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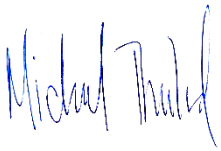

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Abstract

What explains young people's low level of trust in democratic institutions? Seeking to answer this question, the paper at hand examines the root causes of a steady erosion of institutional trust found among young people in the age of 15 to 24 in Honduras.

The methodological framework applied in the paper is constructed around a causal research design in which two theoretical frames are distinguished; one emphasizing democratic performance and the other civic culture. After translating these two frames into two separate hypotheses, both are tested against an empirical foundation consisting of a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. For the quantitative part, data from public opinion surveys carried out between 2004 and 2015 are compiled and systematically aggregated around four sets of indicators. For the qualitative part existing empirical literature on the recent developments in Honduras is then employed to strengthen the internal validity of the findings from the quantitative analysis.

The paper concludes that Honduran youths' low trust in democratic institutions is caused by a lack of political performance. Declining levels of citizen security, increasing levels of corruption and the perception that there is an inherent incapability in the political system to deal with these issues constitute the main determinants in explaining why young people distrust democratic institutions. The paper furthermore finds that economic performance perception when it comes to the democratic system's ability to provide quality service delivery, job opportunities and sound personal economic situations have no correlation to the level of trust youth have in democratic institutions. Similarly, no evidence is found of a relation between civic culture and institutional trust among youth, as measures of civic engagement and social capital demonstrate no empirical association to the phenomenon of democratic trust.

By dealing with institutional trust in an unconsolidated developing democracy in Latin America, the paper contributes to a recent trend, in which increasing academic attention is directed to problems of low democratic trust in Latin America. Treating youth as the object of study, the paper furthermore suggests that much analytical insight can be gained from examining trends among specific sections of a population. As such, it is argued that the paper serves as an example that 1) studies of democratic trust in developing contexts is not only possible but highly necessary, and 2) that studies of democratic trust have much to gain from looking at specific sub-groups within the general population.

Key words: trust, democratic institutions, youth, performance perception, civic culture

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List of abbreviations

AYC	African Youth Charter
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDJ	Convención Iberoamericana de Derechos de los Jóvenes (Ibero-American Convention on Rights of Youth)
CONADEH	Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (National Commission on Human Rights)
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CRSP	Comisión de Reforma a la Seguridad Pública (The Public Security Reform Commission)
DIECP	Dirección de Investigación y Evaluación de la Carrera Policial (The Directorate for the Investigation and Evaluation of the Police Career)
ECLAC/CEPAL	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean / La Comisión Económica para América Latina
$H_{(X)}I_{(X)}$	$Hypothesis_{(X)}Indicator_{(X)}$
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
ILO	International Labour Organization
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Honduran National Statistics Institute)
LAPOP	Latin American Public Opinion Project
OAS	Organization of American States
PL	Partido Liberal (Liberal Party)
PN	Partido Nacional (National Party)
TI	Transparency International
UNAH	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Crime and Drugs
US	United States (of America)
WHO	World Health Organization

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Making democracy perform

Why Honduran youth don't trust in democratic institutions

Introduction

> *"No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death."*
>
> - Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations
> (World Youth Report 2003: 271)

In recent years, concerns have risen regarding young people's trust and lack of participation in formal channels of democracy. Fewer and fewer young people join political parties, voting turn-outs are low compared to older segments of the population and trust in democracy is decreasing among youth in many countries.

Latin America is no exception. According to a 2008 report from the Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), almost 42 percent of Latin American youth state that they are indifferent to the kind of government regime, they have, and that under certain circumstances, they would accept an authoritarian regime. At the same time, 13 percent less young people in the region vote compared to their older counterparts (www.cepal.org, 11/03/2016).

The small Central American state, Honduras, constitutes a particularly worrying example of this development. According to Marta Lagos, Honduras is the only country in Latin America where less people support democracy as a system of government than are satisfied with its performance (Lagos 2003: 167). John A. Booth and Mitchell A. Seligson furthermore point out that Honduras has an unusually high number of people who are so-called "triply dissatisfied", meaning that they score low on support for democracy, support for national institutions and evaluation of the government's performance (Seligson and Booth 2009: 2). The problem is especially relevant among the young population of Honduras. While decreasing trust in the democratic system, as we have seen, can be measured in the population in general, it is however most evident when it comes to people in the ages of 15 to 24. Looking at statistics from the independent Chilean public opinion survey, Latinobarómetro, this is the case both when it comes to support for democracy as a system of government and when looking at trust in specific democratic institutions. Regarding the general support for democracy, the

portion of Honduran youth who see democracy as "preferable to any other form of government" has dropped almost 17 percentage points during the last 10 years, going from 52.5 percent in 2006 to 35.9 percent in 2015. The equivalent numbers for the general population are 51 and 40 (www.latinobarometro.org, 23/03/2016). Regarding trust in three of the most central democratic institutions, the picture is the same. In the last five years alone, the number of youth who have either "a lot" or "some" trust in Government has dropped 18.1 percent, from 43.1 to 25.0 percent, trust in the Judiciary has dropped 11.8 percent from 35.2 to 23.4 percent, and trust in Congress has dropped 13.7 percent, from 34.8 to 21.1 percent (*Ibid.*, 23/03/2016). In all three cases, a quarter or less of the total youth population express trust towards the system, demonstrating a serious lack of legitimacy of the democratic institutions.

In recognition of the importance of including youth in formal processes of democratic participation, the international community has focused increasing attention on the subject. In 2012, United Nation's Secretary General, Ban-Ki Moon, presented his latest five-year action plan, which included as one of five imperatives, "the engagement of youth in social, economic and political development" (UNDP 2013: 11). Similarly, the issue of youth participation has recently received renewed academic attention, with a range of studies seeking to explain how young people understand and participate in democracy. As argued by Sherrod et. al. even though this renewed interest has meant that "the field of youth civic engagement has come of age", it is still young and there is "a need for more academic attention in the area of political engagement and views of youth" (Sherrod et. al. 2010: 158-59).

This paper places itself within this field, seeking to understand the particular tendencies of young people's perception of democracy in Honduras. Examining the reasons for the distrust of young Hondurans in democracy and democratic institutions, the question it poses and seeks to answer is the following:

Why do Honduran youth have low trust in democratic institutions?

In the following, the contextual, methodological and theoretical framework of the study at hand will be outlined. Chapter one places Honduras in a comparative perspective and examines the current democratic situation in the country. Chapter two introduces the methodological approach which will be applied to answer to the problem formulation. Chapter three outlines two main theoretical strands on democratic trust, one focusing on the economic and political performance and people's perception of such performance, and the other focusing on the role of civil society and active civic engagement.

Chapter four presents the empirical analysis, applying each of these theories to the Honduran context, in order to test which of the two best explains why Honduran youth have low trust in democratic institutions. Finally, chapter 5 discusses the implications of the paper's findings for democratic theory and for democracy in developing countries such as Honduras.

Honduras in a comparative perspective

Applying democratic theory to the Latin American context

Most studies of democratic trust have focused on the evident decline in popular confidence in advanced, industrialized democracies, while few have explored the causes of low confidence in democratic government institutions in developing countries. Lately, however, a range of studies focusing on developing countries have seen the light of day. Mark J. Payne and Marta Lagos' studies of the Latin American region as a whole (Payne 2002 and Lagos 2001, 2003) and Espinal, Hartlyn and Kelly's study of the Dominican Republic (Espinal et. al. 2006) represent three main examples of studies of trust in democratic institutions in a Latin American context.

Applying theory which is mainly developed through studies of democratically consolidated and, for the most part Western, countries, to a development context entails a certain risk of ethnocentric bias. Therefore, in studies such as the one at hand, normative and epistemological reflections concerning the applicability of theories and their conceptualization are much-needed. While the abovementioned studies provide us with a platform from which analysis of the Latin American context is methodologically and normatively viable, it is necessary to remember that much variation exists within the Latin American context as well. Honduras is a country with massive democratic deficits and scholars and professionals continuously debate whether or not the country should actually be labelled a democracy (Boussard 2003: 154-155). The following section will briefly introduce the recent political history of Honduras, in order to place the country in a comparative perspective and lay out the foundation for understanding democracy and democratic processes in the country.

Democracy in Honduras – troubled, yet resilient

Robert Dahl has, in his 1989-book "Democracy and its critics" provided us with a conception of democracy, which makes it possible to determine whether or not a country can be characterized as democratic. First of all, in order to talk about democracy, or what Dahl refers to as polyarchy, two general characteristics must exist: "Citizenship must be extended to a relatively high proportion of adults, and the rights of citizenship must include the opportunity to oppose and vote out the highest officials in the government" (Dahl 1989: 220). Elaborating his theory, Dahl explicates that seven institutions must be present in order for a state to be considered a polyarchy; the seven institutions are:

1) elected officials
2) free and fair elections
3) inclusive suffrage
4) the right to run for office
5) freedom of expression
6) alternative information
7) associational autonomy

(Source: Dahl 1989: 221)

On paper, these seven institutions are in place in Honduras and have been since the constitution, declaring the country a democratic presidential republic, entered into force in 1982 (www.cia.gov, 25/06/2016). In terms of citizenship, articles 36 and 37 of the Honduran constitution establish that, "all Hondurans above the age of 18 are citizens" and that "it is the right of the citizen to elect and be elected" (www.oas.org, 25/06/2016, author's translation). Furthermore, articles 196 and 237, state that the president and members of parliament are elected for a period of 4 years after which general elections are to be held (*Ibid.*, 25/06/2016). Finally, articles 61 and 78 speak of the liberties concerning freedom of association, access to alternative information and associational autonomy (*Ibid.*, 25/06/2016). When looking at the constitutional guarantees alone, Honduras qualifies as a consolidated democracy. In practice, however, the picture is somewhat more blurred.

In order to understand the concrete nature of Honduran democracy, an expansion of Dahl's criteria for what qualifies as a democracy can be useful. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan have presented the idea of democratic consolidation referring to the situation where "none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces, or institutions considers that there is any alternative to democratic processes to gain power … and democracy is considered the "only game in town" (Linz and Stepan

1996: 15). According to Linz and Stepan, consolidation takes place at three levels; constitutionally, attitudinally and behaviourally. Constitutionally, all major organs act according to the democratic institutions. Attitudinally, most people accept that democracy is the best form of government. And behaviourally, no group is seriously engaged in secession or regime change (*Ibid.,:* 15). Similarly, Guillermo O'Donnell has added two reservations, which are relevant when it comes to the Honduran case. The first states that "elected officials should not be arbitrarily terminated before the end of their constitutionally mandated terms" and the second, that "elected authorities should not be subject to severe constraints, vetoes, or exclusion from certain policy domains by other, nonelected actors, especially the armed forces" (O'Donnell 1996a: 35).

Including these perspectives and taking a closer look at the Honduran system, we see a different picture. Starting with O'Donnell's reservations, it can first be observed that the military has always played a prominent role in Honduran politics. The change from military to democratic regime in the early 1980's was initiated by the military government itself as a result of internal controversies and after pressure from the United States which wanted a more reliable partner in their fight against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua (Boussard 2003: 157). In the years after the regime change, the military maintained close ties to the National Party (PN) and remained in control of foreign relations, defense, public works and finance (*Ibid.,*: 156). Initially, it was also agreed, that there would be no investigation of military corruption, that the military would have a veto over cabinet appointments and that there would be no interference of civilians in military affairs (Lapper 1985: 81; Acker 1988: 115). Several constitutional amendments over the last three decades have slowly moved Honduras in a more democratic direction and reduced the influence of the armed forces. Most notable is the 1998 amendment which placed the armed forces under civilian control for the first time since 1957 (Boussard 2003: 171). In practice, however, this and other amendments have not stopped the military from intervening. The most recent example of military interference took place as late as in 2009, when then president Manuel Zelaya from the Liberal Party (PL) was forcefully removed from power by the military, in what most observers characterize as a coup d'état. Zelaya was deposed after he had attempted to change the constitution and remove the presidential one-term limit (Harding 2015: 1).

The ousting of Zelaya shows that the military remains an important player in Honduran politics, and in O'Donnell's terms it is a clear example of a breach of the first principle that "elected officials should not be arbitrarily terminated before the end of their constitutionally mandated terms". Then, does that mean that democracy is not "the only game in town"? Although it certainly represents a democratic setback and contributes to the picture of an unstable democracy, it is interesting to note that

proponents of the military intervention against Zelaya argue that it was constitutionally founded and came about as a direct response to Zelaya's attempt to obstruct democratic institutions (Shifter 2009d). In support of this argument, it can be noted that the military, in the aftermath of the coup did not form a government itself, but in accordance with the constitution installed vice-president Roberto Micheletti (PL) as interim president until a new round of presidential elections could be organized and executed. From this perspective, it is possible to interpret the military interference as a defense for democracy, rather than an attack on it. In the terms of Linz and Stepan, while the military's continued meddling in the political sphere certainly represents a problem at the constitutional level, it is thus not the case at the behavioral level, as the goal was never to return to military rule, replacing democracy with an authoritarian government.

At the behavioral level, however, other issues challenge democratic consolidation. Some authors have argued that the presence of organized criminal syndicates and the power they hold vis-à-vis the state, constitutes an example of a major actor which considers that a viable "alternative to democratic processes to gain power" does exist (see for example Bosworth 2010, and Carment & Samy 2011). Indeed, several reports of the limited resources of the state to fight organized crime as well as demonstrations of links between cartel leaders and public officials have seen the light of day over the years. Others argue, that the extremely high levels of corruption and human rights violations which have plagued the country during the entire period constitute another example of the lack of consolidation at the behavioural level. Looking at numbers from the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), operated by the German-based international anti-corruption organization, Transparency International (TI), we get an idea of the problem with corruption in the country. Since 2001, Honduras has scored less than 30 points on a scale from 0-100, where 0 represents a "highly corrupt" and 100 a "very clean" public sector, placing Honduras well below its Central American neighbours Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador (www.transparency.org, 29/06/2016). The picture is no better when it comes to respect for human rights. While the recent killing of leader of the indigenous rights group Copinh, Berta Cáceres, has drawn international attention to Honduras, the problematic is by no means new in the country, which has a historic track record of human rights violations. According to the UK-based human rights organization, Global Witness, Honduras is the country with highest number of killings of environmental and land defenders per capita, with 111 of these activists having been killed between 2002 and 2014 (Global Witness 2015: 4).

Considering the above, it is safe to conclude that major obstacles exist before we can meaningfully call Honduras democratically consolidated. In spite of political instability and rampant corruption, it is

however worth remembering that the country, except for the 2009 incidence, has enjoyed more than 30 years of uninterrupted democratic elections, which have for the most part been characterized as free and fair and where power has shifted peacefully between different political parties. Likewise, regarding attitudinal consolidation, the support for democracy among the general population has been stable at a high level during the entire period. Looking at figures from Latinobarómetro, the number of people in the general population who either "agree" or "agree a lot" that democracy is the best form of government has remained around 65 percent during the last fifteen years, with a small but interesting peak in the years after the coup (www.latinobarometro.org, 25/06/2016, 2008: 66 percent, 2009: 71 percent, 2010: 74 percent).

