ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	THERE GOES THE ELECTORAL NEIGHBORHOOD: LOCAL NETWORKS, ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE (UN) FAIRNESS OF ELECTIONS
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During the last two decades there have been but a handful of recorded cases of

electoral fraud in Latin America. However, survey research consistently shows that

often citizens do not trust the integrity of the electoral process. This dissertation

addresses the puzzle by explaining the mismatch between how elections are

conducted and how the process is perceived. My theoretical contribution provides a

double-folded argument. First, voters' trust in their community members ("the local

experience") impacts their level of confidence in the electoral process. Since voters

often find their peers working at polling stations, negative opinions about them

translate into negative opinions about the election. Second, perceptions of unfairness

of the system ("the global effect") negatively impact the way people perceive the

transparency of the electoral process. When the political system fails to account for

social injustice, citizens lose faith in the mechanism designed to elect representatives

-and ultimately a set of policies. The fact that certain groups are systematically disregarded by the system triggers the notion that the electoral process is flawed. This is motivated by either egotropic or sociotropic considerations. To test these hypotheses, I employ a survey conducted in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala during May/June 2014, which includes a population-based experiment. I show that Voters who trust their peers consistently have higher confidence in the electoral process. Whereas respondents who were primed about social unfairness (treatment) expressed less confidence in the quality of the election. Finally, I find that the local experience is predominant over the global effect. The treatment has a statistically significant effect only for respondents who trust their community. Attribution of responsibility for voters who are skeptics of their peers is clear and simple, leaving no room for a more diffuse mechanism, the unfairness of the political system. Finally, now I extend analysis to the Latin America region. Using data from LAPOP that comprises four waves of surveys in 22 countries, I confirm the influence of the "local experience" and the "global effect" as determinants of the level of confidence in the electoral process.

THERE GOES THE (ELECTORAL) NEIGHBORHOOD. ATTRIBUTION OF
RESPONSIBILITY ABOUT THE QUALITY OF THE ELECTION TO THE
LOCAL COMMUNITY AND THE UNFAIRNESS OF THE SYSTEM

by

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Dedication

Para Guadi y Jofi

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Chapter 1. Introduction: No Confidence, but no Fraud: Why Voters do not Trust the Electoral Process

1.1 The Puzzle

Between 2006 and 2016, the Organization of American States (OAS) deployed electoral monitors in 85 elections across Latin America. They reported only isolated irregularities, but no allegations of extended fraudulent activities were mentioned. I personally participated as electoral monitor in two elections – municipal, Colombia 2011 and presidential, Honduras 2013- where potential problems could occur, particularly during the former. However, when the election finished, there were no intense conflicts among competing parties, every intervening actor accepted the results, and the international community legitimized the process by stating the absence of manipulation of the results. Nonetheless, surveys from Latinobarometer and the Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) show an extended distrust in the quality of the electoral process. As shown in Appendix I, with the exception of Costa Rica, Chile, and Uruguay, about half of Latin American voters have no confidence that elections are clean and fair.

This dissertation seeks to explain this mismatch between how elections are conducted and how the process is perceived by those who participate in it. Why do voters distrust the electoral process when there is so little evidence that elections are fraudulent? Understanding this puzzle is crucial. For any democratic regime, it is necessary to have elections that are believed by its citizens to be

legitimate. This is particularly the case for countries in which democracies are still young, like most Latin American nations.

1.2 Some explanations of the determining factors of Confidence in Elections in the literature

The study of electoral administrative processes is relatively new to the discipline. The first wave of studies was centered around the institutional design and its impact on the quality of the election (Hartlyn, McCoy, and Mustillo 2007; López Pintor, Systems, and Policy 2000; Mozaffar and Schedler 2002; Pastor 1999). In general, these works argue that independent and autonomous Electoral Management Bodies secure the process from manipulations of the incumbent party. Although their argument is not easy to test empirically, it is intuitively reasonable. But, it seems that having the *best* institutional arrangement does not assure voters perceptions to be positive (Birch 2008; Kerevel 2009; Kerr 2009; Rosas 2010). This line of thought has dominated policy memos from international organizations and represents the core rational for what NGOs promote and governments seek to implement.

It is fair to say that even though manifestations of blatant fraud in Latin American countries have been absent for quite some time, minor manipulations of electoral results does continue to occur (Cantu, n.d.). Albeit rarely decisive (Lehoucq 2003), these manifestations can surely impact voters' evaluation of the entire process. In her study of the 2010 election on New Mexico, Atkeson (2010) finds that witnessing fraud, having uncertainty about fraud, and perceptions of fraud in

the polling place, all lower the level of electoral trust. However, poor confidence in the electoral process is too extended so that to be explained by minor and localized manipulations.

In a different line of work, efforts were directed towards understanding the direct personal experiences of voters with the electoral process. Some authors found that experiencing a lack of privacy while voting, waiting too long in line or facing problems to find the polling place all have a negative impact on perceptions about the election's quality. Other scholars studied the effect of voting technology and voting method on voters' confidence and satisfaction with the polling experience (Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008; Claassen et al. 2012; Herrnson et al. 2008; Herrnson et al. Forthcoming; Llewellyn, Hall, and Alvarez 2009). In line with this scholarship, another plausible explanation is that low state capacity in the Latin American region determines citizens' negative perceptions over the quality of the process. While this line of research advances a valuable approach by bringing the attention to the relationship between voter's experience and voter's confidence, most of the studies concentrate on technical rather than social considerations.

1.3 The Theory: Attribution of Responsibility for the Quality of the Election to the Local Community and to the Unfairness of the Political System

In this dissertation, I turn the attention to voters' social experiences in order to understand what factors influence them at the time of forming their opinions about the trustworthiness of the electoral procedure. In Putnam's terms, I am interested in how social networks and other social organizations impact

interpersonal trust and social capital in the community (Putnam 2001). Particularly, I am interested in analyzing the effects of weak bridging ties in the context of highly unequal societies (Putnam 2001). As Uslaner (2012) shows, the level of economic inequality is the strongest predictor of generalized trust over time. Therefore, building upon Uslaner (2002; Rothstein and Uslaner 2005; Uslaner 2012) and You and Khagram (2005) I subscribe to the idea that social trust is negatively influenced by socioeconomic inequality, corruption and perceived unfairness of political institutions.

My theory provides two alternative and novel explanations to help understand the apparent contradiction between factual and perceived quality of the election. First, I argue that voters' trust in their neighbors or peers affects their level of confidence in the electoral process. In most countries across the world, the administration of the election is delegated to members of the community with whom voters routinely interact. Voters' negative opinions about their peers have a strong and negative effect on their considerations about the election. Their trust in their neighbors works as an informational cue for the attribution of responsibility and the perceptions on how well the process is conducted. In this dissertation, I refer to this argument as "the local experience".

Second, I contend that perceptions of unequal treatment in the society affect the way people perceive the transparency of the electoral process. The underlying reasoning points to the failure of the mechanism of translating preferences of every voter into policy making. Elections are meant to represent citizens so that

socioeconomic decisions made by elected officials should contemplate their preferences. When the political system fails to account for socioeconomic inequality and social injustice, the "losers" -or those who care about them- will cast doubt over the mechanism aimed to elect representatives -and ultimately a set of policies. There are two type of motivations triggering the distrust: i) egotropic considerations -that people perceive themselves as not being favored by the system; ii) sociotropic considerations -people care about equal treatment and social justice. I describe this explanation as "the global effect".

The "local experience" and "the global effect" are two possible mechanisms of attribution of responsibility over the quality of the election. The level of trust people have in their community (in their peers) has an immediate and clear effect in their consideration over the quality of the election. There is no buffer in that mechanism: people meet at the polling station with neighbors they happen to like or dislike. Whereas, perceptions of unfairness (that certain groups are unfairly treated) have a more diffuse effect on electoral confidence. Following the idea behind the concept of clarity of responsibility (Powell and Whitten 1993), the expectation in this dissertation is that when people do not trust their community members, it would be easier for them to hold their neighbors responsible for the low quality of the election. Quite opposite, in a context of voters highly trusting their community, any negative opinion about the election is not going to be attributable to their peers. Therefore, there is room to blame the unfairness of the system as a whole, for any failure in the electoral process.

1.4 Cases, Data, and Empirical Results

The empirical strategy in the dissertation is divided into two different sets of data. Chapter 5 presents an analysis of an original conducted by CID Gallup in Central America. This survey includes a priming experiment that permit to test the "global effect". In Chapter 6, I extend the analysis to the entire Latin American region, using four waves conducted in 22 countries from LAPOP.

In chapter 5, the countries under study –Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras- constitute 4 of the 7 nations in the region of Central America. These countries' social and political differences and similarities provide an ideal set of cases to analyze the determinants of confidence formerly outlined. Within the region, Costa Rica is the oldest democracy –since 1948-, with the most stable political institutions, and the lowest poverty rate. Yet, it is one of the few countries in Latin America showing an increasing inequality index for the last few years. During my field trip to Costa Rica –after the presidential first round on March 2014-, the problem of increasing social inequality came up in almost every interview I conducted with political actors, members of the civil society and university professors.

The other three countries had a problematic trajectory and, sometimes, violent path to democracy. These countries experience somewhat recent transitions but show variation in their regime consolidation. El Salvador has improved its political and social indicators consistently over the last years. Guatemala and Honduras still have critical social debts and their advances have been erratic. The

last president from Guatemala resigned under corruption allegations and Honduras´s president Zelaya suffered a coup when he was trying to reform the constitution to stay in power. Therefore, these four countries represent an interesting variation of social and political characteristics, with geographic and institutional similarities. More importantly, the last presidential elections in all four cases have been qualified as clean and fair. In the case of Honduras, I had the opportunity to firsthand experience the process as part of the international electoral observation mission. Although the election had the potential of being problematic because former president Zelaya participated in the contest, there were no major problems. Zelaya was defeated and accepted the results.

To test the arguments developed in this dissertation, I derive a series of hypotheses from the theoretical framework. To test the hypotheses, I use date from a survey conducted by CID Gallup during May/June 2014. This wave of their omnibus survey included Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. The survey covers a nationally representative sample of about 1,200 cases, clustered by region within each country; resulting in a total of 4,838 respondents. I got access to the results of the electoral related portion of the survey. Embedded in the survey, there is a population-based experiment, designed to prime respondents into the unfairness of the system. By taking advantage of this priming effect, I am able to increase the robustness of the empirical evidence for one part of my theory.

The results of the survey show that the average trust in the electoral process for the whole sample is 6.45 –in a scale from 1 to 10. Costa Rica is the country with

the highest confidence in the election (8.09) and the lowest dispersion of answers. This result is consistent with the findings from LAPOP and Latinobarometer –see Appendix I- placing Costa Rica among the countries with the highest confidence in their electoral process, within Latin America. These figures are aligned with the expectations, considering that Costa Rica has the most stable democratic institutions in Central America. Whereas respondents in Guatemala (mean of 6.21), El Salvador (mean of 6.11), and Honduras (mean of 5.36) have substantially lower levels of trust as well as higher dispersion of answers. Given that these countries are characterized by a history of political instability it is not surprising that the average respondent does not consider the electoral process very trustworthy. Moreover, Guatemala and Honduras are among the poorest and unequal countries in the region, a fact that -my theory goes- plays a major role for perceptions of elections being clean and fair.

A potential problem has to do with causality. The level of trust in the community could be in influenced by a specific election of one of the countries in the sample. But the empirics show the effect is homogeneous between countries. Not only, it is relevant to point out that the mean level of trust in the community for the whole sample is 6.12 and the median is 6 in a scale from 1 to 10, with no significant disparities between countries. But the positive effect of trust in the community in the level of confidence in the electoral process holds strongly when splitting the sample by country or using fixed effects.

In terms of how respondents believe different social groups are being favored (or not) there is a clear difference between countries. On one side, respondents in Guatemala and El Salvador seem to believe that the rich are not being benefited or favored by the system -at least with a higher proportion than the other two countries. As for El Salvador, declining levels of inequality and poverty, in particular, may explain this perception of fairness. However, in the case of Guatemala, the erratic pattern of level of inequality across the years fail to provide an explanation for these quite positive perceptions. On the other side of the spectrum, respondents in Costa Rica and Honduras seem to believe the system does not favor the poor enough.

Finally, there is a clear association between perceptions of fairness of the income distribution and how respondents perceive different social groups are being benefited or not. For example, those who tend to believe income distribution is fair or very fair tend to believe that rich people are not being favored. Whereas, considering the rich are being benefited is associated with perceiving income distribution as unfair or very unfair.

In all four models where I test the *"local experience"* hypothesis, I find empirical evidence to support the predicted effect: those who trust their peers have higher confidence that the election was conducted appropriately. This finding holds even when controlling by support for the winning party, the most common and strong positive effect found in the literature –which provides robustness to the models.

Community characteristics represent a key factor in order to comprehend why in certain context people tend to maintain critical views to the electoral process.

In the analysis of the embedded survey experiment, the models show that the "global effect" is in place. There is empirical support for the negative relationship between perceptions of unequal treatment of certain social groups and levels of confidence in the electoral process. Respondents in the treatment group –who were primed about social unfairness- expressed less confidence in the quality of the election in comparison to those in the control group who did not receive the priming. Interestingly, the finding holds among those who consider themselves as part of the discriminated group, but does not hold when they see themselves as part of the benefited social group –egotropic consideration. When analyzed regarding respondent's perceptions of fairness of income distribution in their country, the *"the global effect"* holds among those who think it is unfair – sociotropic consideration.

Finally, the analysis of the *global* and *local mechanisms* altogether yields interesting results. Considerations about unfairness of equal treatment of certain social groups –*global effect*- have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable only for those respondents who do trust the people from their community. In this line, clarity of responsibility plays a major role. Attribution of responsibility for those respondents who do not trust their peers is clear and simple, and leaves no room for a more diffuse mechanism such as unfairness of the political system.

