetrators of violence at the expense of ordinary citizens. It provides evidence to explain why citizens view fundamental rights as antithetical to their security in the context of ongoing criminal wars. I use original, national survey data (N=1,006) to demonstrate how this backlash against human rights protections is a generalized phenomenon across Mexico. I then draw on 67 in-depth qualitative interviews and 48 focus groups from the state of Michoacán to demonstrate three core perceptions of state-administered justice that have led individuals to develop negative views of human rights. Predominant anti-rights arguments assert that human rights 1) restrain authorities from delivering sentences and detaining suspects; 2) enable the accused to perversely use human rights to intimidate authorities and victims from pursuing cases; and 3) wrongly punish victims of crime instead of perpetrators for engaging in what is perceived by many to be legitimate self-defense. These findings imply that scaling up human rights protections in the justice system without improving perceived security for the average citizen can create popular anti-rights backlash. The chapter contributes to our understanding of how criminal wars impact political attitudes and the processes through which citizens come to view rights and security as a trade-off. My research on rights has been featured at *Political Violence @ a Glance*. A draft of this dissertation chapter is complete. I am presenting the paper at the Latin American Studies Association LASA conference this academic year to receive feedback prior to submitting the chapter in article form to a peer-reviewed journal. Again, the CHRHS Seed Grant supported both the transcription costs of qualitative focus groups and the original phone survey that the analysis in this chapter is based on.

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