A peculiar stability thus seems to characterize Honduran democracy. While corruption levels have remained high and grave human rights issues remain, the democratic institutions continue to exist and the popular backing has until recently remained at a high level. As such it is possible to say that, political instability has become institutionalized and that Honduran democracy, with all its defects, has demonstrated a certain level of resilience, which should not necessarily lead us to conclude that a return to an authoritarian regime is close. It does, however, highlight the importance of following developments closely, especially when it comes to people's support for democracy as a system of government. In the light of this brief diagnosis of democracy in Honduras, we will turn to the methodological chapter.

Methodology

This chapter introduces the overall methodological approach of the paper. The first section introduces the object of study; Honduran youth. The second section presents the research design, which will be applied in order to answer the problem formulation and the empirical foundation on which it builds.

Object of study: Honduran youth

As mentioned, this study focuses on the democratic attitudes of youth. In this section, we will clarify what this means and have a closer look at the specific context in which Honduran youth find themselves.

Defining "youth"

Describing what characterizes a certain age group at a certain point in time involves a somewhat arbitrary delimitation. This is especially the case when dealing with youth, as such delimitation transcends the traditional minor-major boundary, where a person is considered a minor, until a certain age, when he or she enters into adulthood and receives the full legal status of a citizen. In line with this, UNESCO states that youth is best understood as a period of transition and should therefore be regarded a fluid category rather than a fixed age-group (www.unesco.org, 21/04/2016).

In recent years, however, there has been a growing recognition in academic as well as professional circles of the need to treat the transitionary phase from childhood to adulthood as an independent analytical category (Cano and Pastor Seller 2016: 119). International organizations such as the World Bank and the International Labour Organizations (ILO) provide statistics on everything from youth unemployment to youth literacy rates and a wide range of official UN documents concerning the role of youth in society have seen the light of day. Although, there is a certain definitional span across the various international organs[1], the most commonly used definition, is the straight-forward one proposed by the UN, referring to youth as "persons between the ages of 15 to 24 years" (www.un.org, 22/04/2016). This definition is also widely applied in the Latin American context, one of the latest examples being the 2005 Ibero-American Convention on Rights of Youth, the first international treaty recognizing young people as specific subjects of rights with legal status and as strategic and capable actors in development (CIDJ 2008: 26). In line with the UN definition, the convention, in article 1, defines

[1] UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and ILO all regard youth as people in the ages of 15-24 years old. The African Youth Charter (AYC) refers to youth as people in the ages of 15-35 years old, whereas the UN Habitat (Youth Fund) refers to youth as people in the ages of 15-32.

youth as "all persons, nationals or residents of any country, between 15 and 24 years old" (*Ibid.,*: 11). The paper at hand, will apply the definition presented by the CIDJ.

Besides from definitional delimitation, understanding a specific youth population requires an understanding of the context in which they find themselves. Social, cultural and political factors shape the way youth can act and affect the choices they make and the way they perceive of the world. While the previous chapter introduced the democratic situation of the country, in the following, we will have a closer look at the specific characteristics of youth in Honduras and some of the social and cultural factors with especial relevance to them.

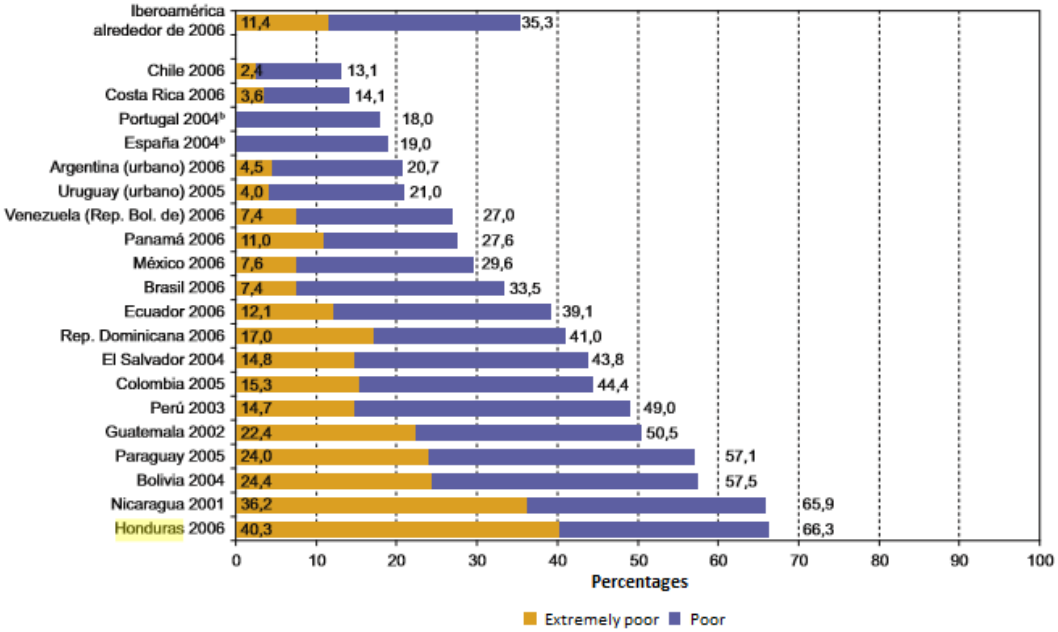
Being young in Honduras

According to the most recent census by the Honduran National Statistics Institute (INE), conducted in 2013, Honduran youth make up 23.77 percent, or almost one quarter, of the country's total population (www.ine.gob.hn, 15/03/2016). In absolute numbers, this amounts to 1.974.263 million people between the ages of 15-24 years. A slight majority of these, 55.1 percent, are urban dwellers, compared to 44.9 percent who are living in rural areas.

Socio-economic status

Besides from political instability, Honduran youth find themselves in a society characterized by a very high degree of social grievance. As we see in figure 1 on the next page, Honduras is the Latin American country with the highest relative number of both poor and extremely poor young people – when looking at the population between 15 and 29 years old (ECLAC 2008: 35). As much as 66.3 percent grow up in poverty – and 40.3 percent in extreme poverty.

Figure 1. "Incidence of poverty and extreme poverty among youth in Ibero-America, around 2006" (percentages)



Source: ECLAC 2008: 35

Looking at the statistics on occupation and education we see some interesting trends. Regarding education, youth literacy has increased significantly during recent years and is currently at 95.7 percent (www.data.worldbank.org, 15/03/2016). Educational levels in general, however, remain low and the number of enrolled students decreases drastically from primary to secondary and tertiary education. Looking at the most updated net enrolment rates from 2013, we see that 89.3 percent of youth belonging to the official primary education age-group are enrolled. When it comes to secondary enrolment, numbers decline to 48.6 percent. Net enrolment rates for tertiary education do not exist, but gross enrolment rates are at 21.1 percent (www.data.worldbank.org, 15/03/2016). Furthermore, Honduras ranks third among Latin American countries in terms of educational inequality, with a 6.2-year gap between the average years of schooling of respectively the lowest and highest income quintile (Cruces et. al. 2011: 4). Regarding employment, data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) underlines the lack of opportunities for youth in Honduras. Recent figures, show that as much as 41.4 percent of Honduran youth are so-called "NEETs", referring to youth who are "neither in education, employment or training" (www.data.worldbank.org, 15/03/2016).

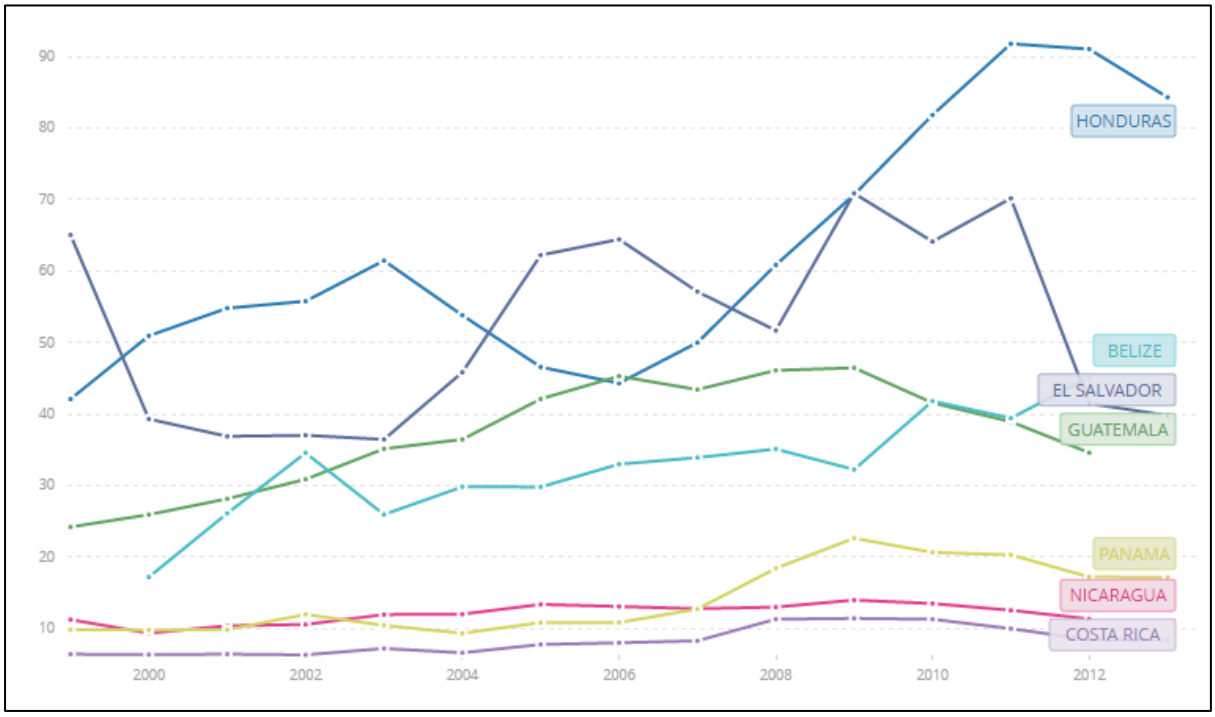
A culture of violence

One of the most evident societal problems facing youth in Honduras is the so-called "culture of violence" which plagues the country (Reyes and Cardenas 2014: 1). Fragile state structures and an unfortunate geographic position between South American cocaine producing states of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, and the number one consumer nation, USA, has made Honduras an ideal transit route for illicit drugs, and a place from which drug cartels can easily and effectively manage their trans-national business. Combined with the emergence of youth gangs, the existence of organized criminal networks has resulted in increasing unrest, as violence and extortion have become common in many neighbourhoods across the country (Fong 2016: 1).

In an attempt to deal with street gangs and organized crime syndicates, Honduras has, since 2003, along with Mexico and the rest of the Central American states (with the notable exception of Nicaragua) been implementing the so-called Mano Dura policy ("Hard Hand"), promoted and partly financed by consecutive US administrations. Mano Dura policies include "deploying the military for internal policing, in addition to lengthening prison sentences, suspending due process guarantees and other protections for alleged criminals, and aggressively arresting youths suspected of gang membership" (Seligson et. al. 2010: 68). While proponents argue for the need to strike hard and persistently on violent criminal activity, this hard-line policy has also resulted in a surge in death rates and a militarization of the general public space, as clashes between police and gang members have become an everyday occurrence.

The violence is directly reflected in the criminal statistics. According to recent data from the UN Office on Crime and Drugs (UNODC), in 2012, 91 intentional homicides were registered per 100.000 people in Honduras. This is almost twice the number of homicides recorded in the second-placed country, Venezuela, with a record of 54 homicides per 100.000 people, and it represents an increase of more than 62 percent over a 10-year period (www.data.worldbank.org, 06/04/2016). As a result of the exceedingly high homicide rates, Honduras has several times in recent years won the dubious title as the world's most dangerous country.

Figure 2. "Intentional homicides in Central America 1999-2013 (per 100.000 people)"



Source: UN Office on Drugs and Crime's International Homicide Statistics Database

The National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) has created a violence observatory which gathers data from the different regions in the country, monitoring violence and citizen security. Figures from the observatory show that youth are the age-group most affected by the increasing violence in Honduras both on the victim and perpetrator side. In the first quarter of 2012 alone, of the 1.709 people killed in Honduras, 920 were young, constituting 54 percent of all violent deaths for that quarter (www.laprensa.hn, 24/05/2016). The high levels of violence have in recent years led a considerable number of youths to consider a future outside of Honduras. Between 2010 and 2014 alone, a total of 301.000 Honduran migrants were deported from Mexico and the United States. Of these, 18.000 were minors who are sent back to a country, that for many represents a dangerous place marred by violence and crime. Processes of migration and deportation deepen the problem as the emergence and functioning of street gangs and Maras is closely linked to these migration flows of young Hondurans from USA and Mexico to Central America (Rivera 2013: 6).

Political participation

When it comes to young people's participation in the political sphere and the spaces of participation open to youth in Honduras, it is interesting to see that, compared to other countries in the region, the legal framework that surrounds youth is surprisingly strong in Honduras. As one of the first countries, Honduras, in 2008, ratified the abovementioned Ibero-American Convention on Rights of Youth (CIDJ). The Convention contains 44 articles and addresses the rights of youth, among others in the area of civic and political participation. It also determines the obligations of the State to ensure the inclusion of youth in society. As stated in Article 21.2, "each State Party undertakes to promote and strengthen social processes that generate forms and guarantees to ensure an effective participation of youth from all sectors of society, in organizations that encourage inclusion." (CIDJ 2008: 20).

Recent administrations on both sides of the spectrum have put the subject of youth at the forefront of political campaigns and programs. In 2007, a year prior to the ratification of the CIDJ, then president Manuel Zelaya from the Liberal Party completed the formulation of a National Youth Policy 2007-2021, setting out the main priorities to guarantee the full inclusion and participation of youth in political processes. His successor, Porfirio Lobo Sosa, from the National Party continued the articulation of a youth-centred approach emphasizing his commitment to "promote a positive attitude towards youth and […] open up spaces of participation for youth in decision-making processes" (www.observatoriodescentralizacion.org, 24/04/2016). The current administration under the leadership of president Juan Orlando Hernandez from the National Party focuses on job creation and youth employment through programmes such as "Tu Banca Jóven" (www.latribuna.hn, 25/05/2016). As the predecessors, the Hernandez-administration has promoted itself as youth-friendly, stating that it sees itself as a "spokesperson for the youth and the vehicle for the transformation of Honduran society at the hands of youth" (www.partidonacional.hn, 21/05/2016).

Looking at the participatory patterns of Honduran youth, it is interesting to observe, that while youth, as pointed out in the introductory chapters, have very low trust in democracy and democratic institutions compared to older segments of the population, their participatory patterns closely resemble that of older generations. According to Latinobarómetro, 22.3 percent of youth discuss politics with their friends either frequently or very frequently. The equivalent number for the general population is only slightly higher, ranging at 24.6 percent. Similarly, 16.5 percent of youth frequently or very frequently try to convince someone of their political opinion, whereas the number for the general population is 18.7 percent. As much as 13.3 percent of youth frequently or very frequently work for a political party or candidate. For the general population, the number is only slightly higher, ranging at

17.5 percent. Looking at the disposition to participate in street protests, the tendency is sustained, with little or no difference in attitude among youth and older segments of the population. This is the case whether the subject of the protest is better salary and working conditions, health and education or defence of democratic rights. Later on, we will go more in depth with these numbers and see how they relate to the level of trust in democratic institutions. For now, it suffices to consider the simple fact alone that, although a quarter this group due to their age is not eligible for voting, their interest and participation in political matters are comparable to older generations.