From the analysis of LAPOP surveys, the mean confidence in the election is 4.08 and the median of 4 speaks of a region where almost half of the people express low confidence in the electoral process –it has a dispersion of 1.9. There are countries where confidence is particularly low –Paraguay- and countries where it is particularly high –Uruguay. To test the "local experience" I use a variable that indicates the level of trust in the community. The category somewhat trustworthy is the mode response, with 41 percent. The categories very trustworthy and not very trustworthy concentrate the 24 and 26 percent of the answers, respectively. The lower category, not trustworthy is the one with fewer responses, with a 9 percent of the sample. Across countries, there are few differences in the level of trust in the community.

For the "global effect" I use two variables. The first one is a combination of two question from the survey about governmental action against poverty and the role the state should have regarding inequality. The responses capturing opinions about governmental actions against poverty in the region are negative too. For a variable with values from 1 to 7, the mean is 3.58 and the median 4, with a dispersion of 1.8. The cross-national analysis indicates that most of the countries are distributed around the general mean. The opinions of about the role of the state in reducing income inequality are more concentrated. Almost half of respondents chose the high end of the scale -7-. The mean is 5.75 and the median is 6, with a dispersion of 1.6. When looking to the distribution by country, once again the dispersion is low. The combination of the three lower categories of the fighting poverty question, and the three upper ones from the duty of the state to

reduce inequality, form the unfairness of the system variables as mention before. It results in a 40% of the sample with the value of 1. That is, 40 percent of respondents are part of the group that considers the government does not fight poverty and it should reduce inequality. The second one is external political efficacy. Again using a scale from 1 to 7, the mean is the lowers of the three with 3.31 and also the median in 3, with a dispersion of 1.9. The mode is 1, the lowers possible value. That is, clearly the majority of the people considers the government is not responsive to their opinions and demands.

In the cross national analysis, the level of trust in the people from the community helps to predict the level of confidence in the election. Being the base category "Untrustworthy", changing to "not very trustworthy" increases -0.10 points- the trust in the election, expressing a positive and statistically significant relationship. The size of the effect increases as trust in neighbors goes up. Comparing those in the "fairly trustworthy" category with the "untrustworthy" one, there is an increase in the level of confidence in the electoral process of about 0.2 –being 0.22 the highest effect in model 4 and 0.11 the lowest in model 2. Finally, those in the "very trustworthy" category are, on average, approximately 0.30 –being 0.35 the highest effect in model 4 and 0.21 the lowest in models 2 and 4. In sum, voters' trust in their peer's increases, they perceive the electoral process is more reliable.

To test the "global effect" in the entire Latin American region I used two different operationalization. First, the unfairness of the system variable built by combining

opinions about the government fighting poverty and the role the state should have in reducing social inequality. In all six model specifications, the unfairness of the system effect is negatively associated with the level of trust in the election as expected, and it is statistically significant with 99% confidence interval. The size of the effect varies across models from the lowest effect of 0.443 to the highest of 0.708 points less in the level of confidence in the electoral process. In model 4 to 6, I introduced the variable that measures how much voters think the government cares about their opinion. Empirical results support the predicted positive effect of perceived external political efficacy on opinions about the quality of the election. In the three models, the mention effect is statistically significant at the 99% confidence interval. In model 4, the coefficient of the external political efficacy variable predicts an increase in the perceive trust in the election of 0.158 as efficacy goes up. When introducing both proxies for hypothesis 2, the size of the effect does not change much decreasing the coefficient only to 0.130 more confidence. Thus, it seems both variables tap into different dimensions of the "global effect".

These findings are important in the context of a region with huge social debts. Besides major improvements in lowering income inequality, there are still substantial disparities, even more for educational indicators. Scholars and policy makers frequently debate over institutional problems and possible institutional reforms that countries in the region should carry out. The main goal of the proposed reforms is to improve the electoral process and the political reality,

often missing the point that the highest threat to the legitimacy of democracy in the region is associated to socioeconomic issues.

1.5 Dissertation outline

This manuscript is divided into six chapters. In chapter 2, I present the current debate in the field about electoral processes, fraud, and confidence in the quality of elections. Afterwards, I provide a theoretical framework to understand why voters have low confidence in elections, albeit the absence of serious irregularities in Latin America. I state two main explanations. First, I argue that voters' views about their peers in the community function as informational cues to assign responsibility over the quality of the process. Second, I explain that perceptions about unfairness of the system –that is, perceptions about unequal treatment in society- greatly impact what voters think about the election.

In chapter 3, I describe the political and social characteristics of four countries in Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Their differences and similarities provide an ideal setting to test the theoretical implications from chapter 2. Using information from Electoral Observation Missions and first-hand experience, I describe the last presidential election in all four, focusing in the absence of extended fraudulent maneuvers.

In chapter 4, I provide the specifics of a survey conducted by CID Gallup in the aforementioned countries. I detail the relevant questions for my topic of study and the experimental design embedded in the questionnaire. Finally, I show

descriptive statistics for the dependent variable and the main independent variables, with bivariate analysis as a first step in the empirical testing of the theoretical implications.

In chapter 5, I derive a series of hypotheses from the theory presented in chapter 2. Subsequently, I present modeling strategy to empirically test my theoretical claims. Overall, I find evidence to sustain the hypothesized relationship between trust in the community and perceptions of unfairness, on one side, and the evaluations voters' conduct about the quality of election, on the other side.

In chapter 6, I recapitulate the two main hypotheses of the previous chapter and test it using data for the entire Latin American region. Using LAPOP surveys, I find support for both of my main theoretical claims, the "local experience" and the "global effect".

In chapter 7, I conclude by stating the main findings of the dissertation, pointing policy implications and future research directions.

Chapter 2. There Goes the Election: Understanding Attribution of Responsibility on the Quality of the Election: *The Local Experience* and *the Global Effect*

2.1 Introduction

During the last two decades there have been but a handful of recorded cases of electoral fraud in Latin America. However, survey research consistently shows that substantial numbers of citizens still do not trust the integrity of the electoral process. Why do voters distrust the electoral process when there is so little evidence that elections are fraudulent? As importantly, who do voters consider the likely culprits of electoral fraud?

My answer is a double-folded one. On the one hand, voters' embeddedness and trust in members of their community ("the local experience") affects their perceptions of trustworthiness of the electoral administration and fairness. My argument is that voters can assign responsibility about the quality of the election to the state (electoral management bodies -EMB), political parties, and/or their neighbors. The existing literature emphasizes the first two, neglecting the role that local communities have in the implementation of the electoral process (i.e. people responsible for administering the electoral process in each polling station, responsible for reporting vote counts).Since voters interact with members of their community, they build ties to those that will administer the electoral process, with party monitors and poll-workers with whom they interact at the local level.

On the other hand, I argue that voters trust more or less the electoral process conditioned on their perceptions of fairness in how different social groups are

treated ("global effect"). The linkage mechanism has to do with perceptions that certain groups of the society are systematically amongst the disadvantaged ('losers'). The existence of consistent 'losers' decreases their hopes that the electoral process as a whole could function as a fair mechanism of translating preferences of every citizen into decision-making process and political outcomes. If the political system is failing to account for socioeconomic inequality and social injustice, if the economic and political outcomes do not take into political consideration the inputs by these disadvantaged groups, then why trusting the electoral process at all? This mechanism works either by egotropic considerations (people perceive themselves as not being favored by the system) or by sociotropic considerations (people care about equal treatment and social justice).

Clean and fair elections are a basic requirement for a representative democracy and voters' confidence in the electoral process a requirement for democratic legitimacy. Distrust in the electoral process breeds political instability, as it has been shown in the contested elections of Felipe Calderon in Mexico in 2006, Enrique Peña Nieto in 2012, or the election of Nicolas Maduro in 2013. Explaining the determinants of voters' confidence in the electoral process is particularly relevant for Latin America, a region with a wide gap between perceptions of electoral fraud and actual fraud.

As I mention before, the study of electoral administrative processes is relatively new to the discipline. With increasing numbers of democratic elections being conducted every year, comparativists have begun to amass information on electoral management bodies (EMBs) and their effect on the quality of elections

(Hartlyn, McCoy, and Mustillo 2007; López Pintor, Systems, and Policy 2000; Mozaffar and Schedler 2002; Pastor 1999). Similarly, an increasing number of studies in recent years have sought to detect fraud in elections using a variety of new statistical tools (Cantú and Saiegh 2011; Cantu, n.d.; Deckert, Myagkov, and Ordeshook 2011; Mebane 2011). A different literature has analyzed the effect of electoral observation missions in the detection and deterrence of fraud, democracy promotion, and international recognition (Alvarez, Hall, and Hyde 2008; Hyde 2007; Hyde 2010; Kelley 2010; Kelley 2011). In the US literature, significant resources were directed towards understanding the direct personal experiences of voters with the electoral process. Several studies employ variables measuring voters' trust as one indicator for electoral performance, as well as the result of changes in voting technology affecting satisfaction with the voting experience and trustworthiness of the results (Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008; Claassen et al. 2012; Herrnson et al. 2008; Herrnson et al. Forthcoming; Llewellyn, Hall, and Alvarez 2009). Likewise, others studied the impact of poll worker-voter interaction and voting environment (Claassen et al. 2008; Hall, Monson, and Patterson 2008). With little evidence that fraud is extensive or that electoral results have been manipulated, it is surprising that researchers have not devoted more time to explain perceptions of fraud.

This chapter is organized as follows. In the first section, I review the current state of knowledge on voters' confidence in elections in the comparative and American literature. In the second section, I build a theoretical framework that provides a

new approach to understand perceptions on the quality of the electoral process in Latin America. Finally, I conclude.

2.2 What do we know about voters' confidence in elections?

Political scientists have only recently begun to study the determinants of voters' confidence in elections. In comparative politics, the analysis centers on the effects of institutions on voters' perceptions, while in American politics the focus is on voters' direct personal experience of the electoral process. Each research agenda's origins can help to explain the differences. Comparativists attempt at trying to understand voters' opinion about elections in fairly new –and sometimes fragile-democratic countries, still undergoing the process of forming and consolidating their institutions. Furthermore, comparativists study many countries with a history of flagrant electoral fraud. The American literature on the subject has its origin in the contested 2000 presidential election and the impulse of the Help America Vote Act, which was directly associated with voting system problems experienced by voters.

The few works that deal specifically with electoral confidence in comparative politics (Birch 2008; Kerevel 2009; Kerr 2009; Rosas 2010), test the influence that electoral management bodies (EMBs) have on voter's confidence. The attribution of responsibility for the quality of the election is focused on the state. The underlying assumption is that the autonomy and professionalization of EMBs should have a positive impact on citizens' perceptions. This is based on the general belief among academics, public policy specialists, and international

organizations that autonomous and professional EMBs increase the likelihood of having clean and fair elections (Hartlyn, McCoy, and Mustillo 2007; López Pintor, Systems, and Policy 2000; Mozaffar and Schedler 2002; Pastor 1999). In short, the different institutional characteristics of the electoral administration determine whether voters give credit to or blame the state for the implementation of the election.

This assumption has been hard to prove empirically. Rosas (2010) does not find a relationship between the institutional organization of EMBs and levels of confidence in the electoral process in his study of Latin American countries. In a cross-national study of developed and developing countries from different regions, Birch (2008) finds the opposite relationship –elections conducted by formally independent EMBs have a negative association with perceptions of election fairness. Kerevel (2009) and Kerr (2009) argue that characteristics of EMBs - non-partisan, independent, and professional- have a positive impact on the level of confidence citizens have in the institution. It seems clear therefore that confidence in the EMB influences confidence in the quality of elections. Besides the state, Kerevel considers political parties as an influence on responsibility attribution. He finds that partisan involvement in the electoral administration is significantly associated with confidence in the electoral process. In his study of sub-Saharan African countries, Kerr finds that confidence in the EMB is associated with perceptions of election outcomes as legitimate. However, there is no significant impact of EMB autonomy or capacity on citizens' perceptions of election quality.

These studies in comparative politics have two common problems. First, it is very difficult to measure how autonomous and professionalized EMBs are. The operationalization of EMB attributes results from coding the formal rules of each institution. This assumption is problematic because often formal rules are not a good indicator of how things work in practice, especially in developing countries. Birch (2008) considers this problem when trying to make sense of her findings. Second, their theory assumes that voters understand how these institutions work – that is, how autonomous and professional they are. But the literature on electoral behavior and public opinion shows that voters have low levels of knowledge about political issues. Unless there is an extended media coverage on EMB characteristics in a particular election, it is unlikely that voters have sufficient knowledge to link the EMBs' attributes to their trust in the electoral process. Rosas (2010) mentions this as a possible explanation for his null finding.

These problems call for a new approach to analyzing the determinants of confidence in elections. I am not saying that autonomy and professionalization of EMBs are not important. As Rosas (2010) shows, there is a connection between EMB characteristics and trust in elections among political elites, demonstrating that they understand that independence and professionalization favors impartiality. But to understand voters' opinions on the subject, it is better to focus on the interaction between individuals and the electoral administration. What is more, focusing on electoral performance and electoral corruption allows us to predict how professional and autonomous EMBs are.

Research in American politics about voters' confidence in elections provide important insights since they focus on individuals' experience of the process. The voting experience involves the interaction of voters with poll workers and the environment of the polling place (Claassen et al. 2008; Hall, Monson, and Patterson 2008). With regard to the environment, they find that experiencing a lack of privacy while voting, waiting too long in line or having difficulty finding the polling place all have a negative impact on poll workers evaluations. Another interesting finding is that poll workers who provide positive evaluations of the training they receive, tend to get more positive assessments from voters.

Both works propose to analyze the role of poll workers as street-level bureaucrats with ample opportunity to use their discretion. Their arguments have some commonalities with the thesis I propose here, but conceptually there are important differences. While they focus on poll workers' performance and discretion, I focus on who the poll worker is, and the importance of voters' preconceptions about them. Hall et al. (2008) find that voters that rate positively the job performance of the poll worker have more confidence in the fairness of the process. Claasen et al. (2008) show that voters interacting with poll workers are more likely to evaluate their performance favorably. However, if their voter's ID was rejected, the interaction produced the exact opposite effect. By interpreting poll workers as bureaucrats, the state is seen as responsible for their performance. But the interpretation changes in part when we consider who the poll workers are. Voters' preconceptions of people working in the election can influence how they rate their job performance and how willing they are to interact with them.

