

Seed Grant for Overkill Project—Mid-term Update and Final Report

Mid-Term Update

The principal investigator was granted an extension to begin the project in May 2022, after the passing of a family member. As such, hiring a research assistant was postponed to Brown's summer vacation, so that data collection for the project could begin in May. In the meantime, the principal investigator and co-PI finalized the codebook and data collection procedures and developed training materials for the incoming research assistant. No significant changes were made to the research design by that point.

Final Report

The principal investigator and Co-PI achieved the aims of the grant, which were to hire a CHRHS-affiliated student to conduct data collection on several countries with the aim of better understanding a novel concept, overkill. Several small changes were made to the research design. The project was completed by December 2022 (with the majority of work completed in Summer 2022).

First, the Co-PIs interviewed and selected CHRHS-affiliated undergraduate student, Abigail Carbajal. She speaks Spanish (relevant for research) and has a strong background working with data. At the beginning of the project, the Co-PIs met with Abigail once or twice weekly to train her on searching the Armed Conflict Location Event Database (ACLED), using the codebook, and data entry procedures, as well as best-practices in media searches. Meetings then occurred once a week or slightly less frequently, once Abigail had a better command of the codebook and research processes. Abigail capably identified and coded incidents of overkill. She also had the chance to provide input on several aspects of the project, for instance operationalizing the concept of overkill based on media searches she had conducted.

The original grant included data collection on Mexico, Colombia, and Nigeria. Mexico remained, however the research team selected two countries instead of Colombia and Nigeria for the project. Colombia was not an adequate test case because the team determined it had too many similarities to Mexico (e.g., organized crime violence) and so, rather than test whether overkill varied across contexts, risked showing that overkill only exists in contexts experiencing gang violence. Nigeria, on the other hand, was not selected because ACLED contained so few incidents of overkill violence for the country that running analyses would not have been useful. Instead, Mozambique and Ukraine were selected, after doing background reading and looking at ACLED incidents for several countries. The research team selected Mozambique because there were sufficient incidents of overkill, particularly in the Cabo Delgado region, to conduct analyses into why this form of violence might vary. Meanwhile, Ukraine was selected because it provided the useful case of a conflict in which violence is primarily between traditional armed forces using traditional means of warfare, making it a useful comparison against a country such as Mexico where much of the violence is perpetrated by organized crime groups. Drawing on this comparison, we could then test (in the next phase of the project) whether overkill might vary between conflict types in order to better understand this form of violence.

Although measures to mitigate secondary trauma (from reading reports of violence) were developed, the research team did not need to put them into practice during the project.

By the end of the grant, Abigail had identified and collected hundreds of incidents of overkill using the ACLED database and news outlets for three countries (Mexico, Mozambique, and Ukraine) across two years (2020 and 2021). The incidents are stored in Excel spreadsheet for analysis during the next phase of the project. The research team also strengthened the definition of overkill during the project by determining which types of empirical incidents precisely fit the concept.

In terms of next steps, the Co-PIs plan to run analyses on the data, conduct a more extensive literature review, and further develop and write-up the theoretical underpinnings of the concept. They plan to present the research paper at a well-regarded conference (i.e., American Political Science Association), then incorporate feedback and eventually prepare it for publication.

Financial accounting

Abigail was paid \$16/hour for approximately 185 hours of work.

Blurb for webpage

The Co-PIs made several advances on the overkill research project in 2022. For one, CHRHS-affiliated student Abigail Carbajal was hired as a research assistant. She identified and coded overkill incidents in three conflicts (Mexico, Ukraine, and Mozambique) using an online database and news searches. The Co-PIs also tested and strengthened the definition of the overkill concept.

Publications for updating webpage

“Staying Power: Strategies for Weathering Criminal Violence in Marginal Neighborhoods of Medellín and Monterrey,” *Latin American Research Review* (forthcoming; with Rebecca Bell-Martin)

“[Migration Research in Violent Areas](#)” in *The Routledge History of Modern Latin American Migration*, eds. Andreas Feldmann et al., 412-435 (with Rebecca Bell-Martin)

“[The Impacts of Attacks on Education and Military Use in Myanmar](#).” 2022. Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (with Marika Tsolakis and Felicity Pearce)