Research design

In empirical research, the role of theory is determined by the aim of such research, which can be both theory-testing or theory-building (Kuada 2012: 21). As a range of theoretical contributions explaining variations in democratic trust already exist, this study will apply a deductive theory-testing method in which two approaches are distinguished and tested against an empirical case, namely the case of Honduran youth and their attitude towards democratic institutions.

The research design applied is a causal design in which it is examined what causes the level of trust youth have in democratic institutions to increase or decrease. In order to establish a causal relation three conditions must exist; empirical association, appropriate time order, and non-spuriousness (Chambliss and Schutt 2013: 105-106). Firstly, concerning empirical association, it needs to be substantiated that the independent variable and the dependent variable are linked. Secondly, concerning time order, it must be substantiated that the independent variable happened before the dependent variable. Thirdly, non-spuriousness relates to the fact that changes in the dependent variable are in fact caused by the independent variable and not some third unknown variable (*Ibid.,*: 105-106).

While over-time comparison of existing survey data allows us to substantiate empirical association and appropriate time order, it is more difficult to address the question of non-spuriousness. Due to the possibility that in a social environment an unlimited number of variables might exist, causality can only be inferred, never proven. According to Norman Denzin, triangulation can, however, serve to enhance the internal validity of a study's findings. Denzin identifies four basic forms of triangulation; (1) *methods triangulation*, where different data collection methods help the researcher check the consistency of his or her findings, (2) *triangulation of sources* where different data sources are incorporated to give the

researcher a broader empirical foundation, (3) *analyst triangulation*, where multiple analysts review the findings, and (4) *theoretical triangulation,* where more than one theoretical perspective is applied to examine and interpret the data (Denzin 2009: 301). In order to heighten the probability of non-spuriousness, the paper incorporates theoretical triangulation, involving more than one theoretical frame in explaining variation in democratic trust as well as methodological triangulation in which findings from the quantitative analysis are sought validated through a subsequent qualitative analysis, based on a review of the existing literature.

Empirical foundation

Regarding the empirical foundation, the quantitative analysis draws on data from public opinion surveys carried out in Honduras from 2004 to 2015. Data is retrieved from Latinobarómetro, an independent private non-profit organization based in Santiago, Chile. In order to ensure representativeness, Latinobarómetro use sample sizes of 1000 persons, of which 50 percent are from urban zones and 50 percent from rural, leaving a margin of error of 3.1 percent. Samples are selected through four stages, using systematic random sampling. In the first stage, settlements or neighbourhoods within cities are selected through segmentation, ensuring that areas with larger population have a larger probability of being selected. In the second stage, sets of houses or blocks within the selected areas are randomly selected. Thirdly, all houses within the selected blocks are visited, starting with the first house on the right, until the established quotes are reached. Fourthly, household members are interviewed according to the actual population distribution in the country (Latinobarómetro 2015: 15).

For the qualitative analysis, empirical data from a range of authors who have dealt with the recent political history in Honduras will be drawn in to establish whether or not findings in the quantitative analysis can be sustained. These authors comprise:

- Carvajal, Roger. 2014. “Violence in Honduras: An analysis of the failure in public security and the state's response to criminality”
- Meyer, Peter J. 2014. “Honduras – U.S. Relations”
- Gutiérrez Rivera. 2013. “Territories of violence”
- Frank, Dana. 2010. “Repression’s Reward in Honduras?”
- Bosworth, James. 2010. “Honduras: Organized Crime Gaining Amid Political Crisis”
- Noriega, Roger F. and José J, Lanza. 2013. “Honduras Under Siege”
- Malkin, Elisabeth. 2013. “Political Doubt Poses Risk to Honduras, Battered by Coup and Violence”

After introducing the overall methodological approach of the paper, including a presentation of the object of study, project design and empirical foundation, the next chapter focuses on the theoretical foundation of the paper. Kuada defines theories as "a series of systematic interrelated statements or generalizations that explain and anticipate developments in a specific context of phenomenon [...] Thus, theory provides the language, the concepts, and assumptions that help researchers make sense of the phenomenon that they seek to investigate" (Kuada 2012: 64). In line with this understanding, the theoretical foundation presented in the following will begin by clarifying some theoretical concepts.

Theoretical chapter

This paper places itself in the tradition of democratic theory, revolving around concepts of democratic institutions, democratic trust and civil society, understood through notions of social capital and civic engagement. In this chapter, these and other relevant concepts are defined and contextualized for the analysis at hand. Furthermore, the theoretical foundation on which the empirical analysis builds is presented and some epistemological issues are addressed and clarified.

Explaining (dis)trust in democratic institutions

Different levels of democratic trust

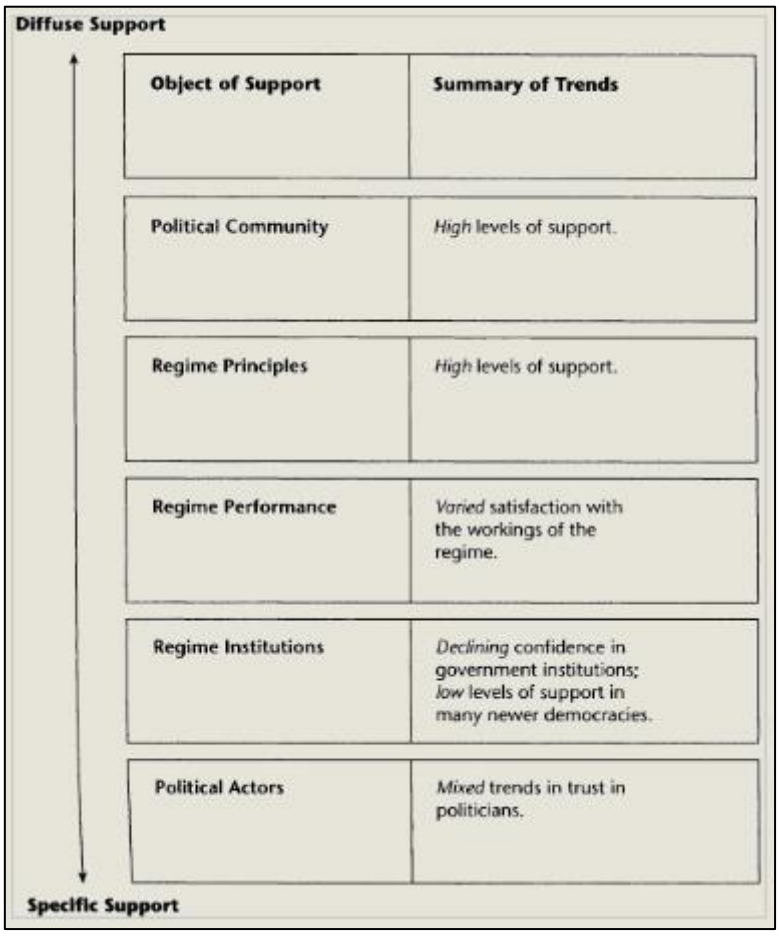
In recent years, as a consequence of the declining support for democracy experienced in many countries, increasing academic attention has been directed to the subject. As a result, a large body of literature on democratic trust has seen the light of day, contributing to a general theoretical and methodological diversification within the field. While this is certainly a positive trait, it also highlights the need for delimitation when studying democratic trust.

As various authors have pointed out, first of all it is important to specify what is meant when referring to trust in democracy or political systems in general. First, it is important to distinguish normative evaluation from performative evaluation. People can be critical of the functioning of democracy while maintaining strong support for the principle of democracy itself. Seen from a pro-democratic point of view, negative performative evaluation is far less problematic, as it is a surface problem, whereas normative evaluation is related to deeper-rooted values which can be harder to change and thus require different measures. This study focuses on normative evaluation, seeking to explain the evident decline in popular trust in democracy per se, while incorporating performative evaluation as one

plausible explanatory factor in generating such (dis)trust.

Secondly, it is important to acknowledge that trust in democracy is a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Norris 1999a: 10). Building on David Easton's analytical framework (Easton 1975), Pippa Norris has provided us with a characterization of the different levels of democratic trust, ranging from trust in specific political actors, over regime institutions and regime principles to trust in the more general and broader political community of the nation-state as a whole (Norris 1999a: 9-11).

Figure 3. "Different levels of democratic trust"



(Source: Norris 1999a: 11)

Norris' model serves as a practical tool, providing the researcher with a continuum on which various types of democratic trust can be distinguished and determined. It is very useful because empirical evidence strongly suggests that, although popular discussions tend to treat the different levels as interchangeable, the public does actually distinguish between them (Dalton and Klingemann, in Norris 1999a: 13). On the other hand, this paper argues that, while it is important to be clear as to the level

on which one operates, much analytical insight can be gained by looking at how the different levels interact.

Taking a closer look at Norris' continuum, the first level, *the political community*, concerns the foundation of democracy, looking at people's sense of belonging and feelings of national identity, often measured through the level of interpersonal trust. The second level concerns people's attitudes towards the core *regime principals*, or basic democratic values. A commonly-used measure for regime principal support is people's agreement to Churchill's phrase, which states that "democracy might have problems, but it is the best form of government". The third level concerns *regime performance*, referring to people's satisfaction with the functioning of the democratic or authoritarian system. The fourth level deals with support for *regime institutions*, including attitudes towards governments, parliaments, the executive, the legal system and police, the state bureaucracy, political parties, and the military. The fifth and most specific level concerns the satisfaction with *political actors*, such as the incumbent president, specific ministers or members of parliament.

This study will focus on the fourth level, support for *regime institutions*, examining the root causes of the rapid decrease in trust among Honduran youth towards three of the country's main democratic institutions; government, parliament and the judiciary. However, in order to explain decreasing trust in democratic institutions, two other levels are incorporated, the first level pertaining to the *political community* and the second level, regarding *regime performance*. Honduras has witnessed a dramatic decrease in trust among youth at all these three levels, and understanding how they interact will provide us with analytical insights needed to answer the problem formulation.

Theories of democratic trust

As explained, in the general literature on democratic and institutional trust, a variety of strands exist, providing us with a range of factors which can explain the emergence of trust or distrust in the political system. In spite of this analytical diversity, it is, however, possible to extract or distinguish two major strands of theories or "schools" – one focusing mainly on economic and political factors and the other on cultural factors. These two schools provide us with two distinct theoretical frames for understanding why young Hondurans lose faith in democratic institutions. By applying and comparing the theoretical frames proposed by each of these schools to the Honduran context, this paper seeks to test the explanatory power of each of these theories. In the following chapter, the two theoretical frames will be presented and the concepts and normative assumptions on which they build outlined. They will then be translated into two separate hypotheses, which will be tested in the analytical chapter.

Performance perception: economic and political performance

The first theoretical frame revolves around people's perception of the polity's ability to deliver tangible results as the main factor in determining the level of trust they designate to their polity. Understood from Norris' conceptual framework this theoretical frame deals with the link between the third level, regarding democratic performance, and the fourth level, pertaining to trust in democratic institutions. Democratic performance, in this case, translates into results of both political and economic nature. In regards to the economic aspects, people's perception of their personal economic situation, and the system's ability to provide employment opportunities and to ensure quality service delivery are among the main factors determining the level of trust a country's population designates to its democratic institutions. Concerning the political aspects, emphasis is usually placed on subjects such as the degree to which democratic institutions are perceived to have integrity, to be responsive as well as their ability to provide citizens with a sense of security.

A wide range of studies support this theoretical frame. Seymour Martin Lipset and William Schneider were among the first to promote this line of argumentation. Based on their studies of the development in the political climate in the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s, they found that the main cause of declining trust in political institutions is to be found in the performance of the polity. Based on statistical calculations, Lipset and Schneider demonstrate a causal relation between drops in unemployment rates and stabilization in inflation rates on one hand, and increasing levels of confidence on the other, leading them to conclude that "confidence levels vary with the state of the economy" (Lipset & Schneider 1987: 5). They furthermore argue that The New Deal and World War II served as economic and political achievements which led to increased popular confidence in institutions, whereas, later on, energy crises, recession, hyperinflation and the Vietnam War affected people's trust negatively (*Ibid.,*: 20). From this perspective, distrust occurs as a direct response to minor and major macro-political events and it is inextricably linked to the democratic performance of any administration.

Other theorists have found somewhat similar results, although several have underlined the importance of distinguishing between actual performance and performance perception. Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield's study of trust in democratic transition states constitutes an example of such distinction. In their study of 8 Eastern European states, Evans and Whitefield cross-examine the relation between respondents' level of trust in democratic institutions with their perception of economic and democratic performance. Applying multivariate regression analysis, Evans and Whitefield use two indicators for economic and political performance respectively – one which measures the objective developments and one which measures people's perception of those developments. Regarding the

economic performance, the two indicators applied are: 1) evaluation of the market's performance and 2) evaluation of the respondents' own and their family's living standard. In this case, market performance is measured by looking at macro-economic data, namely per capita GDP, inflation and unemployment rates. Regarding the political performance, the two indicators applied are: 1) evaluation of democracy in practice and 2) respondents' perception of the responsiveness of the political system. Here, the objective indicator, democracy in practice, is measured in two ways, namely the degree to which constitutional issues are separated from daily politics, and the degree of polarization between political institutions, in this case the presidency and parliament.

Evans and Whitefield find that both economic and political performance is relevant, but performance perception has more explanatory power than actual performance – especially in the case of political performance. They conclude that "both economic and political factors are relevant to predicting support for democratic institutions, but that the indicators of political pay-offs have considerably stronger effects" (Evans & Whitefield 1995: 503). Furthermore, they underline the fact that no relation between actual economic performance, measured on objective macro-indicators and support for democracy can be identified, whereas a relation can be identified between people's perception of their own and their family's economic situation and how much trust they have in democracy. Regarding political performance, the tendency is the same. Here, a relation between the actual functioning of democracy and support for democracy can be found, but the relation between people's perception and their trust in democracy is much stronger (*Ibid.,*: 511-512).

Other authors have supported the argument that performance perception is the main factor in explaining variation in levels of democratic trust. Herbert Kitschelt, in a similar study of democratic trust in transition societies in Eastern Europe, concludes that "people's perception of their own and their country's economic situation must be seen as key predictors of democratic support" (Kitschelt in Evans & Whitefield 1995: 487). Ben Seyd, in his analysis of the role of performance and expectations on political trust in the U.K., concludes that "trust is found primarily to reflect performance perceptions alone" (Seyd 2015: 73).