Gerber et al. (2012, 2013a, 2013b) have been working on the determinants and consequences of voters' perceptions about the secrecy of the ballot. The importance of this research is in the distinction between formal institutions and the beliefs citizens have about them -even if those beliefs are at odds with how those institutions operate in reality. The authors consistently find that voting experience –or the lack thereof- has a profound impact on beliefs about secrecy of the ballot -concerns are particularly widespread among those who have never voted. This is confirmed by Atkeson (2010) who finds that first time voters have lower levels of confidence that their ballot was counted correctly. Also, Alvarez et al. (2008) using age and education as proxy for voting experience find that experience increase confidence.

Other scholars study the effect voting technology and voting mode have on voters' confidence and satisfaction with the voting experience (Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008; Claassen et al. 2012; Herrnson et al. 2008; Herrnson et al. Forthcoming; Llewellyn, Hall, and Alvarez 2009). There are mixed findings regarding the effect of voting technology. Alvarez et al. (2008) find that voters' that used electronic voting were less confidence, whereas Herrnson et al. (2008) find that paperless touch-screen systems generated the most confidence. Llewellyn et al. (2009) find that among those who use electronic voting machines, the ones that have a paper trail rate higher in confidence. It is likely that these apparently contradictory finding can be explained by their different methodological approach; surveys the former and usability field study the later. Claassen et al. (2012) argue that mixed findings could be explaining by

differentiating satisfaction and confidence. They find that those who use paper ballot/optical scan systems are more confident that their vote was counted correctly, but those who use electronic systems are more satisfied with the voting experience. Finally, Herrnson et al. (2008) and Atkeson and Saunders (2007) show that ballot types can complicate the voting experience. Overall, this research highlights the importance voting system and ballot types. They focus in a key decision the state makes when implementing the election.

When thinking in elections and campaigns, it might be appropriate to consider the role of politicians in determining confidence in the electoral process. Sometimes politicians denounce publicly irregularities before, on, and after Election Day. Curiously there is only one study that tries to test this effect (Vonnahme and Miller 2012). The authors assume that the electoral process is complex and citizens lack sufficient information about it. But candidates –that do have knowledge of the process- are in a good position to assess the fairness of the election. Thus, they provide a heuristic for voters' opinion about the election. Through a laboratory experiment with different cues, the authors find that a candidate's challenge has an effect on voter confidence and that a specific allegation has a greater effect than a non-specific allegation. Rephrasing this in terms of Alcañiz and Hellwig (2011), voters reduce uncertainty in the assignment of blame by using candidates' cues, typically holding the incumbent responsible.

Although the occurrence of blatant fraud in Latin American countries has been absent for quite some time, minor manipulations of electoral results does continue to happen (Cantu, n.d.). These manipulations are infrequently decisive (Lehoucq

2003), but they can have big impact on voters' evaluation of the process. Atkeson (2010) finds in her study of the 2010 election on New Mexico that witnessing fraud, having uncertainty about fraud, and perceptions of fraud in the polling place lower the level of confidence. According to Bohn (2013), not everyone is equally likely to experience corruption on Election Day. It is known from the literature (Calvo and Murillo 2004; Dixit and Londregan 2009; Stokes 2005) that poor voters tend to be the ones that are the object of clientelistic relations and vote buying. Thus, they might be more likely to experience ballot rigging, threats, etc. Cantu (n.d.) studies local elections (gubernatorial) and he finds that in Mexico fraud occurrence is localized in some states. The blame for electoral corruption is directed at politicians and political parties.

When studying elections in developing countries, it is also important to explore the impact that international monitors can have on voters' confidence. Nowadays, some type of Electoral Observation Mission (EOM) is present in almost every election around the world, especially in developing countries. However, there are only a few studies that seek to understand the impact of EOMs. Hyde (2007) finds through a natural experiment that international observers reduced fraud by about 6% in the 2003 presidential election in Armenia. Hyde (2010) through a field experiment finds that the presence of observers had a measurable effect on votes cast for the incumbent candidate. It is also argued that EOMs can deter election boycotts (Kelley 2011), or or encourage them (Beaulieu and Hyde 2009). Others argue that observers deter fraud, but also displace it to unobserved areas (Ichino and Schündeln 2012).

Besides some inconclusive findings, these studies (Alvarez 2008; Beaulieu and Hyde 2009; Hyde 2007, 2010; Ichino and Schündeln 2012; Kelley 2010, 2011) agree that EOMs promote confidence on the electoral process among the international community and legitimize regimes. They also assume that monitoring boosts voter confidence, improves election logistics, and alleviates violence, but they do not test these effects empirically. The underlying logic is that EOMs discourage election corruption with their presence and so raise voter confidence. There is only one exception (Brancati 2012). He conducted a field experiment in Kosovo to test the influence of observers to make elections more democratic. Under the assumption that most activities of EOMs are unknown by regular citizens, he decided to distribute flyers with information about the work of monitors among voters in the treatment group. He found that citizens who received the flyer were significantly more likely to believe that the monitors helped make the elections more democratic. Theoretically, the presence of EOMs should have an effect of responsibility attribution in all three groups –state, parties, and the community.

Information and political knowledge have an effect on confidence (Gerber et al. 2013b; Vonnahme and Miller 2012), but depending the context, that effect can be positive or negative . Thus, we should interpret the effect of political knowledge with care. Moreover, informational effects can modify the attribution of responsibility –e.g. problems in 2000 U.S. presidential election can increase blame being attributed to the state; or extended diffusion of electoral corruption can increase blame being attributed to political parties.

Although some of these studies argue in favor of analyzing voters' confidence as a separate phenomenon from studies about trust in government or other institutions (Alvarez, Hall, and Hyde 2008; Atkeson 2010), it is fair to consider that trust in the electoral process is best explained by the level of trust in governmental institutions than from personal experiences with the election. Gronke and Hicks (2009) tests the idea that voter confidence may be more strongly tied to generalized trust in government, and the perception of the system as a whole, rather than features of election administration — technology, accuracy of the count, election day experiences. They find that voters who place more confidence in government and in election officials have more faith in the system, but they also find that voter confidence is most strongly related to actual evaluative and experiential aspects of the election system. Again, these authors compare two different spheres where the state carries the responsibility.

Although none of the studies on voter confidence test experience with non-electoral state corruption, I consider it as important as controlling for trust in governmental institution. Seligson (2002; 2006) develops a corruption victimization survey that asks citizens their experience of public sector corruption in Latin America. He finds that experience with corruption lowers the legitimacy of democracy.

There is a broad consensus that there is a "winner effect" on confidence in the electoral process (Alvarez 2008; Atkeson 2010; Birch 2008; Hall, Monson, and Patterson 2008; Rosas 2010, among others). Those voting for the winning candidate trust the process more than voters of the losing one. This finding is

confirmed when comparing winners from different parties over time (Atkeson 2010). It would be interesting to analyze this effect in the context of a multiple level election.

Birch (2008) study the effect of the electoral systems in voters' confidence. She argues that proportional systems level the playing field by promoting equality among contestants. As she expects, proportional electoral systems are significantly correlated with higher confidence in the fairness of the electoral system. This finding might be better explained by the winner effect stated before since proportional electoral systems produce more winners. In the same vein, it seems useful to consider district magnitude, re-election rate, and the competitiveness of the election.

As would be expected, all the previous works include classic demographic variables in their models, findings are mixed, however. For example, Alvarez et al (2008) find an effect of race on voters' confidence for the 2004 election, but Atkeson (2010) shows that it is because republicans won that elections. She demonstrate that blacks were more confident in the process in the 2008 election when democrats won. However, being a minority might matter in a context of systematic exclusion and should be considered in particular cases.

There are some works that use confidence in the election as the main independent variable in their theories. Some scholars state the importance of understanding voters' confidence under the hypothesis that confidence has an impact on voter turnout. Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn (2008) test this relationship and find a positive relationship between the two in the 2004 U. S. presidential election.

Birch (2010) finds that if voters are confident that an election will be free and fair, they are more likely to vote in her study of 31 elections of established and new democracies. Using public opinion data collected by Latinobarómetro in 18 Latin American countries, Kerevel (2009) shows that individuals who are confident in the EMB are significantly more likely to turnout to vote, and individuals who have greater confidence in election outcomes are also more likely to increase turnout. Gerber, Huber, Doherty, Dowling, and Hill (2013a), find through experimentation that providing information on ballot secrecy and protection against intimidation to those who have never voted, increases turnout. Finally, Brancati (2012) finds that distributing information about the presence of international monitors does not influence the likelihood of turning out at the polls.

2.3 A Theory to Understand Low Confidence in Elections with No Fraud

The literature on economic voting analyzes how voters assign credit or blame to the incumbent and/or other political and economic actors, regarding the performance of the economy. The concept of attribution of responsibility provides an excellent framework to understand who voters give credit to or blame for the quality of the electoral process.

Earlier studies in economic voting analyze the link between global macro-economic indicators and electoral results (Lewis-Beck 1985). Later, Powell and Whitten (1993) introduce the concept of clarity of responsibility. They show that attribution of responsibility is conditioned by different political and institutional contexts. They build an index and show that, under certain conditions, it is easier

for voters to blame the incumbent. This work marked a major step forward as it opened the door to a more complex analysis of how voters make decisions. Some scholars building upon the clarity of responsibility index, added variables that help to explain changes in time with non-changing institutions (Nadeau, Niemi, and Yoshinaka 2002), and changes among different regimes (Hellwig and Samuels 2008). Others explain how under complexity, voters reduce uncertainty in the assignment of blame by using informational cues (Alcañiz and Hellwig 2011) and how voters' perceptions on the economy alternate between reality and voter behavior (Hellwig and Samuels 2007).

In this dissertation I seek to explore how the "local experience" and the "global effect" both affect citizens' confidence in the electoral process. My argument is a double-folded one. That is, informed by recent theories of attribution of responsibility, and influence of social context, I argue that the mechanism that explain whether voters attribute responsibility for the administration of the election to the local community is conditioned to their prevailing negative or positive opinions of the neighbors involved in the process. Furthermore, I analyze how voters trust more or less the electoral process conditioned on their perceptions of fairness in the treatment of different social groups. In the later mechanism, the attribution of responsibility for the quality of the election is directed to the political system as a whole.

2.3.1 The "*Local Experience*": How trust in your peers affects your opinion on the quality of the election

While recent research in the US has brought attention to the relationship between voter experiences and voter confidence, most of the studies concentrate on technical rather than social considerations. Indeed, in most of countries across the world, the administration of the election is delegated to members of the community with whom voters routinely interact. The implementation of elections, on a single day and across all electoral districts, is one of the most important and delicate tasks in any democratic country. This burden requires an enormous number of non-professional personnel to be administered by peers with whom voters interact with on daily basis. I seek to explore how the "local experience" affects confidence in the electoral process. That is, informed by recent theories of attribution of responsibility, valence, and influence of social context, I will investigate the mechanisms that explain whether voters attribute responsibility for the administration of the election to the local community.

The "local experience" side of my argument is that voters assign responsibility about the quality of the election to different actors. So far current studies have focused on the attribution of responsibility to state officials (in all different government levels) and politicians in general, namely political parties and their candidates. However, there is another important actor that voters consider when attributing responsibility, this is their peers, their neighbors. The existing literature emphasis has systematically neglected the role that local communities play in the implementation of the electoral process, how voters' peers participate in the electoral process, for instance in reporting vote counts. Naturally, voters interact with these poll-workers or party monitors, on a daily basis. While

building social ties with their peers, voters form impressions over people in their community, who also happen to be responsible for certain duties the day of the election. Then, to what extent are voters' firsthand experiences with these electoral workers important in explaining the attribution of responsibility?

This project introduces the simple idea, which has been hitherto overlooked, that the voters' embeddedness in their community, and hence trust in their members, affects their perceptions of electoral administration trustworthiness and fairness. The importance of the social context for political behavior has been analyzed by Baker, et al (2006). These authors show that the role of informal and incidental discussions within social networks of friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues, is a key element to understand volatile political behavior in context of low informational cues from parties. Thus, information gathered by citizens through social networks plays a primary role in short-term attitude change and vote choice. The causal mechanisms are associated with the levels of disagreement and heterogeneity in the network and the neighborhood of the voter.

> *"The exposure to subtle environmental cues around one's neighborhood – eavesdropping to others at bars or bus stops, seeing yard signs and bumper stickers, noting which parties canvass the area – can introduce countervailing information to citizens even in their everyday activities and send signals about which candidates are electorally viable (Weatherford 1982)." (Baker, Ames, and Renno 2006, pp.5)*

In this line, I consider that social context plays two important roles in shaping perceptions about the electoral process. Since the community is involved in the implementation, how much voters trust the people from their neighborhood impacts on how assured they are that the election was conducted appropriately. If

a voter has a low opinion of the people in charge of their polling station, she will likely have doubts about their performance or impartiality. Moreover, the social context can influence voters' opinions about the election through informal discussions. Voters gathered information about the election from their social network and neighborhood. In a context of unknown events of fraud –low information- reported by the politician or the media, this local information allows them to assign responsibility among the aforementioned three possible targets (the government, political parties and the community). Following Baker, et al (2006), I expect that disagreement and heterogeneity in the community both affect to whom voters blame or credit for the election and how confident they are about the process and its results.

According to the relevant literature, the role that information plays in voters' opinions is fundamental when the process of attribution of responsibility occurs. When we try to understand how people's perceptions of fairness -in terms of the electoral process- are formed, there are several factors that we could consider, as described above. In this dissertation I propose to redirect the attention from formal characteristics of the EMBs, to the informal attribution of responsibility that any society undergoes (knowing who is responsible for conducting the electoral process).

2.3.2 From Bowling Alone to voters' distrust

In his seminal work, "Bowling Alone", Robert Putnam has thoroughly described the decline in social capital in the United States. The author argued that people

started to interact less in the form of face-to-face and particularly club memberships, religious groups and similar activities plummet. While social capital was declining, also were civic engagement. Among many consequences for the decline in social capital, Putnam shows that neighborhoods are less safe, government's performance deteriorated, children do worse at school, in general people do not prosper as much as before, and they are less happy, and less healthy (Putnam 2001).

In Putnam's terms, social capital represents social norms and reciprocity that emerges from social networks and other social organizations. Within these norms, it is relevant for my theory to highlight the trustworthiness embedded in network's connections. As formerly described, "the local experience" in my theoretical frame described how trust in the community impacts confidence in the election. Therefore, according to Putnam's conceptualization if a society is suffering from a decline in social capital, and thus in social trust, voters will most likely start to perceive the electoral process as less trustworthy.

According to Inglehart (1999) interpersonal trust is one of the long lasting characteristics of a community, relating to its history and cultural heritage, as well as its shared experience in politics, the economy and religion, among other elements. In this sense, the author sustains that we cannot expect from a democracy that it will inevitably breed interpersonal trust. Although some institutions could foster social trust among citizens, it is not sufficient. Yet,

Inglehart believes that the direction is reversed: societies with high levels of interpersonal trust are more prone to democratic stability.

There is a clear distinction in the type of ties that social capital can refer to: Bonding vis-à-vis Bridging (Putnam 2001). On the one side, bonding ties cultivate trust within homogenous groups, and it is quite important to strengthen the community, especially if there is a shared history or a common purpose. On the other side, bridging ties refers to building bridges across heterogeneous groups. For high-homogeneity neighborhoods, bonding ties should be sufficient to foster social trust. However, when communities are characterized by different minorities (e.g. indigenous population in Guatemala, or African descendant in Costa Rica), bridging social capital becomes necessary so that people trust their neighbors, and in consequence -my theory goes- the electoral process. In this line, bridging social capital is also fundamental within unequal communities, in terms of income or socioeconomic level.

Uslaner (2012) presents evidence that the level of economic inequality is the strongest predictor of generalized trust over time in the United States and across countries –excluding former communist ones. He argues that the

> *"The direct effect of inequality on participation arises when inequality of resources leads people in lower economic brackets to refrain from participating, either because they have fewer resources or because they believe that getting involved will be fruitless because the system is stacked against them. Where inequality is high, those people with fewer resources may feel powerless. The indirect effect comes through the impact of inequality on trust. Higher levels of inequality mean less trust, and this may in turn*

reduce the level of civic engagement."(Uslaner 2005)

Building upon Uslaner (2002, 2005, 2012) and You (2006), I subscribe to the idea

that social trust is negatively influenced by socioeconomic inequality, corruption

and perceived unfairness of political institutions. You (2006) proposed that the

sense of unfairness (rather than the sense of dissimilarity) is what drives the

negative impact of inequality on social trust. This author proposes the "fairness

explanation":

> *"The fairness explanation can also explain why political trust,*
> *or confidence in public institutions, is positively associated*
> *with social trust. If public institutions and public officials are*
> *trustworthy, private actors are more likely to observe the rules*
> *of the game and people's sense of fairness and generalized*
> *trust will also likely increase" (You 2006: 155)*

Putnam et al. (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993) show that the large disparities

of income and quality of government among Italian regions are due to historical

developments which lead to different degrees of reciprocal trust in different

communities. In the next section, I explain in detail my argument that social

inequality and perception of fairness regarding income distribution both create

distrust among different sectors of the society, which greatly influence their

opinions about the electoral process.

2.3.3 The *"Global Effect"*: how perceptions about systematic unfair treatment of certain social groups lower confidence in the election

To describe the "global effect" in one sentence: perceptions of unequal treatment

in the society affect the way people perceive the transparency of the electoral

process. The linkage mechanism has to do with perceptions that certain groups of society are systematically amongst the disadvantaged ('losers'). The fact that certain groups are systematically disregarded by the system triggers the notion that the electoral process is flawed. The underlying reasoning points to the failure of the mechanism of translating preferences of every voter into policy making. Elections are meant to represent citizens so that socioeconomic decisions made by elected officials should contemplate their preferences. Naturally, the disadvantaged groups are going to believe their preferences were not heard, in particular if economic and political outcomes do not take their inputs into political consideration. When the political system fails to account for socioeconomic inequality and social injustice, the 'losers' will cast doubt over the mechanism aimed to elect representatives -and ultimately a set of policies.

Consequently, perceptions of (un)fairness about unequal treatment of different social groups bring distrust in certain sectors of society, which in turn, greatly influences their opinions about the electoral process. There are two type of motivations that trigger the distrust. In the first place, egotropic considerations, which means that people perceive themselves as not being favored by the system. In the second place, sociotropic considerations, which means people care about equal treatment and social justice.

There are multiple studies focusing on the pervasive effects of inequalities. Some scholars analyze its impact on economic growth (Barro 2000), population health (Wilkinson and Pickett 2006) and transitions to democracy (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Boix 2003). Interestingly, some authors study the influence of

inequality in turnout and political engagement, what is particularly important to my research. For instance, Solt (2008) shows that inequality depress political interest, frequency of political discussion, and participation in elections, among all but the most affluent citizens. Social inequality and heterogeneity in the distribution of income creates the conditions for the formation of identities that affect the beliefs citizens hold about the electoral process. In their influential work, Alesina and La Ferrara (2002) found evidence in the US that trust in general is negatively associated with belonging to a disadvantaged group. In other words, if either your social group has been historically discriminated against, or is currently unfairly treated by the system (e.g. economically and educationally unsuccessful), your level of trust will be lower. This effect –these authors found– is similarly present for communities experiencing high degree of economic disparity.

Similarly, You (2012) makes the point that social trust is actually affected more by the perception of fairness than heterogeneity. I consider this point particularly relevant to my theory since different societies have different tolerance for income inequalities. Thus, focusing on the perceptions of fairness in income distribution allows me to test the mechanism beyond net income distribution. Cruces, Perez-Truglia, and Tetaz (2013) studied how individuals form their perceptions of income distribution and how ultimately these opinions influence their preferences and attitudes towards redistributive policies. Through an experimental design, the authors show how people take information from specific reference groups and how in general this tends to bias their evaluations on their own relative position,

and on what they consider a fair redistribution. Therefore, perceptions of fairness

have a significant effect on political attitudes, such as for example believing the

system is unfair or distrusting the electoral process. In You (2006) words,

> *"Societies with fair procedural rules (democracy), fair*
> *administration of rules (freedom from corruption), and*
> *fair (relatively equal and unskewed) income distribution*
> *produce incentives for trustworthy behavior, develop*
> *norms of trustworthiness, and enhance interpersonal*
> *trust." (You 2006: 143).*

What impacts mostly the idea that the electoral process is fair is the fact that a

voter could feel her "voice" being heard. When citizens believe they are able to

effectively express themselves through a specific process (in this case, the

election), they will surely trust the process. Besides procedural assessments then,

equal treatment becomes the mechanism linking perceptions of unfairness and

confidence in the electoral process, as Pickett and Wilkinson (2010) put it:

> *"In the context of elections, ''voice'' can be re-cast to refer*
> *to whether an individual was able to participate in the*
> *election, **and ''equal treatment'' to whether all individuals***
> ***have equal influence**.[1]" (Wilking 2010: 141)*

Building upon You (2006), the fairness explanation creates the notion of winners

and losers. The rich tend to think they deserve their wealth and to consider the

rules are fair. The poor tend to think the rules are unfair and to consider they are

unfairly treated (You 2012: 706). From the losers' perspective-especially in

unequal societies- if the rich are perceived as unfairly advantaged, this will

contribute to their distrust in the system. If people feel disadvantaged in a highly-

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[1]Bold not in the original

unequal country, they will be suspicious that those in power -i.e. elected politicians- achieve their power in a corrupt or unfair manner (You and Khagram 2013: 140), making the mechanisms –the electoral system- untrustworthy. When certain groups in the society consider themselves as repeatedly left out, they will attribute their condition to external factors (Martinko 2006). If they perceive elections do not change the composition of winners and losers in the system, they will tend to think that the process itself is corrupt, even in the absence of material evidence of fraud being committed. Therefore, their level of trust for the most important mechanism of democracy is harmed.

Economic voting theory provides two useful concepts to better support the claims of the theory about the "global effect". Part of the discussion in the literature has to do with the motivation or the origin of economic punishment or reward to incumbents by voters (M. S. Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000).The two possible economic motivations to vote are: pocketbook or egotropic voting and general economic condition or sociotropic voting (M. S. Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000). In the context of understanding the determinants of confidence in the electoral process, it is relevant to distinguish if the unfairness of the system matters because people considers themselves as part of the group that is unfairly treated –egotropic- or because they care about social justice –sociotropic.

There are not theoretical grounds to expect one effect would be predominant over the other. I do expect that both, egotropic and sociotropic considerations, have a negative impact on voters' view on the quality of the election.

2.3.4 Interaction between the "local experience" and "the global effect"

It is not possible to disentangle the two theoretical mechanisms and understand them separately since people always have opinions about the members in their communities and opinions about how fair is the political system in which they live. The *"local experience"* and *"the global effect"* are two possible mechanisms of attribution of responsibility about the quality of the election. As mentioned above, Powell and Whitten (1993) introduce the concept of clarity of responsibility: certain contexts or situations facilitate the attribution of responsibility by voters. The level of trust people have in their community (in their peers) has an immediate and clear effect in their consideration over the quality of the election. There is no buffer in that mechanism: people meet at the polling station with neighbors they happen to like or dislike. Whereas, perceptions of unfair treatment for certain groups have a more diffuse influence over confidence in the electoral process. Hence, following the idea behind the concept of clarity of responsibility, the expectation in this dissertation is that when people do not trust their community members, it would be easier for them to hold responsible for the low quality of the election to their neighbors. Quite opposite, in a context of voters highly trusting their community, any negative opinion about the election is not going to be attributable to their peers. Therefore, there is room to blame the unfairness of the system as a whole.

2.3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined the theoretical framework to understand the presence of low confidence in the electoral process in the absence of fraudulent practices. I began by describing the state of the art in the discipline regarding confidence in elections. Within the literature review, I show how scholars in Comparative Politics have centered the analysis, above all, on the influence of institutional arrangements and electoral observation missions on the quality of elections. In this line, some authors are developing sophisticated methodologies to identify possible fraud occurrences using vote counts. Then, Americanists in Political Science analyze as determinants of confidence in the electoral process the interaction of voters with voting machines, and the experience with the process in itself (e.g. time spent waiting in line). All in all, most of the studies concentrate on technical rather than social considerations.

Afterwards, I developed a double-folded theory to explain this anomalous situation where voters do not trust elections in the absence of fraud. On the one hand, I argue that voters' embeddedness and trust in members of their community ("the local experience") impact their perceptions of trustworthiness of the electoral administration. On the other hand, I claim that voters trust more or less the electoral process conditioned on their perceptions of fairness in how different social groups are treated ("global effect"). Moreover, I contend the *"global effect"* can be originated by different motivations. Drawing a parallel with economic voting theory, I state there are two possible motivations: egotropic or sociotropic. The attribution of responsibility is mediated by the clarity of who is responsible. When comparing the two possible theoretical explanations, I argue

the *"local experience"* provides immediate and clear information to voters about the election, while the *"global effect"* can be more distant and blurry.

In the next chapter, I describe the political trajectories and social conditions of the four countries in Central America that I chose to test my theoretical claims in the rest of this dissertation. These countries –Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras- represent a good selection because of their differences and similarities. The next chapter also includes a description of the recent presidential elections in each of these four places. Notwithstanding marginal irregularities, I show the electoral processes where consider free from fraud and the results accepted by all political parties and the international community. Later, chapter 4 describes the results of the survey conducted by CID Gallup in those countries, and preliminary empirical foundations for my theoretical assertions.

Chapter 3. Four countries in Central America: trajectories to democracy, socio-economic conditions, and a brief description of their last electoral cycle.

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced my theory to explain voters' confidence in the electoral process. This theoretical framework provides an approach to understand voters' low trust in the election in a context of not known irregularities in the process. I proposed two possible explanations. First, what I called the *"local experience"*; voters can assign responsibility about the quality of the election to their neighbors. Since the community is involved in the implementation of the electoral process, voters trust in the people from the neighborhood impact how confident they are that the election was conducted appropriately. If a voter has a low opinion of the people in charge of their polling station, she will likely have doubts about their performance or impartiality. Second, what I called the *"global effect"*; perceptions of unequal treatment in society affect the way people perceive the transparency of the electoral process. The existence of consistent *losers* decrease the hopes that the electoral process as a whole could work as a fair mechanism to account for socioeconomic inequality and social injustice. This explanation can be motivated by personal interest or moral social considerations.

In this chapter, I describe in detail the characteristics of the four countries from Central America I use to test empirically the mentioned theoretical claims. The countries under study –Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras- constitute 4 of the 7 nations in the region. Costa Rica has the oldest democratic

region –since 1948-, the most stable political institutions, and it has the lower poverty rate. However, it is one of the few countries in Latin America that increased their inequality index. The other three had a problematic trajectory and, sometimes, violent path to democracy, but currently they have a consolidated democratic regime. El Salvador has improved consistently over the last years its social indicators. Guatemala and Honduras still have important social debts and their improvements have being erratic. Finally, I describe the last presidential election that had place before the survey I present in chapters 4 and 5 had been conducted. Using information of electoral observation missions, I show the four elections have been qualify as clean and fair. Notwithstanding a few denounces of irregularities, the results had been accepted by all contestants and the international community.

Figure 3. 1 Map of Central America

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows. In the first section I describe the different political systems that the countries have, and each particular trajectory to democracy. In the second section, I describe these countries' socioeconomic characteristics, emphasizing on their differences and similarities in terms of poverty and inequality levels. Finally, in the last section, I describe each country's recent electoral cycle analyzed in this dissertation.