As mentioned earlier, although most studies have been conducted in industrialized contexts, the theory has also been applied to developing contexts, and with similar results. Espinal et. al.'s study of the Dominican Republic is the main example. Measuring people's satisfaction with three consecutive governments' service delivery, Espinal et. al. find that people's evaluation of democratic performance is a strong predictor of democratic trust, also in a developing country. Pertaining to economic

performance, they find a consistent effect on institutional trust. The higher a person scores government service delivery, the higher his or her level of trust in the democratic institutions tends to be (Espinal et. al. 2006: 14). This is also the case, when it comes to political performance. Measuring developments in people's perception of safety and corruption and comparing it to changes in their attitude towards democracy, they demonstrate a clear empirical link between the way people perceive of a system's ability to deliver political results and how well the institutions on which the system builds are evaluated (*Ibid.,*: 15).

Summing op – a theory of performance perception

It seems logical that a political system which succeeds in bringing its citizens economic and political goods are perceived as more trustworthy than a system which fails to do so. As we have seen, a wide range of studies provide empirical support for this argument. Although some methodological and conceptual variation exists among the different theorists presented above, they all share one main characteristic, namely that performance, or for the most part, perception of performance – economic as well as political – serves as the main determinant, when it comes to explaining trust in democracy and its institutions. As such, it is possible to pool their statements together and claim that they represent one singular theoretical framework, which can be applied to explain why trust in democratic institutions is low. Applying this theoretical framework to the Honduran case, we should thus expect to find a strong relation between young people's perception of the performance of the system and the level of trust they designate to it. As we have seen, different indicators are applied to measure economic and political performance. In the following, the way these terms are operationalized for this study will be elaborated. First, however, we will turn to the introduction of the second theoretical frame.

Civic culture: civic engagement and social capital

The second theoretical frame comprises scholars who emphasize various socio-cultural aspects as determining of people's level of trust in democratic institutions. These scholars share a focus on civil society and people's active engagement with their community as well as the political system. The common denominator in their line of argumentation is, that trust in democratic institutions is related to, and to some extent determined by, the level of civic engagement and social capital that exists within a given population. Understood from Norris' conceptual framework, this theoretical frame deals with the link between the first level, regarding the political community, and the fourth level, trust in democratic institutions.

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's 1963 book, "The Civic Culture", is often mentioned as the first well-developed empirically grounded theory of political culture, and is considered the backbone of theories emphasizing the role of political culture in explaining why people trust their polity (Inglehart 1988: 1204). Based on a five-nation study of popular attitudes in Mexico, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, Almond and Verba identify three different types of political culture; parochial, subject and participant. In *parochial cultures* "the individual thinks of his family's advantage as the only goal to pursue, or conceives of his role in the political system in familial terms" (Almond and Verba 1989: 120). This means that citizens in parochial cultures in general have a low degree of orientation towards the political system, and considers the idea of citizenship and any individual relation and obligation to the state irrelevant. In *subject cultures*, the individual recognizes the role of citizenship, but in a passive, rather than active way. As Almond and Verba write, "the law is something he [the citizen] obeys, not something he helps shape" (*Ibid.,*: 118). In *participant cultures* people have a high level of orientation towards the political system and understands and values the importance of both rights and obligations toward the nation-state. Here, the citizen is expected to have "the virtues of the subject – to obey the law, to be loyal – but he is also expected to take some part in the formation of decisions" (*Ibid.,*: 118). What is analytically interesting in our case, is that Almond and Verba go on to demonstrate that a correlation exists between the type of political culture and the level of democratic trust, in which societies dominated by participant cultures display greater degree of trust in democratic institutions than cultures dominated by parochial and subject cultures. As they argue, democratic trust is "maintained by active citizen participation in civic affairs, by a high level of information about public affairs, and by a widespread sense of civic responsibility" (*Ibid.,*: 9). Through active participation in political matters, people become familiar with the political system, while at the same time building the social capital required to interact meaningfully with the system. Seemingly, it is possible to explain a society's low trust in democratic institutions by determining the characteristics of civic culture in that society, meaning the degree to which people are actively engaged in civil and political matters. Behind low levels of trust, we should therefore expect to find a low degree of civic engagement and vice versa. Or as stated by Almond and Verba: "If a democratic political system is one in which the ordinary citizen participates in political decisions, a democratic political culture should consist of a set of beliefs, attitudes, norms, perceptions and the like, that support participation" (Almond and Verba 1989: 178).

Almond and Verba's theory has laid the foundation for studies of political culture and given direction to many other theorists interested in the field of political culture and democratic studies. One of these is Robert Putnam who is well-renowned for his studies of civic cultures mainly in Italy and the United States. In regards to the former, based on a study of regional governments in 1970s Italy, Putnam

develops the theory of social capital and links it to the idea of civic engagement, concluding that the level of civic engagement is a determining factor when it comes to the success of democracy (Putnam 1995: 66). According to Putman, democracy thrives in societies characterized by high degrees of civic association and active cultures of civic engagement. In such societies, democratic trust is high because political and social networks alike are organized horizontally, and the population's active engagement in civic associations translates into active political participation, which again produces trust in democratic institutions. On the other hand, in so-called "uncivic" societies, democratic institutions fail to maintain popular support due to their vertical nature of patron-client relations between population and polity, rooted in a culture of non-participation, where engagement in civic associations is low. In such societies, people lose confidence in democratic institutions, because they experience that "public affairs are someone else's business, not mine" (Putnam 1993).

In his study of civic engagement in the U.S., "Bowling alone", Putnam demonstrates the dramatic decline that has taken place in associational and political activity in the U.S. during the last 30 years. In line with his findings in studies of the Italian context, according to Putnam, there is reason to view the situation in the US with concern, because civic engagement is closely linked to the destiny of democratic institutions. As he says, "institutions (and not only in America) are indeed powerfully influenced by norms and networks of civic engagement" (Putnam 1995: 66). Contrary to theorists who underline the performance of democracy, Putnam argues that declining trust in the American political system cannot be explained by unsuccessful decision-making by politicians alone. Instead, he says that "democracy depends on social capital" (Putnam 2000: 505), and he argues that declining trust in the U.S. is to be explained by the fact that "American social capital in the form of civic association has significantly eroded over the last generation" (*Ibid.,*: 287).

When it comes to the role of civil society and people's engagement with the political system, the question of Western ethnocentrism again becomes relevant. The concept of civil society and the normative implications of applying it is highly debated and by many it is regarded as a purely Western concept, which cannot be directly translated to fit a non-western context. Philip Oxhorn, in his 2011 book "Sustaining Civil Society", provides us with a sum-up of the different positions; at one end of the spectrum, we find scholars such as Chambers and Kymlicka (2002) and Ehrenberg (1999), who argue that civil society should be considered present to a greater or lesser degree in almost all social contexts. At the other end of the spectrum, Hann (1996), Seligman (1992) and others argue that the concept is "so normatively and historically determined by the experience of Western Europe and the United States that it is almost impossible to find in other contexts" (Oxhorn 2011: 8). Oxhorn himself presents his

understanding of civil society as a collectivist one – focusing on the power structures that exists in the interaction between the political system and the people it represents (*Ibid.,*: 9). This paper applauds the usefulness of a context-specific understanding of civil society when it comes to representation of people's interest and the broader role of civil society organizations to the political system. It disagrees, however, when it comes to the understanding that there is something inherently problematic in applying individualistic understandings of civil society to a non-western context. Individual perceptions or attitudes are (for the most part) equally relevant in countries of Western and non-Western descent, and stating otherwise is a denial of the fact that modernization, with its set of individual rights and obligations has to a high extent taken root in many non-western societies – including Honduras. As such, in its focus on civic engagement, this paper centres on the individual, and thus places itself closer to the liberal or Lockean perspective than the collectivist understandings of civil society.

Summing op – a theory of civic culture

Just as it seems logical that democratic institutions gain trust by performing well in economic and political terms, it also seems plausible that such trust is related to the civic culture, and the degree to which citizens participate in society. As we have seen, several studies provide empirical support for this latter argument. These studies share one main characteristic, namely that culture - and not performance - serves to explain levels of trust in democracy and its institutions. Robert Inglehart brilliantly sums up this position, when he states that "even when democracy has no reply to the question, *what have you done for me lately?* it may be sustained by diffuse feelings that it is an inherently good thing" (Inglehart 1988: 1205). Applying this theoretical framework to the Honduran case, we should thus expect to find a strong relation between young people's civic engagement and social capital and the level of trust they designate to democratic institutions.

This chapter has presented two distinct theoretical perspectives on what explains people's trust in democratic institutions – one emphasizing performance perception and the other civic culture. In the analytical chapter, these two theoretical frames will be treated as independent variables, in order to examine and compare their explanatory power when it comes to determining the decreasing trust in democratic institutions among youth in Honduras. Before that, an operationalization of the two concepts is necessary in order to turn them into measurable entities.

Operationalization

The first hypothesis, which will be tested, states that "performance perception determines level of trust in democratic institutions". Performance perception is measured on two arenas; economic and political. Regarding economic performance, three indicators will be used to measure Honduran youth's perception of economic performance: (1) satisfaction with service delivery, (2) view of personal economic situation, and (3) evaluation of opportunity to find work. Likewise, regarding political performance perception, three indicators are applied: (1) evaluation of citizen security, (2) evaluation of progress in reducing corruption, and (3) approval of government management. Together, these six indicators constitute the first hypothesis, pertaining to democratic performance perception.

The second hypothesis, which will be tested, states that "civic culture determines level of trust in democratic institutions". Civic culture is likewise measured on two arenas; civic engagement and social capital. In the first case, three indicators will be used to measure Honduran youth's civic engagement: (1) participation in civic organizations, (2) interest in news, and (3) engagement in talks about politics with friends. In a similar fashion, political capital will be measured on three indicators: (1) the degree to which politics is considered complicated, (2) interpersonal trust, and (3) level of satisfaction with life. Together, these six indicators constitute the second hypothesis, pertaining to civic culture. Figure 4 provides an overview of the two hypotheses and their corresponding indicators.

Figure 4. "Overview of hypotheses and indicators"

H_1 Performance perception determines level of trust in democratic institutions

Economic Performance Perception

H_1I_1 Satisfaction with service delivery
H_1I_2 View of personal economic situation
H_1I_3 Evaluation of opportunity to find work

Political Performance Perception

H_1I_4 Evaluation of citizen security
H_1I_5 Evaluation of progress in reducing corruption
H_1I_6 Approval of government management

H_2 Civic culture determines level of trust in democratic institutions

Civic Engagement

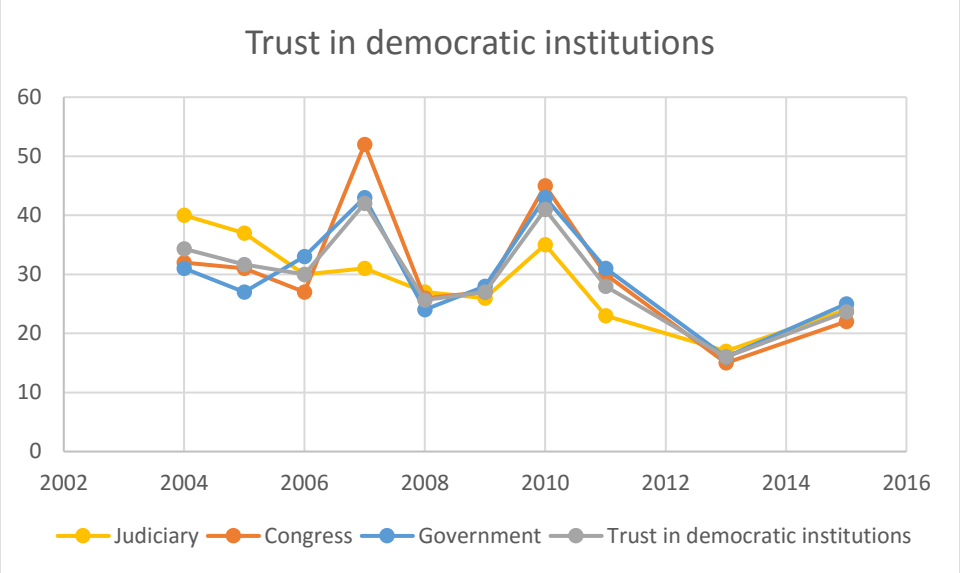
H_2I_1 Participation in civic organizations
H_2I_2 Interest in news
H_2I_3 Engagement in talks about politics with friends

Social Capital

H_2I_4 Degree to which politics is considered complicated
H_2I_5 Interpersonal trust
H_2I_6 Level of satisfaction with life

In order to test the two variables, developments on each of the indicators over a 10-year period from 2005 to 2015 will be compared with developments in democratic trust in the same period. This will allow us to determine whether or not a correlation exists between each of the variables and the dependent variable. As mentioned earlier, the three institutions which will be included are; Government, Congress and Judiciary. An aggregate curve chart is created in which youth's trust in each of these institutions is combined. As we can see in Figure 5, this is possible due to the closely resembling developments on each of the curves.

Figure 5. "Aggregate curve chart of Honduran youth's trust in democratic institutions 2004-2015"



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After this operationalization, where the two theoretical frames have been translated into two distinct measurable variables, the methodological framework on which the analysis can build is now established. In the following chapter, these two variables will be applied to the selected case in order to test the validity of their argumentation and their explanatory power when it comes to answering why Honduran youth do not trust their democratic institutions.

Analysis: Empirical chapter

After establishing the methodological and theoretical foundation, the framework needed to conduct an analysis is in place. This chapter will test the two delimited variables against the Honduran case in order to examine and compare their relative explanatory power.

Hypothesis 1:
Performance perception determines the level of trust in democratic institutions

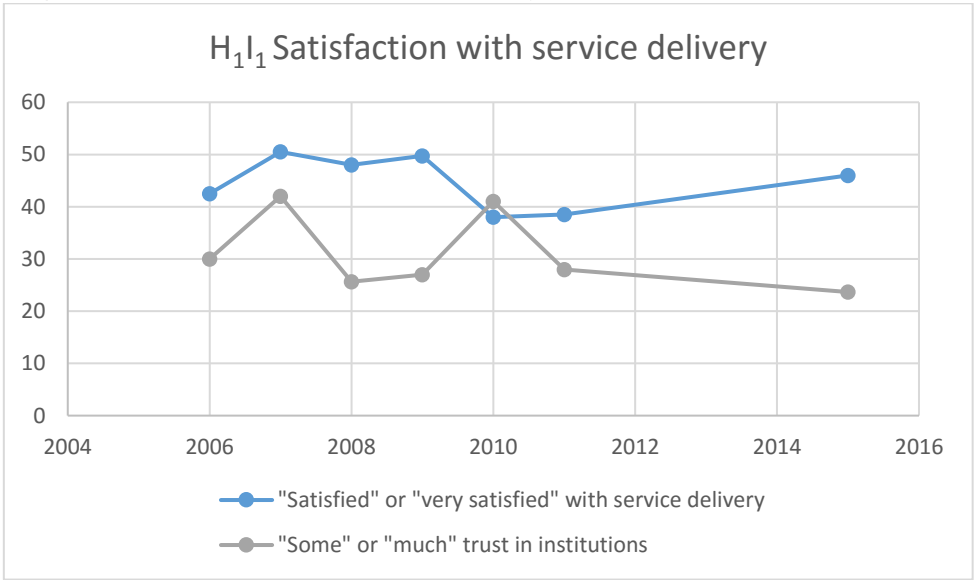
The first independent variable which will be tested is "performance perception". In order to examine the link between the way Honduran youth perceive of regime performance and the level of trust they convey to democratic institutions, we will look at trends regarding economic and political performance perception, respectively.