3.2 Trajectories to Democracy

In this section I describe briefly the political history of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala y Honduras, the different paths they followed to become democracies, and the current political characteristics. Studying confidence in elections requires to have historical political knowledge of the countries under study because it can condition or explain the opinions citizens hold about their political institutions. All four countries have similarities and contrasts, particularly between Costa Rica and the rest. All four countries have presidential regimes. None of them have any type of federal arrangement. The history of political violence, age of their democratic systems, and institutional stability differs greatly. In the following paragraphs, I synthetize each of these four countries' historic paths towards democracy and its main institutional features in terms of their strength and stability.

3.2.1 Costa Rica's political trajectory[2]

In the late 19th century, Costa Rica experienced remarkable transformation, due to the coffee export boom, the universal enfranchisement act (1889) and its educational reform. After Zeledon's administration, the military was successfully put under civil rule and coup attempts were replaced by political bargaining and coalition building. That party system lasted for long and guaranteed alternation and civil participation. Anyway, political oppression and fraud were ultimately common, since 1871 Constitution gave the ruling party the right to manipulate the electoral process. But over the time political reforms succeeded to create a more competitive system. In 1913, direct vote with an absolute majority requirement for victory was enacted. Later, in 1925, vote was ruled secret and a strong National Electoral System was created.

Like in other Central American countries, 1930 world economic crisis hit the middle class and unrest arose in the agricultural sector, both among lords and peasants. But Costa Rica government's reaction was far from the ones other governments in the region displayed. While in Guatemala labor unions' leaders were executed and every expression of disenchantment was heavily repressed, in Costa Rica a minimum wage for rural peasant was approved. While in El Salvador major landowners formed a coalition to pursue their interest, in Costa

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[2] This section is based on (Camacho 1999; Bulgarelli 2004; Garcia,2004)

Rica an institute for coffee production promotion was created to improve the relation between big and small producers.

Notwithstanding those progressive social reforms, Costa Rica's political trajectory by that time was one of great instability. In 1948, the Congress ignored the election's result when the opposition candidate Otilio Ularte had resulted winner. That triggered a civil war, later on called "Revolution of 1948". For 18 months after the Revolution, a Junta governed without Congress, through executive decrees, pursuing ambitious reforms. It nationalized bank deposits, enacted a 10% capital tax and created a handful of regulatory institutions such as the Institute of Electricity.

In 1948, a Constitutional Assembly was elected to sanction a constitutional reform which included the abolition of the Army. The executive branch's power saw a great decrease of its political power with the reform. A new autonomous Electoral Institute was created, which meant a loss of the power of supervision and control the President held over the electoral process. The reelection was forbidden after two presidential periods and the President was compelled to share the power to enact executive decrees with his ministers. The central government also lost some power to the newly autonomous municipalities, which gained political and fiscal autonomy.

The constitutional reform shaped an institutional arrangement that resulted in the long term consolidation of two big political coalitions: PLN (*Partido Liberal Nacional*) and PUSC (*Partido Unidad Social Cristiana*). From that point, though

in some decades the PLN showed a great hegemony over the political system, the democratic regime was consolidated.

The most salient policy issues over the first decades of the new constitutional rule were the educational reforms, which created several new universities and increased budget for education, the female electoral enfranchisement, the creation of economic policy and financial institutions such as the Central Bank and the economic integration with other countries in the region.

3.2.2 Guatemala's political trajectory

After the Revolution of 1944, Guatemala moved from the previous liberal regime towards a more development-oriented egalitarian one. The ten years after the Revolution and the new Constitution (1945) set the basis for a new political and social regime, with better legal and social conditions for popular sectors. The support for these governments came from urban middle income sectors' political parties, popular sector organization and workers' and rural peasants' mobilization. During these administrations, the state increased its participation in the economy and its regulatory capacities to ensure better working and living conditions for workers. Arbenz's administration pursued an agrarian reform to modernize labor relations and popular mobilization, but achieved instead a sharper political

opposition from the oligarchy and big American companies, such as the United Fruit Company (Donghi 1990).

In 1954, an authoritarian relapse took place. The new anti-communist government limited political participation and mobilization through heavy repression (Donghi 1990). This situation led to a great disenchantment by the share of the society that had taken profit from the participatory environment and popular policies of the former administration. This disenchantment forged a big guerrilla movement by the 1960. The armed conflict lasted 36 years, from 1960 to 1997 and was one of the crudest and most violent in the whole region. Its victims are estimated around 200,000 (El Mundo, 2011).

In response to repression and the many consecutive military administrations, many demonstrations against human rights violations started to spread, coming both from guerrilla movements and social organizations. This led to another military coup, commanded by General Efrain Rios Montt. After three years of military rule, in 1985 a democratic transition took place, as well as a constitutional reform. A Constitutional Court, an Electoral Court, a Human Rights Violations prosecution agency and the ban on presidential reelection were some of the institutions created by this reform, designed to consolidate democracy[3].

During the democratic transition, a democratic regime had to coexist with an active fight against armed insurgency in Guatemala. The military regained power

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[3]"PNUD" (2016)

with this anti-guerrilla campaign and triggered two coup attempts in 1988 and 1989. Crucially, for the sake of democratic consolidation, the armed forces' elites did not support those coup attempts. The military's commitment with democracy showed to be strong again when President Jorge Serrano Elias, in 1991, tried to dissolve the Congress and the Supreme Court. Ultimately, this led to the fall of his administration. The military cooperated with the Constitutional Court in assuring the transparency of the government change.

Over the 1990s, twelve peace agreements were reached between the government and the National Revolutionary Unit of Guatemala (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*). The Peace Agreements also set the basis for some extent of economic prosperity. Since they were signed, poverty decreased and investment rates increased. Education and labor market became open for broader parts of the population. Most relevantly, indigenous population, which as noted above makes more than half of total population in Guatemala, saw traditional barriers to education and labor force participation decrease (ECLAC, 2010). Nevertheless, the political system still suffers of major flaws that prevent it from achieving crucial economic and social reforms. The state has little institutional capabilities to pursue public policy. Its first obstacle is fiscal. In 1996 they set a target for fiscal revenue as percentage of GDP of 12% for 2000. As little as this figure may seem, they failed to achieve it. Another problem is the party system's weakness, which entails the impossibility of any intertemporal commitment to a long term policy path. Parties only work as a cohesive and disciplined machine in electoral times. Since parties are financed almost entirely privately, their

organization is contingent upon the formation and action of interest groups. This weakens the possibility of a more institutionalized political competition and, thus, stable and strong policy reforms.

3.2.3 El Salvador's political trajectory

In the late 19th century, El Salvador had liberal governments in a similar trend to its neighbors. As in other export-oriented countries in the region, the global crisis of 1929 heavily hit the economy. Indigenous population and rural peasants mobilized, but got heavily repressed. Civil unrest ended up causing a military coup in 1932. From that moment, a long sequence of authoritarian governments began, lasting until the early 1980s.

Authoritarian rule was incapable of boosting economic growth and social inclusion. A weak external sector with constantly falling prices of coffee and the persistence of electoral fraud triggered the insurgence of armed groups and a civil war that would cause the death of 75,000 people (PNUD 2015). The conflict involved three main groups: i) the counter-insurgent government coalition, formed by conservative in the military and members from the PDC (*Partido Demócrata Cristiano*); ii) the extreme right, ultra-conservative opposition from which ARENA (*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista*) emerged; iii) the Revolutionary Democratic Front, FDR (*Frente Democrático Revolucionario*), led

by the FMLN (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional*) in coalition with democratic leaders (Turcios 1997).

Though in 1984 the first free elections were celebrated, civil war continued. During the first years of democratic transition, the world started speaking of El Salvador as "a young and new democracy", but the political regime was only democratic at an electoral level (Munck 1993). Napoleon Duarte's administration had almost none real power. The main political actors were the military, the United States and the insurgents (Van der Borgh 2003). As time went by and elections kept on being celebrated, actors that previously had chosen not to participate in them slowly started engaging in the democratic process and leaving the armed conflict. Such was the case of the Revolutionary Democratic Front, formerly associated to the FMLN. Along elections and stronger political parties, social organizations started to grow, mobilize and engage politics (Williams and Walter 1998).

The armed conflict ended in 1992, with the signature of the Peace Agreements in Mexico between the right-wing alliance ARENA and the FMLN. After that, ARENA became the hegemonic party, winning every presidential election until 2009. Only in 2009 did the left wing FMLN win an election and become government.

Since the peace agreements, the country has improved its Human Development Index qualification, decreased its illiteracy, malnourishment and child mortality

rates. Political stability has proved to be a great booster for slow but continuous social and economic achievements.

3.2.4 Honduras' political trajectory[4]

After the war Honduras fought against El Salvador in 1969, a strong sense of nationalism arose in popular sectors and relieved for a short while traditional cleavages of social conflict. In 1971, a commitment between the two main parties (*Partido Nacional de Honduras* and *Partido Liberal de Honduras*) gave place to a unified government. That would not last for long. President Cruz respected at first the pact of an even distribution of positions in the cabinet for each party and former dictator Lopez Arellano as chief of the military. Not long afterwards, Cruz fired two of his PLH ministers, stopped the ongoing project of agrarian reform, and extended imports cutting fiscal benefits for local enterprises. That made him earn the disapproval of all rural peasants, labor unions, businessmen, which led to a nonviolent coup that restituted power to Lopez Arellano. Bad economic results, natural disasters and corruption scandals eroded the support for Arellano. He was later on replace by another army general, Melgar Castro. Castro did not enjoy greater success, and only a few months later was replaced by Policarpo Paz Garcia.

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[4] This section is based on Merrill (1993); Rojas Bolaño (1994); Posas and Cid (1983).

Paz Garcia called for elections in 1980. That electoral process resulted in a political agreement between parties (PLH and PNH) and the military to share government positions, both in the cabinet and in Congress. That Congress faced the tough duty of writing a new Constitution, in a political deliberation that lasted more than a year.

The result of the first electoral process regulated by the new Constitution was a big victory for PLH, giving the presidency to Roberto Suazo Cordova. Cordova chose to develop a close tie with the United States as he perceived the Sandinista government of Nicaragua as a potential threat to Honduran interests and therefore chose to ally with the US. His successor, Azcona, tried to move away from Cordova's policies, especially regarding the relation with the United States. He wanted to cooperate with Reagan but without reneging sovereignty. In the end, he could not deal with the political challenge the civil war in Nicaragua and the boom of drug trafficking and organized crime represented. He left office without having been able to overcome his general weakness and denouncing several encompassing conspiracies that, allegedly, had prevented him from achieving his goals.

His successor, Callejas, pursued a more aggressive strategy toward those challenges. He deported 12,000 Nicaraguans who lived in Honduras and rejected United States' intervention. In the economic side, he implemented a set of reforms, following the Washington Consensus' recommendations, with the supervision of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Those

included a great devaluation of the national currency, in an attempt to recover some competitiveness. As could be expected, that policy had a negative impact over some sectors that were already disadvantaged and Callejas lost the following election to the opposition candidate.

At this point, Honduran democracy seemed pretty well consolidated. Its competition between two stable, ideologically differentiated parties resembled that of the most institutionalized democracies in the planet. However, a recent episode put that in question. President Manuel Zelaya, from PLH, replaced right wing market oriented President Ricardo Maduro, who had been successful in stabilizing the economy and reducing debt but not in fighting poverty. Zelaya changed dramatically that ideological orientation, shifting toward a tight partnership with socialist Hugo Chavez from Venezuela. In March 2009, although the Supreme Court and the Electoral Court had alleged that his attempt to reform the Constitution was illegal, Zelaya pursued the electoral process anyway. Given the denial of the Chief of the Army to cooperate in the ballot distribution and the organization of the election, he removed him. Having earned with the whole constitutional reform process the opposition of almost every relevant political actor, he was overturned by the military leaders, who named PNH's leader Roberto Micheletti President instead.

This coup was heavily criticized by the international community[5]. However, the

Congress and Micheletti refused to comply with the request of restituting the

removed President in office. In late 2009, new elections led to conservative

Porfirio Lobo elected President. Although he was at first only recognized

officially as President by a handful of countries (and ignored by most Latin

Americans) an active campaign of negotiation, consensus building and

reconcilement led to only one rejection (Ecuador's) when the Organization of

American States voted whether to accept Honduras again as a full member. In

2011, Lobo himself with Zelaya sealed an agreement called "Agreement for

National Reconcilement and the Consolidation of Democratic System in the

Republic of Honduras". As of today, political stability appears to have been fully

reestablished in Honduras.

3.3 Socioeconomic characteristics

In this section I briefly describe the social composition and relevant

socioeconomic measures for these four countries. As reported by CEPAL (see

Table 3.I in Appendix), El Salvador has been showing a declining trend of income

inequality. Whereas in Costa Rica, the Gini Index has been gradually rising. For a

country that has been relatively equal -particularly when compared to its

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[5]http://www.bbc.com/mundo/america_latina/2009/06/090628_1627_honduras_reacciones
_mr.shtml

neighbors in Latin America- higher numbers for the Gini Index turned the issue of socioeconomic distribution (or income fairness) into a salient one. However, in terms of poverty measures, both Costa Rica an El Salvador have been declining their numbers, as show for Table 3.II in Appendix (Poverty headcount ratio at $1.90/day as a percentage of population). On the other hand, Guatemala and Honduras do not show any specific pattern. Both in terms of poverty and inequality index, these countries displaya more erratic behavior than a clear decline or rise.

Inequality indicators in Costa Rica contrast with its good performance in other crucial social variables. Costa Rica has only 22.4% of population below the poverty line[6], which is not only the least among these four countries but also one of the lowest in the whole American continent. Public social investment also places Costa Rica as the best performer in the region. Investing 6.3% of GDP in education (as opposed, for instance, to 3.4% by El Salvador and 3% by Guatemala), a similar figure to the ones Scandinavian countries or many other developed countries show, has allowed Costa Rica to reach a 97.8% literacy rate[7].