Economic performance

H_1I_1	Satisfaction with service delivery
H_1I_2	View of personal economic situation
H_1I_3	Evaluation of opportunity to find work

In the following, three curve charts will be presented, containing each of the three indicators which together constitute economic performance perception; satisfaction with service delivery, view of personal economic situation, and evaluation of opportunity to find work.

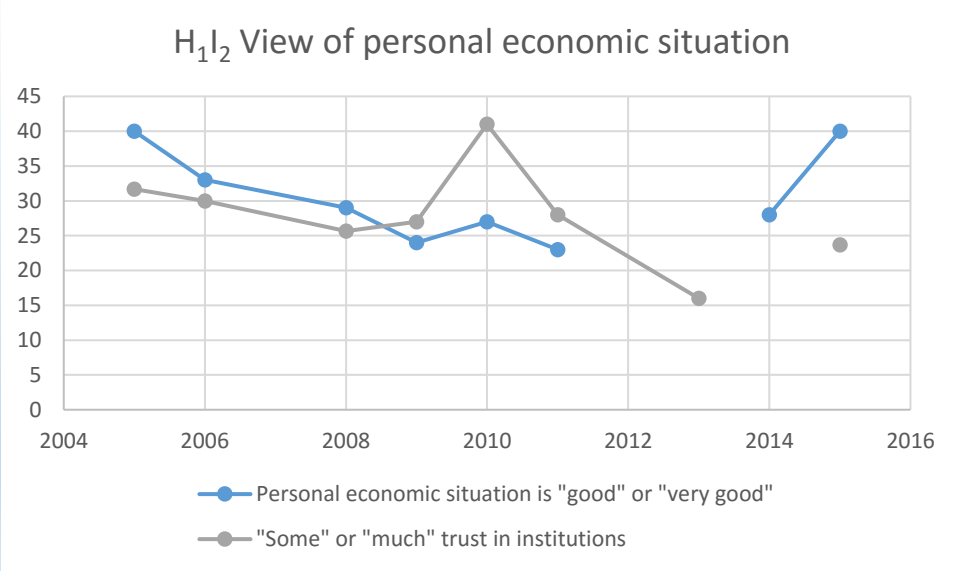
Figure 6a. "Satisfaction with service delivery"



Data retrieved from www.latinobarometro.org, 23/06/2016

Regarding the first indicator, "satisfaction with service delivery", no consistent correlation can be observed between youth's satisfaction with service delivery and the level of trust they confer to democratic institutions. Looking at the period from 2006 to 2009, changes on the two curves do seem to follow a somewhat similar pattern, where higher numbers of youth satisfied with service delivery are followed by increased levels of institutional trust, and lower numbers of youth satisfied with service delivery are similarly followed by lower levels of trust. In example, the number of youth satisfied with service delivery increased from 42.5 percent in 2006 to 50.5 percent in 2007, followed by an increase from 30 to 42 percent in the level of institutional trust. From 2010 and onward, however, the picture is reversed. Whereas the number of youth who are satisfied with service delivery increases from 2010 to 2015, going from 38 percent in 2010 to 38.5 in 2011 and 46 percent in 2015, conversely there is a sharp decrease in the number of youth who trust in institutions, going from 41 percent in 2010 to 28 percent in 2011 and to 23.7 percent in 2015. As such, when looking at service delivery, it appears that no correlation can be identified between economic performance perception and levels of institutional trust.

Figure 6b. "View of personal economic situation"



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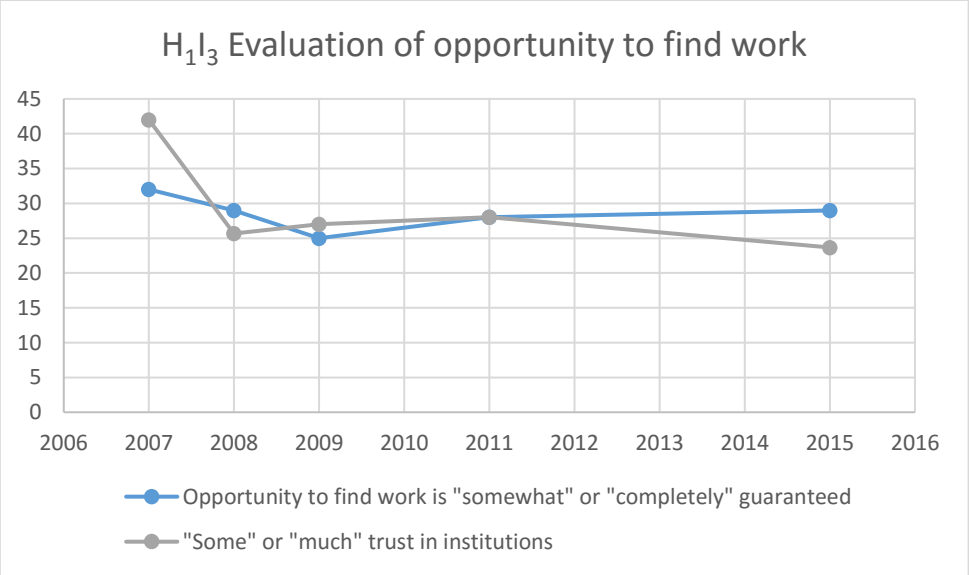
Looking at the second indicator, "view of personal economic situation", a closer connection with institutional trust can be observed, although it is not entirely constant during the period. From 2005 to 2008, a decreasing number of youth evaluate their personal economic situation positively. In 2005, 40 percent viewed their situation as "good" or "very good", whereas the number in 2006 was 33 percent and 29 percent in 2008. In the same period, trust in democratic institutions decreased after a similar

pattern, going from 32 percent in 2005 to 30 percent in 2006 and 26 percent in 2008. Between 2008 and 2009 we see an opposing pattern, where trust in institutions increases marginally, although the personal economic situation is viewed increasingly negatively. From 2009 to 2011, changes in perception of economic situation are followed by comparable changes in institutional trust. Variations are however much greater in the latter case, where numbers fluctuate from 27 percent in 2009, over 41 percent in 2010 to 28 percent in 2011. The corresponding numbers regarding view of personal economic situation are 24 percent (2009), 27 percent (2010), and 23 percent (2011). From 2011 and onwards, we lack consistent data, and it is difficult to deduct whether or not a meaningful correlation exists, although it could seem like an increase in the number of youth who evaluate their economic situation positively is followed by an increase in institutional trust. Thus, when it comes to perception of personal economic situation, only a weak correlation can be identified between economic performance perception and levels of institutional trust.

Figure 6c. "Evaluation of opportunity to find work"



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Concerning the third indicator, "evaluation of opportunity to find work", no consistent correlation can be detected. From 2007 to 2008, a minor decline can be detected in the number of youth who have a positive view of their opportunity to find work, going from 32 to 29 percent. Meanwhile, the number of youth who trust in democratic institutions was almost halved, going from 42 percent to 25.7 percent in 2008. From 2008 to 2009, the two curves show opposite trends, with continued decline in the number of youth who positively evaluate their opportunities of finding work, which is reduced to 25 percent, and a marginal increase in institutional trust, going to 27 percent. From 2009 to 2011, both

curves demonstrate small, insignificant increases. From 2011 to 2015, the number of youth who state that the opportunity to find work is "somewhat" or "completely" guaranteed, remains stable, increasing only one percentage point from 28 to 29 percent. In the same period, the equivalent number of youth who trust in democratic institutions goes down from 28 to 23.7 percent. All in all, the two curves seem to develop independently of each other, and the few examples of sporadic convergence must be considered coincidental.

Sum-up

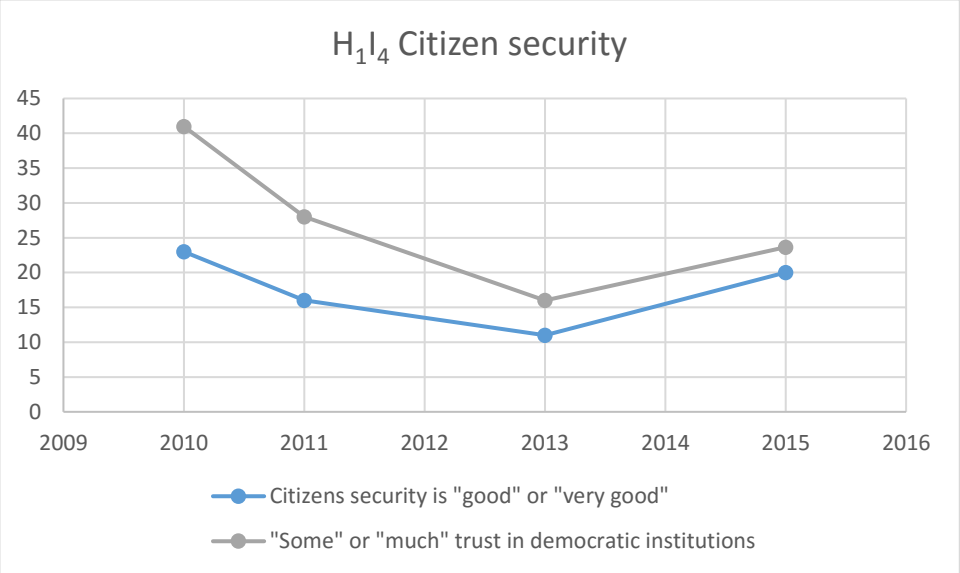
To recap, when looking at the three indicators that together constitute economic performance, no clear link with institutional trust can be observed. Whereas a weak link can be detected regarding the way youth perceive of their personal economic situation, this is not the case when it comes to their evaluation of service delivery and job opportunities. Economic performance perception thus cannot explain why youth do not trust in democratic institutions.

Political performance

H_1I_4	Evaluation of citizen security
H_1I_5	Evaluation of progress in reducing corruption
H_1I_6	Approval of government management

After analysing trends in economic performance, the next section deals with the second component of democratic performance, related to political performance. Here, the three curve charts presented will be; evaluation of citizen security, evaluation of progress in reducing corruption, and approval of government management.

Figure 7a. "Evaluation of citizen security"



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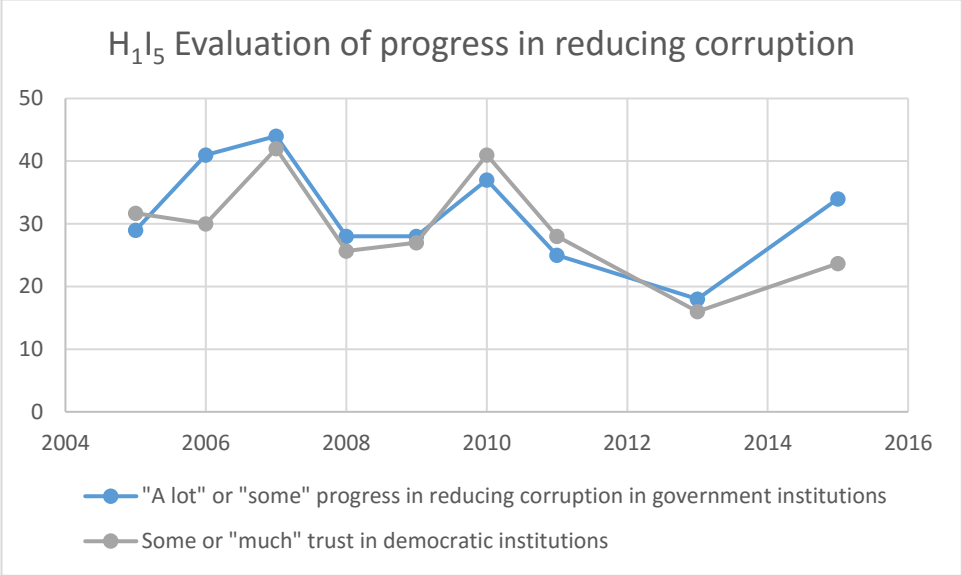
Looking at the first indicator, "evaluation of citizen security", a strong correlation appears to exist between the number of youth who characterize their society as safe and the number of youth who trust in democratic institutions. From 2010 to 2011 we can observe a comparable decline on the two curves. In 2010, 23 percent state that citizen security is either "good" or "very good", whereas the number drops to 16 percent in 2011. Similarly, the number of youth who have "some" or "much" trust in institutions goes markedly down, from 41 percent in 2010 to 28 percent in 2011. The following two years, the decline continues on both curves, in both cases at a lower rate. In the case of citizen security numbers go from 16 to 11 percent, and in the case of institutional trust from 28 to 16 percent. From 2013 to 2015, both perceptions of citizen security and institutional trust go up once more, again at a more or less identical pace. The number of youth who are positive of the level of citizen security thus increases 9 percent, to a total of 20 percent, the number of youth trusting in institutions increases 8.7 percent, to 23.7 percent. As such, it seems plausible to say that a very strong, and almost perfect, correlation exists between how secure youth feel and how much they trust their democratic institutions. However, it is important to note that citizen security has only been measured from 2010 to 2015. The trends observed are thus based on a somewhat limited data material, which should be reflected in the strength we convey to our conclusion.

Figure 7b. "Evaluation of progress in reducing corruption"



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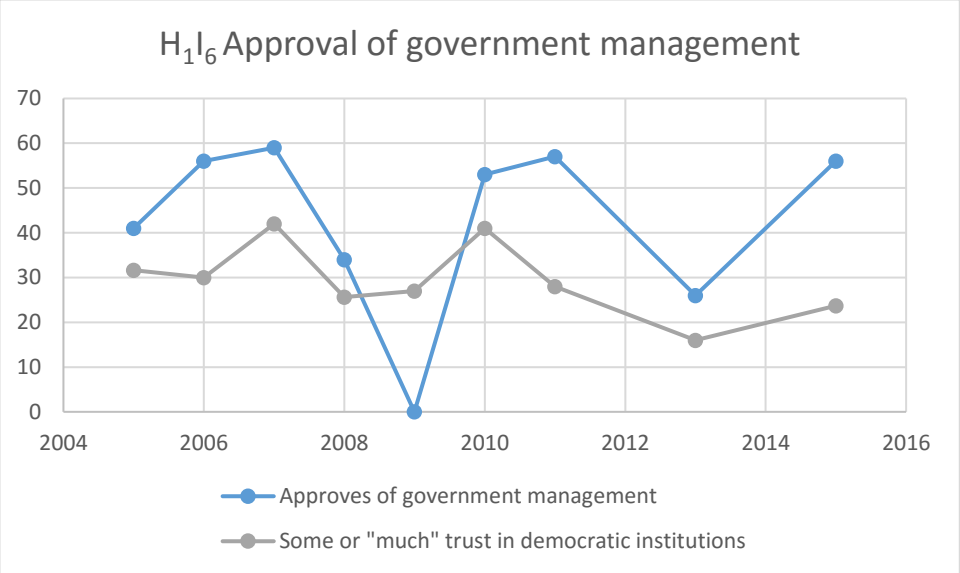
When it comes to the second indicator of political performance, "evaluation of progress in reducing corruption", an analytically interesting pattern reveals itself. Except from 2005 to 2006, developments on the two curves seem to follow the exact same pattern during the entire period from 2005 to 2015, with positive evaluations of the progress in reducing corruption resulting in increases in numbers of youth expressing trust in democratic institutions, and, conversely, negative evaluations of the progress in reducing corruption followed by declining numbers of youth expressing trust in democratic institutions. Looking first at the exception, from 2005 to 2006, we can observe an increase from 29 to 41 percent in the number of youth stating that they observe "some" or "a lot" of reduction of corruption. This increase is not reflected in the numbers of youth who trust democratic institutions, which declines slightly from 31.7 percent to 30. From 2006 and onwards, however, we see a completely different picture. From 2006 to 2007, a slightly higher number of youth, 44 percent, evaluate anti-corruption efforts positively, and trust in institutions increases to a corresponding level, reaching 42 percent. From here on, the two curves develop almost identically, with only minor differences from year to year (2008: 28 vs. 25.7 percent; 2009: 28 vs. 27 percent; 2010: 37 vs. 41 percent; 2011: 25 vs. 28 percent; 2013: 18 vs. 16 percent; 2015: 34 vs. 23.7 percent). Considering these figures, it appears that a very strong empirical link exists between how youth evaluate the system's performance against corruption, and the level of trust they admit to the system.