Public investment in health also shows Costa Rica in an advantaged position. Having invested 9.9% of GDP in health expenditure, Costa Rica is placed again among developed countries as the ones that spend the most[8]. Guatemala and El Salvador, meanwhile, only spend 6.7% of GDP. All this comparatively

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[6] http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/costarica/overview
[7] http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/costarica
[8] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cs.html

remarkable social performance indicators help explain why Costa Rica is the only Central American country whose migration balance shows a positive figure.

Guatemala's situation in terms of income inequality is one of deep structural inequalities. In 2002, 1% of the population owned 13.9% of the gross total income in the country. Ten percent of the population earned half of the whole country's income. On the other side, the poorest 20% of the population only earned 1.6% of the gross income (OAS 2005)[9]. Poor population is concentrated in rural areas. Heavily concentrated land and inefficient agrarian structures help very little to improve the situation of the people who live in those areas, which make the majority of its population.

In terms of development and social welfare, El Salvador is a poor country but with a good performance over the last 20 years. El Salvador is the Latin American country that has increased its Human Development Index the most, moving from 0.5 to 0.68 [10]. In social aspects it has also shown quite a good performance. Literacy rate among adults has increased from 72% in 1992 to 87% in 2011. Those rates are even higher among under-15 population, which is a proxy of the progress being made in education. Access to clean water, to decent housing and to health care services have all increased substantially over the last two decades.

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[9]OAS. 2005. *Informe Comparativo de Políticas y Estrategias para la Prevención del Fracaso Escolar en Centroamérica*. Nicaragua, June 2005.
[10]http://www.sv.undp.org/content/el_salvador/es/home/countryinfo/

However, El Salvador is one of the developing countries most heavily hit by crime. Its murder rates are the highest in the region, and in recent years they have spiked to over 70 homicides for every 100,000 habitants for instance in 2009[11]. Furthermore, during 2015 about 6,600 people were killed, which for a population of 6 million represents a very high number[12]. This trend makes El Salvador one of the most violent countries in the world. In 2015, its migration rate (Salvadoreños leaving the country minus foreigners migrating to El Salvador) was -8.28. This placed El Salvador in #209 among 222 countries, meaning it is one of the least immigration-attractive countries in the world. As a matter of fact, within the four countries, Costa Rica is the only one showing a positive figure (0.83) for a migration rate. For Honduras it is -1.16 and for Guatemala is -1.97[13].

In terms of development, 2008 world crisis had a very strong impact over El Salvador's economy. Poverty rates, which had been persistently falling, climbed up to the levels they had shown 10 years before, over one third of the population. Informality in the labor market is also a great challenge to social protection policy. Although the 7% unemployment rate does not look bad, 44% percent of the economically active population are informally employed and earning wages below the minimum defined by law[14].

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[11] See http://www.bancomundial.org/es/country/elsalvador/overview
[12] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/01/05/why-el-salvador-became-the-hemispheres-murder-capital/
[13] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/
[14] http://www.sv.undp.org/content/el_salvador/es/home/

Honduras is the second poorest country in the American continent, just behind

Haiti. Its GDP per capita is as low as US$ 4700. However, as many of its

neighbors in the region, it has experienced a steady growth for the last 15 years,

with the sole exception of 2009 world crisis[15]. Social indicators show a very poor

performance as well. Honduras is the 9th poorest country in the world, surpassed

in America only by Haiti[16]. Services and agriculture are the most significant

activities in Honduran GDP. Coffee and sugar are the most important crops. Most

of the industrial activities involve processing these commodities into consumption

goods, with little added value. Honduran economy depends heavily on the United

States, especially since 2006 free trade agreement. In 2014, 43.5% of all imports

and 32.5% exports to and from Honduras were traded in the US.

Honduras has also a very poor business environment. According to the World

Bank's "Doing Business" index, Honduras is ranked #110 among 189 countries.

Its bad reputation is strongly tied to its perceived corruption of the public sector[17].

Although the unemployment rate, currently 4.3%, is not high, over half of the

economically active population are informally employed, with wages below the

legal minimum. Moreover, Honduras is also the second most unequal country in

the American continent, after Haiti. The richest 10% of the population earns

41.5% of all national income, while the poorest 10% earns just 1% of it.[18]Finally,

Honduras holds one of the highest murder rate in the world. In recent years, the

[15]http://www.datosmacro.com/paises/honduras
[16]https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ho.html
[17]http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/honduras
[18]http://datos.bancomundial.org/pais/honduras

number of homicides (84 for every 100,000 people)[19] stand greatly above the rates of its neighbors and has only been surpassed by El Salvador's.

In terms of social composition, there are big differences among Central American countries also. According to an OAS report, Guatemala's population is 66% indigenous[20]. Also, half of the total population lives in rural areas. As noted above, Guatemala shares with Honduras the greatest levels of economic inequality in the region, though not the demographic characteristics, since only 6% of Honduran population is indigenous. In El Salvador, only 1% of population is indigenous, with 90% mestizo and 9% white. In Costa Rica, only 2.4% of total population corresponds to native indigenous people, which is also divided into 8 ethnic groups.

3.4 The last electoral cycle

In this section, I address the particular electoral process that each one of these countries experienced right before the survey was conducted. Namely presidential elections taking place on 2011 in Guatemala, during November 2013 in Honduras and early 2014 for El Salvador and Costa Rica. Hence, the information with

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[19]http://www.datosmacro.com/paises/honduras
[20]http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/moe/guatema2011/ficha.asp

respect to these recent electoral cycles is relevant to understand the data analysis in the following chapters.

3.4.1 Costa Rica, 2014 presidential election

On February 2014, Costa Rica voters cast their ballots to elect a new President, Vice President and 57 representatives to the National Assembly. Unlike other countries in the region, voting in Costa Rica is compulsory and registration is automatic. For this specific electoral process, voter turnout was about 69%[21].

Thirteen different candidates ran for the presidency. Luis Solis Rivera, from PAC (*Partido de Accion Ciudadana*) got 31% of the votes, while Johnny Araya Monge, from the incumbent party (*Partido de Liberacion Nacional*) fell just one point behind, with 30%. Costa Rica's electoral system includes a second round if no party gets 40% of the votes. On April 2014, then, a *ballotage* between these two candidates went on, resulting in Solis Rivera's victory with 77% of the votes. That huge margin may be explained by the fact that Araya Monge tried to retreat from the new election, which is forbidden by Costa Rica's electoral law. His party did not mobilize voters for this second round and voting turnout fell to 56.5%.

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[21]Tribunal Supremo Electoral de Costa Rica: http://www.tse.go.cr/AplicacionVisualizador/datos.aspx

This result meant that for the very first time a candidate coming neither from *calderonismo* nor the Liberal Party won the presidency. In fact, Solis Rivera lost most electoral districts. His victory was built upon his great success in the central valley, the most densely populated area and with a medium-high socioeconomic profile. PAC could not win the legislative elections, it got just 13 representatives appointed, while the PLN got 18. All the other seats were distributed among smaller parties.

The resulting political landscape is one the greatest party fragmentation in the last 61 years. The effective number of parties (4.9) is the highest since 1953. This fragmentation has led to a challenging scenario of divided government[22].

This election was novel not only because some of its unprecedented results but also because they were the first implementation of 2009's Electoral Reform. That reform pursued to improve supervision and control overall, and also gender representation. This second target was not achieved, since only 33.3% of elected charges were for women (38% in the previous election)[23].

The OAS supervised the whole electoral process and considered it "excellent". They also gave credit to the Electoral Court's autonomy and reliability, praising the good fulfillment of the electoral calendar and the organization of several

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[22]http://www.estadonacion.or.cr/files/biblioteca_virtual/020/politica/Alfaro&Gomez2014.pdf
[23]http://www.estadonacion.or.cr/files/biblioteca_virtual/020/politica/Alfaro&Gomez2014.pdf

debates to better inform voters[24]. The main concern the Electoral Observation Mission expressed regarding the electoral process had to do with campaigns financing. Minority parties alleged that electoral polls were used by private donators as a proxy to final electoral performance, which meant a bias in campaign donations. Also, they complained about the scarcity of public financing for political parties, which also works through small direct transfers. Unlike many other systems, public financing does not include the assignment of media slots to deploy their campaign.

Media coverage was the most controversial and disputed aspect of the last electoral process in Costa Rica. Three presidential candidate from minor parties denounced violations of the principle of political equality in not having invited all candidates to the presidential debates but only those who were ahead in the polls. The Electoral Observation Mission considered that, although all procedures leading to that are legal, the situation of unequal access to media should be somehow addressed as a real problem. In fact, of all thirteen candidates to the presidency, only five concentrated 88% of the news coverage. The Mission also recommended the creation of an equal assignment of media slots for every party to present their political platforms to the public.

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[24]OAS. 2014. Electoral Observation Mission in Costa Rica:
http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/moe_informe/InfoVerbalMOECostaRica2014.pdf

3.4.2 Guatemala, 2011 presidential election

The last electoral process in Guatemala took place on September 2011. Many positions were then in contest: president, vice-president, 158 national representatives, 333 municipal assemblies and 20 seats in the Central American Parliament. The elected President was Otto Perez Molina, from PP (*Partido Patriota*), defeating in the second round Manuel Baldizón from LIDER (*Partido Libertad Democrática Renovada*). After a tight first round, where Perez Molina just got 36% of the votes, he got 53.7% in the second round.

These elections also showed the highest level of electoral turnout in Guatemala's history. It is worth mentioning that voting is non mandatory in Guatemala, and registration is not automatic. For this election, half of the population got registered, and a 69% of those showed up for voting in the first electoral round (60% in the second).This electoral turnout, though a record for this country's history, is not surprising, since in recent years there has been a noticeable increase in political participation and civic engagement in Guatemala. Besides, electoral reforms in 2004 and 2006 made it easier for rural population to vote.

In terms of representation of social minorities, results are quite disappointing. Only 13% of the seats in dispute were won by indigenous candidates. That figure contrasts sharply with the 66% of indigenous population in the country. Women are not better represented. They only hold 12% of the Parliament's seats.

Remarkably, however, registration for elections is persistently higher among women than men[25].

The partisan landscape is both of fragmentation and high instability. The effective number of parties in the parliament is 6.4. But the most salient aspect of that fragmentation is volatility. Most of the parties that participated in 2011 elections are less than 10 years old. Among them, especially, both those who took part in the second round (PP and LIDER). Parties' cohesion is driven more by charismatic leaderships than programmatic similarities or differences.

Another controversial issue in Guatemala's elections was political campaign financing. Parties depend highly on private contributions to do political campaigning. Although several different decisions from the Electoral Court limited the extent to which private agents could donate to a political party, much of the campaign financing goes through black channels and eludes these regulations, which have little or no enforcement at all.

There were also several incidents during the electoral process raising doubt over the transparency of the whole election. Multiple different problems were denounced: coercive voter mobilization, threats and the use of force to determine people's vote, fake identifications, fraud and even the murder of voters and candidates.

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[25]Núñez Vargas, E. "Siete claves para el cambio". Guatemala: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2008

The Electoral Observation Mission (*Mirador Electoral*) reported an increase in

the number of episodes of this worrying kind, compared to those general elections

in 2003 and 2007[26]. Even so, denounces of fraud or similar disputed situations are

densely concentrated in a short minority of electoral districts. In the majority of

all districts, no allegations of any kind of controversial procedures have been

made. In balance, although there appeared to be some isolated issues in the

ballots, they were concentrated in a small number of places, and while in the rest

of the country elections were presumed to be transparent. Different political actors

agreed that the electoral process was overall clean and gave support to the

Electoral Court (*Tribunal Superior Electoral*). Most of the electoral supervisors

came from Guatemala (14,023 local monitors), but some arrived from abroad

(317 international monitors).

Some international organizations' reports (including Konrad Adenauer Stiftung)

and national political actors have underscored the necessity of reforming the law

that regulates both elections and political parties. They argue that the Electoral

Court and the law enforcement should be strengthened, while they emphasize the

importance of bolstering engagement of indigenous population and women[27].

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[26]Mirador Electoral "Informe sobre violencia y conflictividad electoral". Guatemala, 2011
[27]Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, *Informe Analítico del Proceso Electoral Guatemala 2011*. Guatemala: Editorial AIES, 2012.

3.4.4 El Salvador, 2014 presidential election

Last election in El Salvador took place in 2014. The FMLN won with 48.9% of votes, leaving ARENA in the second place with 39%. This is not enough for El Salvador's electoral regulation, so a second round had to be organized between the two traditional parties. The FMLN won also the second round, but with a very small margin of less than 1%[28]. Thus, Salvador Sánchez Cerén was elected president, replacing Mauricio Funes, also from FMLN. Electoral turnout was near its historical average in the country, 55% of registered voters showed up in the first round, and while 60.88% did it in the second round. First round's turnout was below El Salvador's average, but second round's was above[29].

The election in 2014 was also the time for the first implementation of several electoral reforms from the previous years. First, in 2011 the Supreme Court had decided the unconstitutionality of the closed ballot system. Thus, the last election had to be celebrated with an open ballot system, allowing voters to choose candidates from different parties, until completion of the numbers of seats in dispute. Citizens living abroad were enabled to vote and rural population would have better access to voting locations. The Electoral Court had its attributions

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[28]http://www.tse.gob.sv/2014/escrutiniofinal_1ray2davuelta/pres1/pais.html

[29]http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/MOE_informe/InformeVerbal_El_Salvador.pdf

revised and redefined, closing a gap in the legislation that had left the Electoral

Court with little regulation of its jurisdiction and capabilities[30].

On Election Day, several incidents casted attention and raised doubts over the

transparency of the process. These included claims of unconstitutionality of

different candidacies, the alleged participation of gangs in the electoral process,

and several corruption scandals involving the General Prosecutor, the Supreme

Court and the President himself. At the very minimum, consensus was reached on

the fact that the voters' registry was flawed[31].Then, the main source of conflict on

Election Day was the alleged participation of hierarchical public officials

campaigning for their parties, while in office, which is forbidden in El Salvador.

Several incidents regarding fake identities and fake identification documents also

arose.

The whole electoral process was supervised by the OAS Electoral Observation

Mission. This Mission was led by the former Bolivian chancellor Gustavo

Fernandez Saavedra and included 62 monitors from 21 different countries. The

observers agreed that the first round went on "in a satisfactory way, with no

serious incidents that could question the election's quality". Although there were

some episodes of political intimidation and threats, in a general perspective the

free vote provisions were respected. Electoral supervision by partisan delegates

certainly is connected to transparency. In almost every electoral location there

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[30]http://www.elsalvador.com/articulo/nacional/nuevas-reglas-del-juego-para-elecciones-2014-39088
[31]http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/MOE_informe/InformeVerbal_El_Salvador.pdf

were supervisors from both traditional parties. Then, 38% of all electoral observers graded the election as "excellent", 60% "good" and just 2% thought the election was "bad"[32].

In the second round, the Electoral Observation Mission increased its number of participants and the number of electoral locations they supervised, reaching over a third of all electoral locations in the country. The overall qualification of the election actually improved, with 52% of observed saying it had been "excellent", 46% "good" and just 2% "bad". The main sources of conflict during this second round Election Day were very much the same as the first round: coercion, threats, issues with voters' registry and identification issues. Many fraud allegations were politically driven. The fact that the defeated party (ARENA) only got 10000 votes less than the winner encouraged its members to denounce fraud and claim for a new election. Many of those allegations reached the judiciary. After long judicial processes, the Electoral Court and the Supreme Court decided there were not enough reasons to doubt of the validity of the electoral results[33].

The Electoral Observation Mission published a report in which it says there had been no evidence of electoral fraud, and that the election had been free and clean. It also praises the success of all the reforms that had been enacted before the election and first implemented during it. However, the report also states a set of reforms that should be further pursued: the generalization of the residential vote,

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[32]http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/MOE_informe/InformeVerbal_El_Salvador.pdf
[33]http://www.tse.gob.sv/documentos/Elecciones2014/audiencias/denuncias2014.pdf

the regulation of policemen's vote, improvement in the infrastructural conditions of the electoral locations, and, most important, the publications of all registers of voters and franchises.

3.4.4 Honduras, 2013 presidential election

The last election in Honduras took place in late 2013. The elected positions were president, vice-president, 128 national representatives, 20 representatives to the Central American Parliament, 298 mayors and 2092 *regidores*. The electoral turnout, around 61%, was higher than in previous elections. The winning party was *Partido Nacional*, with 36.9%. Juan Orlando Hernandez was elected president and replaced Porfirio Lobo, also from *Partido Nacional*. The main opponents were Castro de Zelaya from *PartidoLibre* (28.8%), Villeda from *Partido Liberal* (20.3%) and Nasralla from PAC (13.4%).

The political context in which this election took place was difficult. Porfirio Lobo had overtaken Manuel Zelaya after the military coup. Lobo failed to keep the promise of welcoming Zelaya back as president in exchange of Zelaya's commitment not to reform the Constitution, which earned him the rejection of a big part of the international community. Unlike 2009 election, in 2013 parties from all over the political spectrum participated. Nine parties, from right to left, took part in the election, an unprecedented number for Honduran history. The

results meant the end of the two-party competition that had dominated the politics of Honduras all over its history. The political landscape is one of greater fragmentation than in the past and divided government. For the first time, in the congress there will be four important partisan groups, and the *Partido Nacional* will need to negotiate.

The Electoral Observation Mission from the European Union evaluated the electoral process as very positive. They praised the electoral transparency as well as everyone's respect for the results. Although both main parties alleged electoral fraud, a sophisticated new vote count by the Electoral Observation Mission showed the results were correct.

Nevertheless, a considerable number of incidents and various questionable episodes cast doubt on the strength of the electoral competitiveness. Both the Electoral Observation Mission from the OAS[34] and Mission from the EU[35] stress the following problematic issues in their reports.

First, like in many other systems, one problem involves campaign financing. According to the OAS, the legal framework in Honduras is not sufficient to ensure equitable competition. Moreover, the Electoral Court does not have the necessary tools and attributions to develop the control that would be needed to enforce this kind of regulations. In absence of that enforcement, parties and candidates act arbitrarily and deepen the inequalities in the system.EU's report

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[34]https://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/moe/honduras2013/docs/CPDec19.pdf
[35]http://www.eods.eu/library/EUEOM%20FR%20HONDURAS13.02.2014_es.pdf

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stress the excessive length of political campaigns in Honduras, to explain how costly they end up being. More strikingly, political parties in office use state resources to do political campaigning. That reduces the overall competitiveness of the system and increases inequalities.

This misuse of state resource takes several different forms. First, state publicity always ends up turning into partisan propaganda. Second, through clientelistic channels. For example, the so called "Bono 10000", a cash transfer for poor people, was delivered by government officials who explicitly called to vote for the incumbent party while doing so. The report also mentions situations in which other kinds of private consumption goods, or even food, were delivered to poor people in exchange for their vote.

The report prescripts the necessity of a reform to bolster transparency of every financial aspect of political campaigns. It also recommends forbidding institutional publicity during electoral periods. Besides, it is necessary to strengthen the institutional capabilities of the Electoral Court to prevent and prosecute effectively violations of every electoral regulation. Improving enforcement is a necessary condition for any other reform to succeed.

Another worrying issue, according to those reports, is inequality of access to mass media. The same reports show the bias in media coverage in favor of the parties with biggest chances of winning. This does nothing but deepen the gap between big and small parties. Many pieces of propaganda in media were found to violate

clearly the regulations of content. No matter how clear those violations were, the Electoral Court never intervened.

Voters' registration is also to be improved. Estimations from both Electoral Observation Missions agree that census data is very bad in Honduras, and that probably more than a third of the people in the census are actually migrants of dead. A better registry of the own population and an improvement in the quality of the identification documents should be needed to address both problems of poor data and fake identities issues. This registry includes home address verification, which is usually and by violent means changed for political purposes.

Violence is deeply present in everyday life in Honduras. That affects the performance not only of political institutions but also of the media. Threats, murders and intimidation drive journalists to do "self-censorship" and, by doing so, deepen the informative inequalities in the system.

The institutions in charge of electoral supervision and control are also highly politicized. Politicians use the state infrastructure to pursue their political interests and those institutions are not the exception. The lack of autonomy of these institutions (that reaches also the Electoral Court) exclude new participants from the political arena and prevent the engagement of greater parts of the civil society.

It is also necessary to improve the representation and participation of women and minority groups in politics in Honduras. The law that ordered that at least 40% of all lists were to be women, though was enacted, is not being enforced. The open

ballot tends to harm the minimum representation for women provision, since people are able to choose individual candidates from a plurinominal list and so able to exclude women. Indigenous and African-Honduran people are also negatively affected by the situation. The lack of any policy oriented directly toward these populations, such as electoral instruction in native languages, keeps these groups excluded from the political arena.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the political and social characteristics of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. I mentioned a clear contrast between Costa Rica and the test regarding the length of their democratic regimes, and less violent trajectory. Also, I described how unequal are Guatemala and Honduras, while El Salvador had been improving their social indicators steadily and Costa Rica -the most equal of the group- had been increasing its social differences. Correspondingly, I provided information about the closest electoral cycle been held in those countries before the survey used to test empirically the theory I outline in chapter 2. All four elections were contested, competitive, and recognize as clean and free from fraud by the competing parties and the international community. However, as I will show in the following two chapters, many people have a critical view about the quality of the process.

In the next chapter, I describe in detail the survey instrument and the

characteristics of its design. I provide a descriptive examination of the results,

including bivariate analysis that indicate there is preliminary evidence to sustain

my theoretical explanations.

Chapter 4. Confidence in Elections, Trust in the Community, and Perception of Fairness in the System: Descriptive Evidence from a Survey in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described in depth the characteristics of the four countries from Central America included in the survey I will describe in the present chapter. The countries social and political differences and similarities provide an ideal set of cases to study the determinants of confidence that I outlined previously. Both voters' trust in their community as well their perceptions of fairness in the system greatly influence how trustworthy they find the electoral process. Costa Rica became a democracy early on –in 1948-, has the most stable political institutions, and the lower poverty rate of the four. However, it is one of the few countries in Latin America that increased their inequality index during the last few years. The other three had a problematic political trajectory and, sometimes, violent path to democracy, but they currently have a consolidated democratic regime. El Salvador's social indicators have improved consistently over the last years, while Guatemala and Honduras still have significant social debts. Finally, chapter 3 provides information from electoral observation missions, mostly arguing in favor of the quality of the electoral process, as being free from extended fraud.

In this chapter, I present the survey conducted by CID Gallup in these four countries as part of their omnibus measurement. I provide details of the survey instruments, how the data was collected and, specifically, details of the priming experiment embedded in the questionnaire. The bivariate analysis shows a positive relation between voters' trust in their community and their confidence in the election, in line with the expectation for the "*local experience"* further developed in the theoretical chapter. Regarding the *"global effect"*, there is a clear association between confidence in the election and perceptions of fairness of income distribution. In this chapter I will provide evidence that those who understand income distribution in their country is unfair express lower levels of trust in the electoral process. Likewise, those who consider themselves as not favored –'losers' of the system– are less confident in the election.

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows. In the first section I describe the survey questions used to operationalize the dependent variable –confidence in the election-, the main independent variables –trust in the community and unfairness of the system treatment- and control variables. I give information about the experiment embedded in the survey as well as the advantages of such a research design. In the second section, I present an analysis of balance between treatment and control group to show there are no important differences among the two groups that could influence the results. In the third section, I show the descriptive results of the variable of interest. Finally, I conclude stating the main findings of the chapter.

4.2 Data and Experiment

To test the arguments developed in this dissertation, I am using a survey conducted by CID Gallup in four countries in Central America during May/June 2014. This wave of their omnibus survey included Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. The survey covers a nationally representative sample of about 1,200 cases, clustered by region within each country; resulting in a total of 4,838 respondents. I got access to the results of the electoral related questions of the survey. Among those, there is a population-based experiment that I can take advantage of to test part of my argument.

One of the most important questions for the purposes of this dissertation is the one asking about the level of trust in the last election. It was asked in a standard manner with a scale from 1 to 10. This question is used for the dependent variable (DV) in this study: *Trust in the Electoral Process*. Specifically, the question in the survey reads:

> *Now thinking of the last election, how would you rate it in a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means that the electoral process was completely unfair and fraudulent and 10 means that it was completely fair and clean. Please remember you may use any number between 1 and 10.*
>
> *1. Unfair and fraudulent   2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9   10. Clean and fair*

There are three more relevant questions for my research in the survey. The one used for the priming experiment, which I will describe later in detail. As well as the other two that constitute the main Independent Variables (IVs) to test my

hypotheses: a question about trust in different groups in the society and about perceptions on the fairness of income distribution in the country:

> *I would like to ask you how much you trust the people in the following groups, from 1 to 10 where 1 means no trust at all and 10 means absolute trust? Please remember you may use any number between 1 and 10.*
> **a. People in your neighborhood**
> b. *People from the lower class / poor people*
> c. *People from the upper class / rich people*

And,

> *In your opinion, how fair is the income distribution in [*name of respondent's country*]?*
> 1. *Very fair 2. Fair 3. Unfair 4. Very unfair*

In terms of the first one, I am going to focus particularly on the results obtained from the answers about the level of trust in the people from respondents' neighborhood. This is the question I use to test the local mechanisms a determinant of opinions over the quality of the election. The second question is my proposed way to operationalize what I call the global mechanism. In particular, this question allows me to test how perceptions about fairness of income distribution impact what people think about the electoral process. Also, it allows me to interact these responses with treatment and control groups to empirically reinforce my argument.

As mentioned above, there is an experiment embedded in the survey designed in order to prime respondents into the unfairness of the system. Due to the difficulty in pointing out one main causal mechanism using traditional survey data (Vicente and Wantchekon 2009), I take advantage of this priming effect to increase the

robustness of my theory. This method provides me with a way to test the

hypotheses, by cuing specific frames or topics before asking about the question of

interest. This large-scale survey experiment, allows me to analyze the effects of

priming respondents to think about unfairness in the system right before

evaluating their confidence in the electoral process. To my knowledge there are

not specific survey experiments in the literature of trust in elections, since

observational studies have dominated the field so far (Hartlyn, McCoy, and

Mustillo 2007; López Pintor, Systems, and Policy 2000; Mozaffar and Schedler

2002; Pastor 1999).

Randomized controlled experiments have gained popularity in Political Science

based on their effectiveness in solving problems of confounding and selection

bias (Dunning and Hyde 2008).

> *"With experiments, by contrast, random assignment ensures that treated and untreated groups are equivalent prior to the intervention, up to random error. With a large enough number of units, random error will play only a small role. Post-intervention differences across the treatment and control groups can then be reliably attributed to the effect of treatment."* (Dunning and Hyde, 2008)

As researchers, we are almost always interested in explaining causal relations. In

doing so, we are implicitly using the counterfactual. As Brady and Collier (2010)

define in the glossary of Rethinking Social Inquiry (2010),

> *"...the causal effect of a given explanatory factor on a particular outcome for a specific case at one point in time is defined on the basis of a comparison between the observed outcome and the hypothetical outcome that would have occurred in the same case at the same point in time if the explanatory factor had not been present."(pp. 323).*

The counterfactual is physically impossible, but randomization in group assignment allows to create two groups that are exactly the same – with some random error- which makes possible to isolate the effect of the variable of interest.

The basic requisite for this type of experiment to work is that the assignment of the subjects into the different groups is completely random. Randomization of group assignment is the tool that guarantees that both groups are completely equal in every factor –known and unknown. Thus, the outcome from the study is only attributable to the treatment that it is the only difference between the groups – internal validity.

Furthermore, experimental designs such as the one in this dissertation, provide the extra benefit of being conducted with subjects selected by sampling method. Population-based experiments not only guarantee internal validity, but also external validity.