Figure 7c. "Approval of government management"



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When it comes to the third and final indicator of political performance, "approval of government management", the above picture is sustained, although the correlation observed here, is much less straight-forward than was the case above. As can be observed in figure 7c, youth's satisfaction with government management fluctuates greatly over the 10-year period in question with high approval ratings in 2007 (59 percent), 2011 (57 percent), and 2015 (56 percent), and very low approval ratings in 2008 (34 percent), 2009 (0 percent!), and 2013 (26 percent). Here it is worth noting, that youth seem to have reacted strongly against the actions of the 2009-administration led by Manuel Zelaya, whereas approval rates increase drastically in the aftermath of the coup d'état. When comparing these trends to the simultaneous changes in levels of democratic trust, we see some similarity in development patterns. As in the case of approval of government management, the number of youth who trust in democratic institutions increases from 2006 (30 percent) to 2007 (42 percent) and decreases from 2007 to 2008 (25.7 percent). From 2008 to 2009, however, whereas approval ratings drop significantly, we can observe a surprising increase in the number of youth who trust in institutions. Normally, this would lead us to conclude, that no correlation exists. However, considering the fact that youth, according to this chart, reacted extremely negatively to the politics of president Zelaya, and seem to place themselves on the side that see his ousting as the right option, it is possible to interpret the simultaneous increase in institutional trust as a sign that, in this case, the democratic institutions are perceived to function well. While it is important not to over-interpret the circumstances around the event, it does seem a likely explanation and should not be ruled out. This is especially the case, in the light that, for the rest of the period we see a strong correlation between the two curves. Thus, when

taking into account, the specific characteristics of governing around 2009, it appears that a close link exists between the number of youth who approve of government management and the number of youth who trust in democratic institutions.

Sum-up

To sum-up, combining the above trends on the three indicators that together constitute political performance, it seems plausible to conclude that a strong link with institutional trust appears to exist. Indicator 1, "evaluation of citizen security" and indicator 2, "evaluation of progress in reducing corruption" both show very strong correlation. Indicator 3, "approval of government management", shows a more ambiguous relation, which is however strengthened when we inculcate the specific circumstances surrounding the coup d'état in 2009. According to the empirical data, political performance perception can thus explain a decrease in the level of trust in democratic institutions among youth.

Hypothesis 2:
Civic culture determines the level of trust in democratic institutions

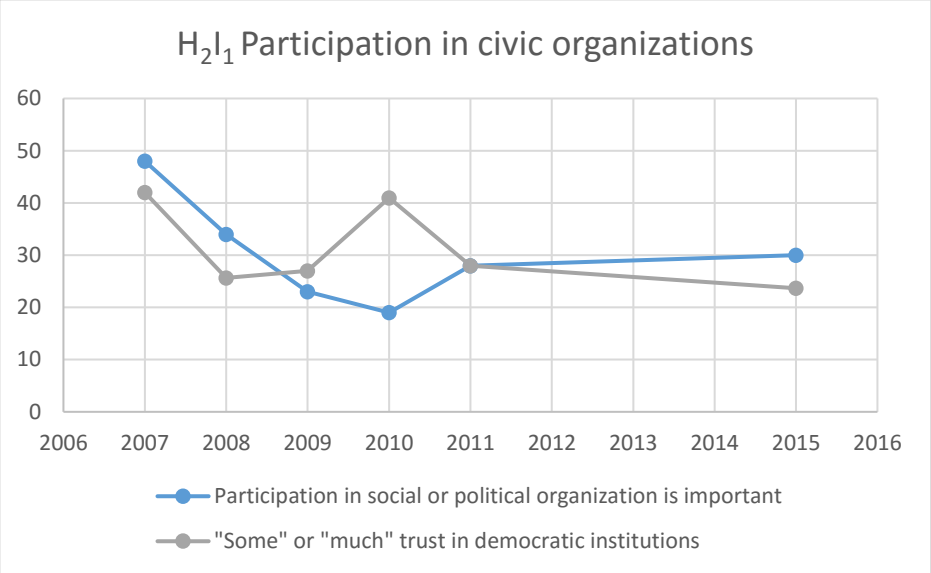
The second independent variable which will be tested is "civic culture". In order to examine the link between the civic culture among Honduran youth and the level of trust they convey to democratic institutions, we will look at trends regarding their civic engagement and social capital.

As was the case above, in the following, three curve charts will be presented, each representing one of the three indicators which together constitute civic engagement; participation in civic associations, interest in news, and engagement in talks about politics with friends.

Civic engagement

H_2I_1	Participation in civic organizations
H_2I_2	Interest in news
H_2I_3	Engagement in talks about politics with friends

Figure 8a. "Participation in civic organizations"



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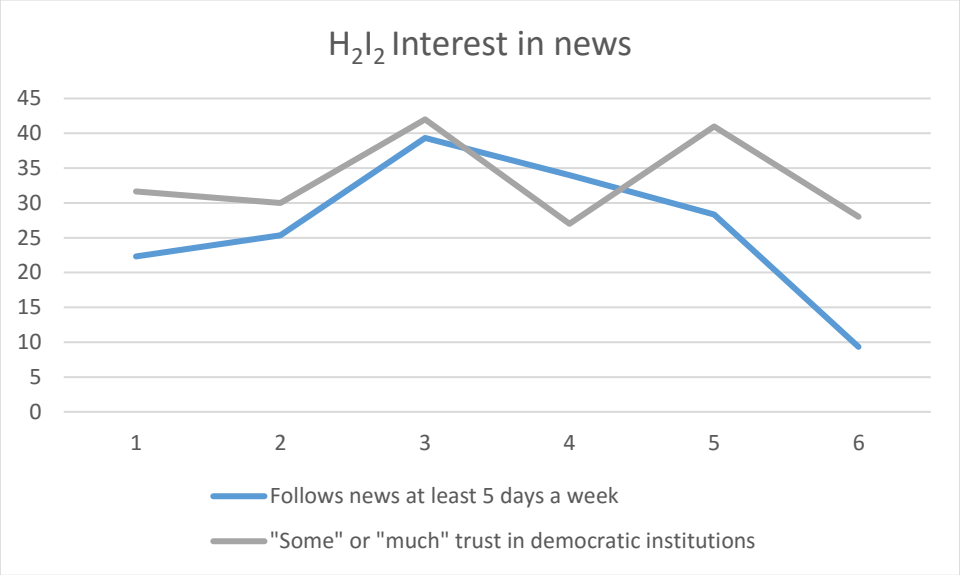
Regarding the first indicator of civic engagement, "participation in civic organizations", it is important to note, that no data on actual participatory patterns of youth exists. What is measured here is instead the level to which youth find such participation to be important. From 2007 to 2008, the two curves follow the same pattern. The number of youth who find civic participation important drops from 48 to 34 percent, whereas the number of youth who trust in democratic institutions drops from 42 to 25.7 percent. The rest of the period, however, we find diverging patterns, where developments on the two curves consistently contradict each other. While the number of youth who find participation important continues to drop the two following years, reaching 23 percent in 2009 and 19 percent in 2010, we find the opposite trend in their levels of institutional trust. In 2009, 27 percent state that they have "some" or "much" trust in democratic institutions, and in 2010, the equivalent number is 41 percent. From 2010 to 2011, a renewed interest in civic participation can be observed, as numbers increase from 19 to 28 percent. Oppositely, the same year the level of trust decreases to 28 percent. During the last four years of the period, a slow increase in the number of youth who find participation important can be detected, but this fails to translate into more institutional trust, with numbers decreasing gradually until 2015, where they reach their lowest point, with only 23.7 percent of youth trustful of democratic institutions. All in all, no correlation appears to exists between participation in civic organizations and level of trust in democratic institutions.

Figure 8b. "Interest in news"



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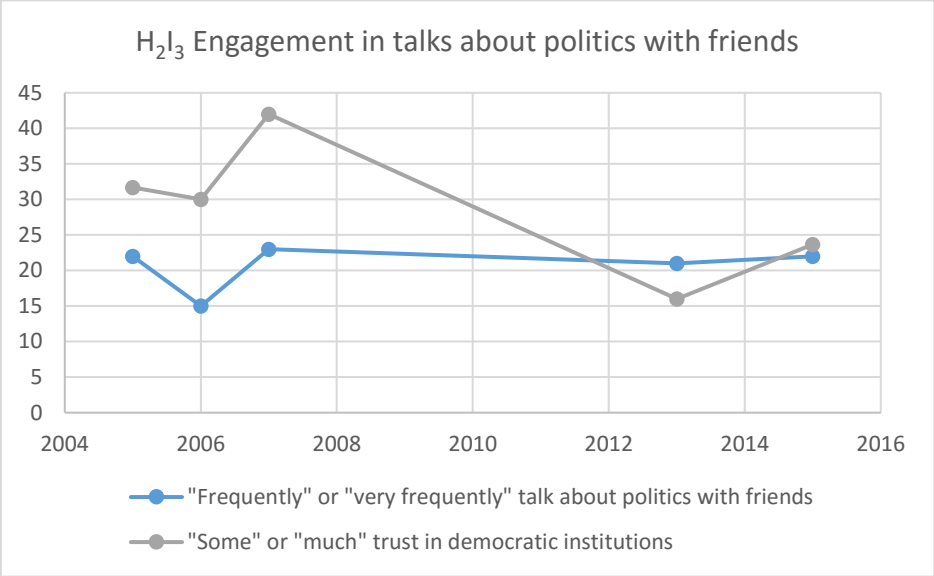
The second indicator, "interest in news", measures the number of youth who follow the news at least 5 days a week, either through television or radio broadcasts or by reading it in a newspaper. Here, we can observe no consistent correlation to the level of trust in democratic institutions. From 2005 to 2006, there is a slight increase in the number of youth who show a high level of interest in news, increasing from 22.3 percent to 25.3 percent. The same year, a slight decrease can be observed in the number of youth who trust in democratic institutions, going from 31.7 to 30 percent. From 2006 to 2007, both curves increase significantly, going from 25.4 to 39.3 percent and from 20 to 42 percent, respectively. However, from 2007 to 2011, the two curves demonstrate opposing trends. In the case of news interest, during this period, a gradual decline takes place in the number of very news-interested youth, going from 39.3 percent in 2007, over 34 percent in 2009, 28.3 percent in 2010 and as low as 9.3 percent in 2011. In the same period, the number of youth who trust in democratic institutions fluctuates, decreasing from 42 percent in 2007 to 27 percent in 2009, and increasing to 41 percent in 2010, after which it again decreases to 28 percent in 2011. In conclusion, the level of trust Honduran youth admit to democratic institutions seems to have no connection to whether or not they follow the news.

Figure 8c. "Engagement in talks about politics with friends"



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The third indicator of civic engagement measures the level of "engagement in talks about politics with friends". As was the case with the second indicator, here, figures are also rather inconclusive. While a correlation can be observed in some periods, in others it does not seem plausible as trends go in opposite directions. From 2005 to 2007, an almost identical development on the two curves can be observed. From 2005 to 2006, the number of youth "frequently" or "very frequently" talking about politics with their friends decreases from 22 to 15 percent. In 2007 it goes back up to 23 percent. In a similar fashion, the corresponding number of youth who state that they trust in democratic institutions drops from 31.7 percent in 2005 to 31 percent in 2006, after which it increases to 42 percent in 2007. From 2007 to 2015 we see the opposite trend. While the tendency to discuss political matters with friends stays almost entirely stable throughout the period, ranging only from 21 to 23 percent, we see a very significant drop in support for democratic institutions from 42 percent in 2007 to 16 percent in 2013, followed by an increase to 23.7 percent in 2015. Thus, although developments in the first part of the period lead us toward concluding in favour of a correlation, when looking at the overall picture including numbers from the last period, it becomes clear that no relation between the two curves can be discerned.

Sum-up

When taken together, the results on the three indicators constituting civic engagement are consistent in showing no correlation with trust in democratic institutions. Whereas some examples of convergence could be find on indicator 3, "engagement in talks about politics with friends", indicator 1, "participation

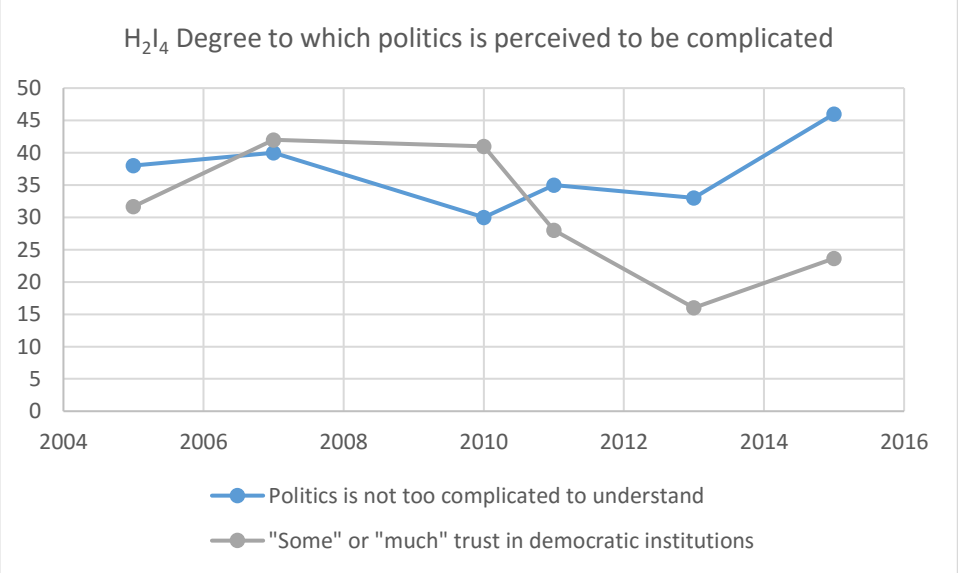
in civic organizations" and indicator 2, "interest in news" show absolutely no empirical association. Civic engagement thus cannot explain why youth do not trust in democratic institutions.

Social capital

H_2I_4	Degree to which politics is perceived to be complicated
H_2I_5	Interpersonal trust
H_2I_6	Level of satisfaction with life

After analysing trends in civic engagement, the next section deals with the second component of civic culture, related to social capital. Here, the three curve charts presented will be; the degree to which politics is perceived to be complicated, interpersonal trust, and the level of satisfaction with life.

Figure 9a. "Degree to which politics is perceived to be complicated"



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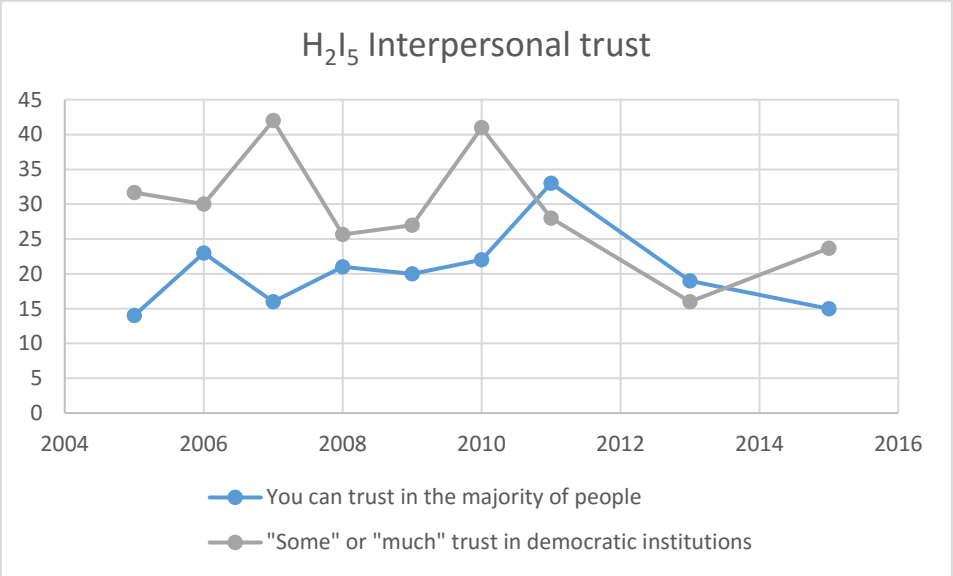
Regarding the first indicator of social capital, "degree to which politics is perceived to be complicated", it is possible to identify some correlation with the level of trust in democratic institutions. The correlation is, however, weak and somewhat inconsistent. From 2005 to 2007 a slight increase can be observed in the number of youth who find that politics are not too complicated to understand, going from 38 to 40 percent. In the same period, the number of youth who trust in democratic institutions increases markedly, going from 31.7 to 42 percent. In the following period, from 2007 to 2010, both curves decrease, but whereas institutional trust only decreases one percentage point, the number of youth finding politics not too complicated, drops ten percentage points. In the following year,

developments on the two curves diverge, with increases on the former and decline on the latter. From 2011 to 2013 and again from 2013 to 2015, however, they return to similar trajectories. In 2011, 35 percent of youth find politics not too complicated, while this number falls to 33 percent in 2013 and then increases to 46 percent in 2015. Similarly, whereas, in 2011, 28 percent of youth trust in democratic institutions, the number goes down to 16 percent in 2013, after which it grows to 23.7 percent in 2015. Overall, although, in some periods, figures on the two curves do increase or decrease simultaneously, in most cases the volume of these fluctuations are very different. This leads us to conclude, that, in this case, no significant correlation can be distinguished based on the empirical evidence.

Figure 9b. "Interpersonal trust"



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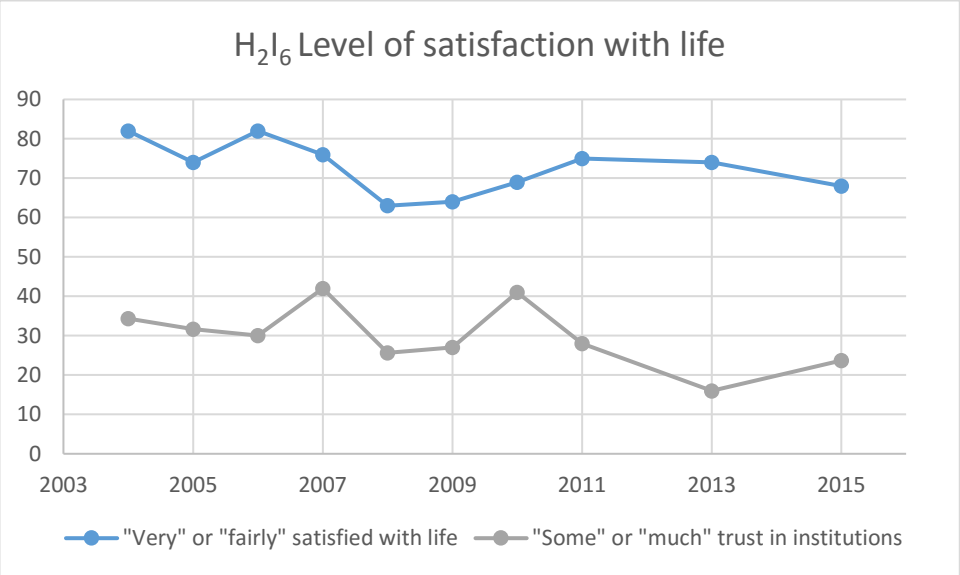
Turning to the second indicator of social capital, "interpersonal trust", we reach a similar conclusion. From 2005 to 2006, the number of youth who feel that they can trust the majority of people grows from 14 to 23 percent. Meanwhile, the number of youth who trust in democratic institutions drops slightly from 31.7 to 30 percent. In the following year, trends on both curves are reversed. While interpersonal trust decreases to 16 percent in 2007, institutional trust on the other hand increases to 42 percent. In 2008 tables are turned once again with more youth expressing trust in persons and less youth expressing trust in institutions. It is possible to detect positive empirical association only in two intervals – between 2009 and 2010, and between 2011 and 2013. In the first case, a small increase in the number of youth who find the majority of people trustworthy (2 percentage points) is followed by a great increase in the level of institutional trust (14 percentage points). In the second case

interpersonal trust declines from 33 to 19 percent, whereas institutional trust drops from 28 to 16 percent. Based on these observations, it seems reasonable to disclaim that the level of interpersonal trust can explain why youth have low trust in democratic institutions. Interestingly, until 2009, the two curves demonstrate almost perfect reversed developments, implying that, anti-thetically to our hypothesis, lower levels of interpersonal trust should somehow lead to higher levels of institutional trust. This seems highly illogical, however, and is also rejected based on the trajectories in the following years.

Figure 9c. "Level of satisfaction with life"



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Whereas observations on the two first indicators have left us with a clear impression that no correlation exists between social capital and institutional trust, the third and final indicator of social capital, "level of satisfaction with life" provides us with a slightly more nuanced picture. In four cases we can observe a positive correlation. From 2004 to 2005 we see a decline in number of positive statements both when it comes to life satisfaction and trust in democratic institutions. Whereas the former decreases from 82 to 74 percent, the latter decreases from 34.4 to 31.7 percent. From 2007 to 2008 both curves decrease dramatically, life satisfaction going from 76 to 63 percent and institutional trust from 42 to 25.6 percent. From 2008 to 2010, both curves go up – from 2008 to 2009 following a similar trajectory, whereas from 2009 to 2010 the increase is much greater in the level of institutional trust. From 2011 to 2013 both curves decline, the number of youth considering themselves satisfied with life only marginally, going from 75 to 74 percent, and the level of institutional trust dropping from 28 to 16 percent. Conversely, in the periods from 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 20010-2011, and 2013-2015, opposing trends can be observed on the two curves. Most spectacular are the differences experienced

from 2006 to 2007 and from 2010 to 2011. From 2006 to 2007, the number of youth who state that they are "very" or "fairly" satisfied with life declines from 82 to 76 percent, while the number of youth who have "some" or "much" trust in democratic institutions increases from 30 to 42 percent. From 2010 to 2011, the former increases from 69 and 75 percent, whereas the latter declines from 41 and 28 percent. To recap, although some examples of convergence can be detected, it is too inconsistent to conclude that any correlation exists between the level of satisfaction with life and the level of trust in democratic institutions.

Sum-up

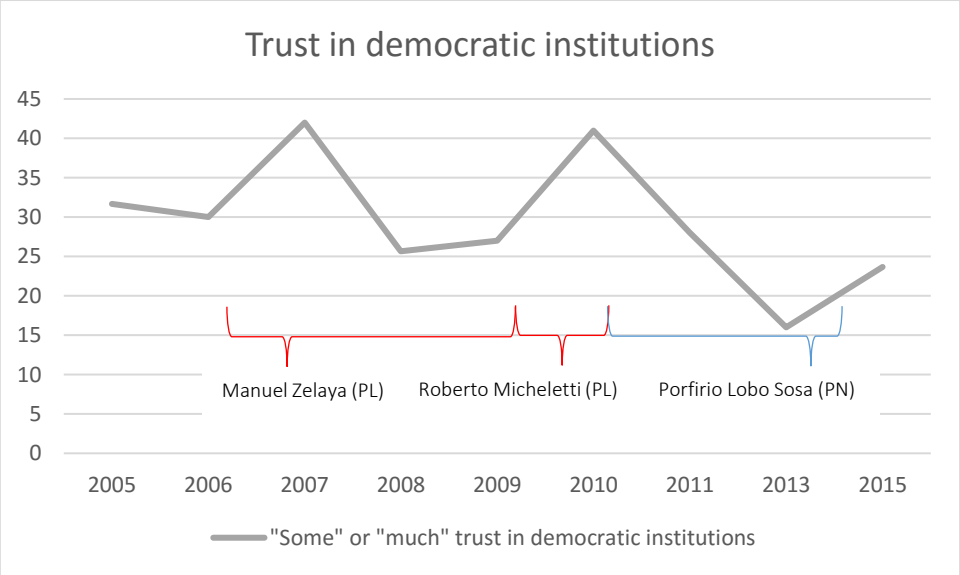
Compiling the results on the three indicators listed above leaves us with a quite unambiguous picture, showing no consistent correlation between social capital and institutional trust. Based on this, we can conclude that the level of social capital among youth in Honduras does not determine their level of trust in democratic institutions and that recent declines in levels of institutional trust cannot be explained by decline in social capital.

When looking at results from over-time developments in public opinion, it appears that political performance, as the only of the four variables examined above, can explain why youth have low trust in democratic institutions. However, before concluding definitively on the explanatory power of this variable, a closer cross-examination of the results will serve to strengthen the findings. In the following, a qualitative analysis based on a literary review will be conducted in order to test the validity of the argument that political performance perception determines the level of trust youth have in democratic institutions. Adding a qualitative perspective to the quantitative analysis conducted above will serve to inform our analysis and enhance the validity of its findings.

Literature review: political performance

As suggested by William Mishler and Richard Rose, when examining regime performance, and in this case political performance, a good approach can be to "compare the current against the older regime, since this provides a common standard" (Mishler and Rose in Norris 1999: 6-7). However, when looking at figure 10, we can observe that the level of trust is not contingent on party alignment, as the two periods of greatest decline in trust (2007-2008 and 2010-2013) took place during a Liberal and National administration, respectively. Therefore, instead of comparing the performance of individual governments, we will examine the political developments during the period in which we see the greatest and most consistent deterioration in institutional trust among youth in Honduras – the period from 2010 to 2013.

Figure 10. "Trust in democratic institutions under different administrations 2006 – 2014"



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After the coup d'état in 2009, and the end of the interim 6-months government led by Vice-president and member of the Liberal Party (PL), Roberto Micheletti, Porfirio Lobo Sosa from the National Party (PN) was elected president on January 27th 2010. Lobo was in power from 2010 to 2014, including the three years of extreme decline in trust among Honduran youth. According to the hypothesis, we should be able to observe significant deterioration in the political performance in the period from 2010 to 2013.

The literary sources available characterize the period from 2010 to 2013 as a period of increasing levels of crime and a general worsening of the security situation. After a period with a softer policy approach towards criminal and security issues under the administrations of Zelaya and Micheletti, President Lobo reinstated the hard-line strategy focusing on Mano Dura politics and militarization of the public sphere (Carvajal 2014: 17). As we saw in one of the first chapters of this paper, crime rates have been on the rise during the entire period from 2006, under liberal as well as nationalist governments. However, during the Lobo administration, the situation deteriorated at an alarming rate, with crime rates reaching an unprecedented high point in 2011, where 91 intentional homicides were recorded per 100.000 people (www.data.worldbank.org, 17/07/2016). It was during this period, Honduras received its name as the world's murder capital. According to Peter Meyer, although the Lobo-administration "adopted a number of policy reforms designed to address these challenges, conditions did not improve". On the contrary, "the poor security and human rights situation in Honduras continued to deteriorate under President Lobo" (Meyer 2014: 494). In spite of a very strong focus on public security, the government during this period thus did not manage to improve or even halt, the spiral of violence which spun out of control.

According to Lirio Gutiérrez Rivera, not only did the levels of violence increase, but the character of violence changed as a new wave of political violence saw the light of day aimed at LGBT, human rights activists and political opponents as well as members of youth associations (Rivera 2013: 1999). Several authors have observed the same, highlighting the period as especially detrimental because of the increase in human rights violations. 2010 appears to have been particularly grim, with a number of examples; on August 13, police attacked peaceful demonstrators in Choloma with tear gas; on August 26 and 27, teachers protesting in Tegucigalpa were attacked in a similar fashion; and on September 17, Juana Bustillo, a leader in the social security workers' union was shot and killed (Frank 2010: 1). With nine journalists critical of the government killed in the first months of 2010 alone, James Bosworth concludes that, in that year, Honduras was "one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists" (Bosworth 2010: 18). Bosworth furthermore mentions "the government's unwillingness to take the investigation of crimes seriously" as a key factor in a worsening situation (*Ibid.,*: 18). In a similar fashion, a report from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) concluded that "the government's ongoing failure to successfully investigate crimes against journalists and other social critics - whether by intention, impotence, or incompetence - has created a climate of pervasive impunity" (www.cpj.org, 21/07/2016). Although the Lobo administration did in fact take some steps to address human rights issues, including the implementation of an investigative unit under the Attorney General and a National Commission on Human Rights (CONADEH) dedicated to investigate and denounce abuses, these

initiatives had little effect and violations continued throughout the period (Bosworth 2010: 26).

The deteriorating situation was also noticed outside of Honduras. Particularly in the US, where the situation was viewed with growing concern by many democrats who were critical of the substantial economic contribution from the US to the hardline policies carried out in Honduras. The subject was several times brought up in the American Congress where these critics pleaded for a halt of American security assistance to Honduras until human rights were guaranteed. Roger Noriega and Javier Lanza, in their study "Honduras Under Siege", give a detailed overview of the North American reactions to the situation in Honduras, providing us with an understanding of the severity of the situation:

- *In May 2011, 87 Democrats in the House of Representatives called on then–secretary of state Hillary Clinton to suspend police and military assistance to Honduras "due to the lack of mechanisms in place to ensure security forces are held accountable for abuses."*
- *Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), then ranking member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, sent two letters, in November 2011 and October 2012, raising questions about US security assistance to Honduras.*
- *In March 2012, seven Democratic senators, led by Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), sent a letter to Clinton reminding her that US security assistance was contingent upon certification that Honduras was doing all it could to prosecute human rights violators.*
- *In January 2013, 58 House Democrats sent a letter to new Secretary of State John Kerry and Attorney General Eric Holder requesting a further investigation of the May 2012 incident at Ahuas.*
- *In March, 94 House Democrats signed a letter sponsored by Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), again calling for a suspension of US security assistance to Honduras.*
- *Finally, on June 17, a group of 21 senators sent a letter to Secretary Kerry asking for a review of aid destined for the Honduran military and police.*

(Noriega and Lanza 2013: 6)

As a result of this pressure and the continued human rights violations, the US administration ended up suspending some of its security programs in Honduras. Instead, some of the funds were diverted to the installment of a purging unit to clean out police officials involved in human rights violations. As then-US Ambassador in the country, Lisa J. Kubiske, hinting at the problematic, stated: "In democracies, police are used to enforce the law and the military is used to protect the borders" (Malkin 2013:1).

Related to the problem of human rights violations is the issue of political integrity. This was a redundant theme throughout the period, with recurring discussions of lacking political impartiality and problems regarding the constitutional separation of powers. In the abovementioned case, many were critical of

the decision to designate Ramón Custodio as head of CONADEH, because of the role Custodio had played during the previous government (Bosworth 2010: 26). Another example is found in the sacking of a judge who opposed a Supreme Court ruling which had the intention of legitimizing the ousting of President Zelaya (*Ibid.,*: 26). These are just two examples of politicizing of the judicial system, which demonstrate inherent problems in the performance of the democratic system.

Likewise, several authors have pointed to the failure of the Lobo regime to deal with the high levels of corruption during the period (Bosworth 2010: 25, Meyer 2014: 494). Although the government initially embarked on a road of institutional reform in an attempt to deal with the widespread corruption across the system, follow-up in terms of actual policy-making was almost non-existing. One example is the establishment of two anti-corruption bodies initiated by the government itself to reform the justice system. In December 2011, The Directorate for the Investigation and Evaluation of the Police Career (DIECP), replaced the ineffective internal affairs unit of the police force (Meyer 2014: 507). In January 2012, another body followed; The Public Security Reform Commission (Comisión de Reforma a la Seguridad Pública, CRSP), with mandate to investigate the police, the public prosecutor's office, and the judiciary, and suggest reforms to strengthen the institutions (*Ibid.,*: 507). Whereas the former body was simply ineffective in creating results, the latter did conduct a series of institutional evaluations on the basis of which, in October 2012, a set of reforms to the police, the public prosecutor's office and the judiciary was proposed. According to Meyer, these recommendations were, however, never taken into account by neither the Lobo administration, nor the Honduran Congress, and thus never resulted in any tangible institutional change (*Ibid.,*: 507).

When looking at the findings from various authors who have dealt with these issues, it is clear that the period from 2010 to 2013 represents a time of serious deterioration in citizen security, human rights and political integrity in Honduras. Concerning citizen security, whether it was an expression of a flawed political strategy or due to a lack of resources, the return to Mano Dura policies proved unsuccessful in controlling rising crime rates in the years after the coup d'état. Similarly, the integrity of the political system took a strong hit during those years, where corruption reached new heights and human rights violations were abundant. While the Lobo government is probably not without blame in this regard, it is important to mention that it is not the argument here that this specific administration bears the entire responsibility for the troublesome situation in Honduras. The historic circumstances no doubt placed the government in a complicated situation, where political instability and growing influence of organized criminal networks made political maneuvering difficult. What is relevant here is that we see a consistent pattern in the political developments during the period in which a large portion of

Honduran youth lost faith in democratic institutions. On all three indicators of political performance; "citizen security", "progress in reducing corruption", and "government management", the findings from this literary review support the findings from the quantitative analysis. This leads us to the conclusion that hypothesis 1, "performance perception determines the level of trust in democratic institutions" is partially sustained. While no pattern can be observed in regards to economic performance, a strong and consistent correlation appears to exist between the way democracy performs on a set of political indicators and the level of trust youth confer to democratic institutions.

Analysis: Implications for theory

After examining the two delimited hypotheses and their relation to the phenomenon of democratic trust, the next section will relate the findings to the theoretical contributions presented in the beginning of the paper in order to answer the problem formulation. The aim here is to discern how the findings of this paper can inform the existing literature on trust in democratic institutions and discuss how this implicates existing theories that shape our understanding of democratic trust.

Towards a focus on political performance

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis stated that "performance perception determines level of trust in democratic institutions". This hypothesis builds on a theoretical frame which assumes that people's perception of the polity's ability to deliver tangible political as well as economic results is the main factor in determining the level of trust they designate to their polity.

Economic performance

As we saw in the theoretical chapter, several authors are in favour of the argument that levels of trust are contingent upon economic performance. Seymour Martin Lipset and William Schneider have found that "confidence levels vary with the state of the economy" (Lipset & Schneider 1987: 5). Espinal et. al. that "evaluation of government services, consistently has one of the most important effects on trust" (Espinal et. al. 2006: 14). And Herbert Kitschelt, that "people's perception of their own and their country's economic situation must be seen as key predictors of democratic support" (Kitschelt in Evans & Whitefield 1995: 487).

In order to test these arguments, developments on three indicators of democratic performance over a

10-year period were compared to simultaneous developments in the level of trust youth have in democratic institutions. Similar to Espinal et. al.'s study, the first indicator looked at young Hondurans' evaluation of service delivery. Whereas Espinal et. al. found a positive correlation between evaluations of service and levels of trust in democratic institutions, this was not what the empirical data showed in the Honduran case. On the contrary, no consistent pattern was observed during the period in question, with levels of trust fluctuating independently of service delivery satisfaction. Testing the argument of Kitschelt, the second indicator looked at youth's perception of their personal economic situation. In contrast to the findings of Kitschelt, when it comes to the way Honduran youth perceive of their personal economic situation only a weak relation to institutional trust could be discerned. We see the same picture when it comes to the third indicator. As with the two first indicators, nothing indicates a link between levels of trust and youth's evaluation of job opportunities.

Political performance

While no correlation could be observed when it comes to economic performance perception, in the case of political performance, we observed a completely different picture. In the theoretical chapter, we saw that some authors have placed political performance at the root of determining democratic trust. Evans and Whitefield argue that "people support democracies because they are seen to work, reflecting respondents' experience of the pay-offs from democracy itself" (Evans & Whitefield 1995: 503). Although they furthermore state that "both economic and political factors are relevant to predicting support for democratic institutions" they go on to conclude that "the indicators of political pay-offs have considerably stronger effects" (*Ibid.,*: 503). Similarly, Espinal et. al. argue that "trust in government institutions is shaped primarily by perceptions of (economic and) political performance" (Espinal et. al. 2006: 1). Regarding the specific subject of corruption, they furthermore find that "perceptions of corruption influence trust consistently over time" (*Ibid.,*: 15).

In line with this, the results of the empirical analysis provide us with a very clear indication that low trust in democratic institutions is indeed rooted in the poor political performance. In the Honduran case, unsuccessful attempts to contain expanding organized criminal networks and an increased presence of less organized street gangs have led to diminishing levels of public security and alarmingly high levels of violence. At the same time, corruption scandals and human rights violations have become part of the everyday picture, with frequent reports of killings of journalists, political activists and human rights activists. Meanwhile, young people feel their society is everyday more dangerous, and they observe a political system incapable of providing them with political leadership characterized by integrity and the ability to deliver change. Based on findings from both the quantitative survey and

qualitative literature review, it can thus be concluded that institutional trust is strongly correlated to the political performance.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis stated that "civic culture determines level of trust in democratic institutions". This hypothesis rests on a theoretical frame which assumes that civic engagement and social capital, together constituting civic culture, are the main determinants when it comes to explaining why youth distrust democratic institutions.

Civic culture

A range of authors have emphasized the effect of an active and participating citizenry as a key factor when it comes to generating trust in democratic institutions. According to Almond and Verba democratic trust is "maintained by active citizen participation in civic affairs, by a high level of information about public affairs, and by a widespread sense of civic responsibility" (Almond and Verba 1989: 9). Putnam has concluded that "the level of civic engagement is a determining factor when it comes to the success of democracy" (Putnam 1995: 66). And, in a similar fashion, Inglehart has found that "democratic institutions seem to depend on enduring cultural traits such as life satisfaction and interpersonal trust" (Inglehart 1988: 1209).

Whereas it is hard to find arguments against the inherently positive aspects of a civic culture in which people are able and willing to participate in society and interact with the political system, the findings of this paper do not point to civic culture as a determining factor of Honduran youths' trust in democratic institutions. When looking at the three first indicators of civic culture, results were consistent in showing no correlation between the youths' level of civic engagement and their trust in democratic institutions. This was the case both when looking at participation in civic organizations, interest in news and engagement in talks about politics with friends. Similar results were found on the three indicators constituting social capital. Neither the degree to which youth perceived politics to be complicated, nor their level of interpersonal trust or satisfaction with life showed any correlation to the level of trust confer to democratic institutions. While it might be true, as Inglehart has argued, that "among the polities of Europe, basic satisfaction with life and political circumstance, and levels of inter-personal trust, are strongly correlated with both the existence of relatively long-lived and stable democratic institutions" (*Ibid.,*: 1207-16), this does not seem to be the case when it comes to the Honduran context. Here, trust in democratic institutions seems to be disconnected from issues of interpersonal trust and satisfaction with life as well as with active civic engagement. Thus, although lack

of civic engagement and social capital might be problematic for many reasons, it does not seem to hold true, as argued by Putnam, that "there is reason to suspect that this democratic disarray may be linked to a broad and continuing erosion of civic engagement". When it comes to trust in democratic institutions, it does not seem crucial to answer the question of "how to reverse these adverse trends in social connectedness, thus restoring civic engagement and civic trust" (Putnam 1995: 76).

Generalizing the results

Whereas the empirical analysis left us with a rather unambiguous result, it is important not to claim too much on the basis of what can be seen as a rather limited empirical foundation. Expanding the empirical foundation through cross-country comparisons or inclusion of more indicators would without doubt have strengthened the validity of the findings. Likewise, critics might address the issue concerning the direction of causality and meaningfully question the blind faith in a specific direction of influence going from respectively, civic culture and democratic performance to levels of trust in democratic institutions. In particular it could be argued that normative support for democracy would tend to induce better performance evaluation, rather than vice versa. Comparing over-time developments on these two variables obviously does not rule out the possibility of reciprocal causality. What strengthens the internal validity of the findings, however, is that a quantitative analysis of survey data and qualitative data based on a literary interview, independent of each other, reached the same conclusion. Whereas the quantitative analysis focusing on youth's perception of performance might be biased by such reciprocal causality, it seems highly unlikely, considering the fact that actual political performance in the period was completely consistent with youth's perception of the situation. Based on methodological triangulation, it thus seems plausible to conclude that institutional trust is a function of political performance, rather than the other way around.

Concerning external validity, the degree to which the findings of this paper can be generalized to other empirical contexts, can likewise be debated. From a methodological perspective, considering that the second hypothesis deals with civic culture, much depends on whether one accepts the liberal or Lockean understanding of civil society proposed here, putting emphasis on the individualistic traits of civil society. Similarly, concerns could arise as to the applicability of a conceptual framework developed in studies of mainly Western societies. Perhaps, this is where the study has most to contribute. Whereas few scholars have dealt with democratic trust in so-called unconsolidated or developing democracies, this study contributes to a recent trend started by Espinal et. al. and others, considering democratic trust outside of a Western context increasingly relevant for academic research. Going a step further, this study has attempted to demonstrate that changes in levels of democratic trust is not necessarily a

one-size-fits-all in which only studies of general populations have relevance. Rather, it suggests that much analytical insight can be gained from extracting a specific part of the population, looking at specific tendencies of, in this case, youth and changes in their attitudes toward democracy. As such, it is argued that the paper serves as an example that 1) studies of democratic trust in developing contexts is not only possible but highly necessary, and 2) that studies of democratic trust have much to gain from looking at specific sub-parts of population groups.

Conclusion

> *"Today we are witnessing a significant lack of trust by youth in the traditional institutions of democracy. As no sustainable and inclusive democracy can be built without youth, addressing this challenge needs to be a priority."*
>
> Joan Sawe, Acting Secretary-General of
> International Institute for Democracy
> and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)
> (Sawe 2013: 1)

After a rapid decline over the last few years, Honduran youth now have very low trust in three of the most important democratic institutions: only 25.0 percent express trust in Government, 23.4 percent in the Judiciary, and 21.1 percent trust in Congress (www.latinobarometro.org, 23/03/2016). With less than a quarter of the total youth population expressing trust in the institutions on which democracy is founded, it is crucial to start looking for answers as to what causes such democratic distrust and how the declining trend can be reversed. In that perspective, the aim of this paper has been to understand what explains fluctuations in democratic trust. Applying a causal research design, the paper has examined the explanatory power of two contemporary theoretical approaches from the literature on democratic trust; one focusing on performance perception, the other on civic culture.

Based on results from a quantitative opinion survey and a subsequent qualitative literature review, the paper concludes that Honduran youths' decreasing democratic trust in recent years is caused by a lack of political performance. Declining levels of citizen security, increasing levels of corruption and the feeling that there is an inherent incapability in the political system to deal with these issues constitute the main ingredients in explaining why young people distrust democratic institutions.

In contrast, economic performance perception when it comes to the system's ability to provide quality service delivery, job opportunities and sound personal economic situations have no correlation to the level of trust youth have in democratic institutions. This is also the case, when it comes to civic culture, where over-time changes are disconnected from the levels of trust youth confer to democratic institutions. Neither civic engagement, measured through indicators of active citizen participation, interest in news, and engagement in talks about politics with friends, nor social capital understood as the degree to which politics is perceived to be complicated, as well as through levels of interpersonal trust and satisfaction with life, demonstrate any empirical association to the phenomenon of democratic trust.

While supporting the theoretical framework proposed by scholars such as Evans and Whitefield and Espinal et. al., this conclusion challenges the findings of a range of scholars emphasizing civic culture as the main determinant in democratic trust. While not neglecting the importance of building civic cultures characterized by high levels of social capital and civic engagement, this paper places itself within a theoretical approach, emphasizing political performance perception as the main factor in determining variations in democratic trust.

Considering that young people between 15 and 25 constitute a fifth of the world's population, there is an urgent need to ensure their inclusion in political processes. Just as politically marginalized youth tend to adopt anti-social and high-risk behaviours, youth who feel included in the political processes have the potential to become a transformative power in the continued process of democratization, in Honduras as well as on the Latin American continent in general. In order to earn the trust of youth and rebuild their confidence in democratic institutions, politicians and professionals alike need to provide safe societies characterized by a high degree of integrity and respect for human rights.

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