> *"...when scholars want to be certain that a given relationship involves cause and effect, and that their theory may be generalized beyond a narrow pool of subjects, then this is precisely the context in which population-based survey experiments can make their biggest contribution."* (Mutz 2011)

The treatment and control randomization was conducted dividing countries in regions used as blocks. There are a total of 27 regions: 7 in Costa Rica, 8 in Guatemala, 7 in Honduras, and 5 in El Salvador. Both groups received the same questions, but in different order. Following Mutz's (2011) terminology, it was an

indirect treatment with intention *"to induce an altered mood and thought process"* on how some social groups are unfairly benefited to later ask about their confidence in the electoral process. The treatment consisted in priming into the existence of people and social groups that benefits from the system before asking about the election. Thus, the treatment is pointing to the existence of beneficiaries.

Specifically, respondents had to answer a five item question to state their opinion about how benefited are each of the social groups mentioned in the question:

> *Some people believe that certain groups in society are being UNFAIRLY BENEFITED. From the following groups, I would like you to tell me if you believe these were **very benefited, somewhat benefited, barely benefited, not benefited**.*
>
> > a. *Rich / Upper Class*
> > b. *Poor / Lower Class*
> > c. *Middle Class*
> > d. *The Working Class*
> > e. *People like you*

For the treatment group, the question above was asked right before asking them about their confidence in the last election (Question 1[36].). In other words, after respondents in the treatment group placed the different social groups and themselves as benefited or not, they were asked about their perceptions on the quality of the past election, the previously described DV. The control group

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[36] Numbering is not original, it is used only for description purposes.

received this same questions, but the order was altered. Question 1 (DV) was asked first, followed by question 2 (priming treatment).

By asking about the electoral process first, and the priming one later in the questionnaire, it is possible to test how respondents' perceptions over the unfairness of the system influence their consideration of the electoral process' trustworthiness. Questions 3 and 4 were asked in the same order for control and treatment groups, in both cases after questions 1 and 2, ergo not affecting the priming experiment.

Unfortunately, the survey did not collect information about how respondents voted, for which candidate they casted their ballot for. Instead, they were asked which party they preferred or supported. The later question allows me to create a variable indicating support for the incumbent party, opposition party or independents.

For example, in Costa Rica in 2014 the incumbent party after the election took place was PAC (*Partido de Acción Ciudadana*), so therefore the variable "Support for the Winning Party" is a dummy that takes 1 if respondent supports the party PAC and 0 otherwise. Alternatively, I created a different variable that takes 3 possible categories: Government, Opposition and Independent.

Considering partisan affinity of respondents is relevant because there is a strong agreement in the literature that supporters for the winner party have higher levels of trust in the electoral process than those who support the losing party. The

results in the survey show party support is a good proxy, having the same effect as voting for the winner has on the level of trust.

In terms of other possible control variables, I consider the traditional ones: respondent's age, education level, gender, and if they live in an urban or rural area. Unfortunately, the survey does not provide any information on respondents' income, assets, occupation, ethnicity or race.

4.3 Analysis of balance

Although an analysis of balance is not strictly necessary to show how randomization worked –an even in some cases can be considered a wrong exercise (Mutz 2011) – I present the results to show that the answers to the questions that constituted the priming do not differ between treatment and control group. I am specifically interested in showing that there are no differences among groups in the number of respondents that identify themselves as very favored, favored, not very favored, and not favored. This variable will be a key one when I try to identify different effects of the treatment between those who see themselves as part of the winner or loser group. Also, it is useful to see that all socio-economic variables are well balanced, showing no significant differences among the groups.

Table 4. 1 Analysis of Balance for treatment and control groups.

Variable		N	Mean	Treated	Control	*t-value*
Age		4838	5.08	5.06	5.11	-0.531
Female		4838	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.377
Up to primary complete		4838	0.42	0.42	0.40	1.158
Up to secondary complete		4838	0.43	0.42	0.44	-1.335
Up to college complete		4838	0.15	0.16	0.16	-0.048
Rural		4838	0.45	0.44	0.43	0.992
Rich benefited	Very favored	4838	0.69	0.70	0.68	1.392
	Favored	4838	0.17	0.17	0.17	-0.402
	Not very favored	4838	0.09	0.09	0.10	-0.700
	Not favored	4838	0.05	0.04	0.05	-0.965
Poor benefited	Very favored	4838	0.04	0.04	0.04	-0.274
	Favored	4838	0.20	0.18	0.21	-1.990
	Not very favored	4838	0.37	0.37	0.37	-0.413
	Not favored	4838	0.39	0.42	0.38	1.793
You benefited	Very favored	4838	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.113
	Favored	4838	0.16	0.15	0.16	-0.700
	Not very favored	4838	0.31	0.30	0.32	-1.413
	Not favored	4838	0.50	0.52	0.49	1.349

4.4 Descriptive Results

The present section shows the results of the survey focusing on the distribution of

opinions on the aforementioned questions. I present aggregated results and

variation of responses among the four countries and some demographics. More

importantly, I present an analysis of the relationship between the dependent

variable (DV) and main independent variables (IVs), representing a preview of

the models in the following chapter.

4.4.1 Dependent variable

The distribution of the dependent variable (DV) "Trust in the Last Election"
shows a fat tail in the high-end of the distribution with 28.43 percent of
respondents saying the election was clean and fair. The second most selected
category was the lower-end of the distribution with 14.43 percent, followed by the
middle option with 13.78 percent. Overall, the distribution of the variable seems
equilibrated and the level of skewness is mild. The average Trust in the Electoral
Process for the whole sample is 6.45, with a standard deviation of 3.20 points.
This particular dispersion is coherent with results in surveys that use similar
questions and scales (e.g. Lapop, Latinobarometer, CSES, etc.). The median is 7,
almost exactly the same as the mean.

Figure 4. 1 Trust in the Electoral Process whole sample
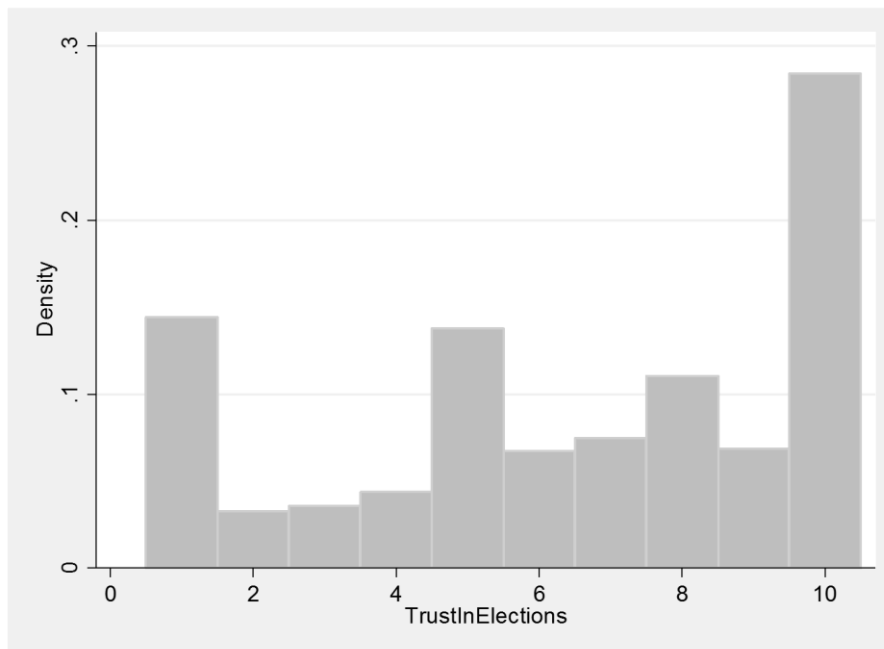
The comparison between countries shows differences as expected. In Costa Rica about half of the population indicated the electoral process was clean and fair by choosing the top number of the scale (10). This makes Costa Rica the country with highest mean (8.09) for trust in the electoral process and the lowest dispersion of answers (a standard deviation of 2.58). This result is consistent with findings from LAPOP and Latinobarometer placing Costa Rica among the countries with highest confidence in their elections. It also goes in line with the expectations given that Costa Rica has the most stable democratic institutions in Central America.

Whereas respondents in Guatemala (mean of 6.21), El Salvador (mean of 6.11), and Honduras (mean of 5.36) have substantially lower levels of trust as well as higher dispersion of answers. Given that these countries are characterized by a history of political instability it is not surprising that the average respondent does not consider the electoral process very trustworthy. Moreover, Guatemala and Honduras are among the poorest and unequal countries in the region, a fact that - my theory goes- plays a major role for perceptions of elections being clean and fair.

Besides the average, it is useful to take a look to the median value because it is expressed in the predetermine scale used by respondents to answer. In a scale from 1 to 10, the median for Costa Rica is 9, whereas for Guatemala and El Salvador is 6, and for Honduras is 5. Interestingly, only 18 percent of the respondents in Costa Rica fall between 1 and 5 categories.

Table 4. 2 Average Trust in the Electoral Process by country

Country	Median	Mean	SD	N
Costa Rica	9	8.089	2.585	1224
Guatemala	6	6.215	2.996	1152
Honduras	5	5.361	3.397	1210
El Salvador	6	6.116	3.118	1202
Total	7	6.453	3.201	4788

Figure 4. 2 Trust in the Electoral Process by country

Graphs by Pais
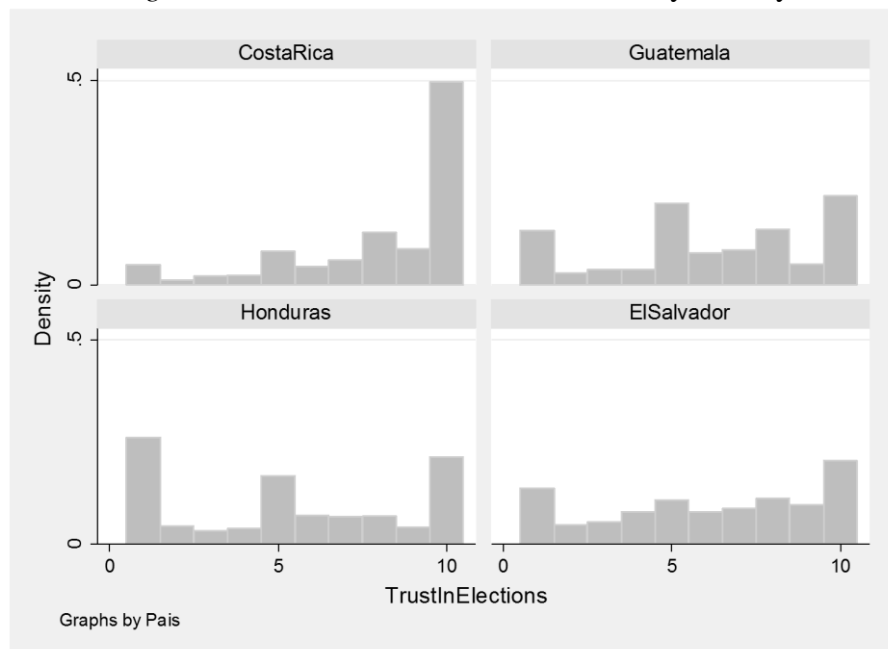
The dependent variable does not seem to be correlated with age of the respondent, and it is spread evenly across categories. However, there is an interesting pattern only for the highest score (10) of the DV: those who think the electoral process is completely clean and fair. The distribution of these respondents is notoriously skewed to the right (older respondents). In other words, the frequency of

respondents in this category (score 10 in the DV) clearly increases with respondents' age (see table ii in Appendix).

As shown in Table 4.3 below, respondents with the highest level of education (college or higher) tend to evidence higher scores in the DV than the average. Accordingly, these respondents show lower proportions of the lowest scores for trust in elections. For example, on average 14.43 percent of respondents chose score 1 for trust in elections. This figure drops to 12.67 for the most educated respondents in the sample. The same pattern is repeated for score 2 (3.28 on average but 2.02 within college or higher). And the tendency continues for scores lower than 7, to a point when is reversed. While on average 46.35 percent of respondents score the electoral process 8, 9 or 10, this figure goes up to 55.26 for the most educated respondents in the sample (see table iii in Appendix for more detailed categories). In terms of gender, the dependent variable does not show any particular behavior. The same occurs for the cleavage urban/rural (see tables iv and v in Appendix).

The distribution of the variable Trust in your neighbors among countries does not vary a lot. The average level of confidence in the community in Costa Rica is 6.40, in Guatemala is 5.92, in Honduras is 6.20 and in El Salvador it is 5.96. In all four cases the dispersion is about the same around 3. In the case of Costa Rica the median is 7 while for the rest of the countries, 6.

Table 4. 3 Trust in Elections (percentage) by education level.

	up to primary complete	up to secondary complete	college or higher	Total
1	15.69	13.86	12.67	14.43
2	3.85	3.19	2.02	3.28
3	3.8	3.48	3.23	3.57
4	4.4	4.83	3.1	4.39
5	15.18	13.86	9.84	13.78
6	6.58	6.96	6.47	6.73
7	6.58	8.36	7.41	7.48
8	9.11	12.03	13.48	11.05
9	5.97	7.25	8.22	6.87
10	28.85	26.18	33.56	28.43
Total	100	100	100	100

4.4.2 Independent variables

One of the main independent variables is "Trust in Your Community". This variable allows me to test the local mechanism from my theory. The mean level of trust in the community for the whole sample is 6.12 and the median is 6 in a scale from 1 to 10. The distribution is closely normal in shape. Within countries, there are not great disparities with their mean, median, and distribution. In Costa Rica, the mean trust in the community is 6.40 and the median 7, both representing the highest among all four countries. But the rest is not far from those numbers, all three have a median of 6, and are quite close in terms of the average. In Honduras, the mean trust in the community is 6.2, in El Salvador is 6.0, and in Guatemala is 5.9. Also, as you can see in graph 3.3, the distribution of the variable is about the same.

Figure 4. 3 Trust in your community by country

Figure 4. 3 Trust in your community by country
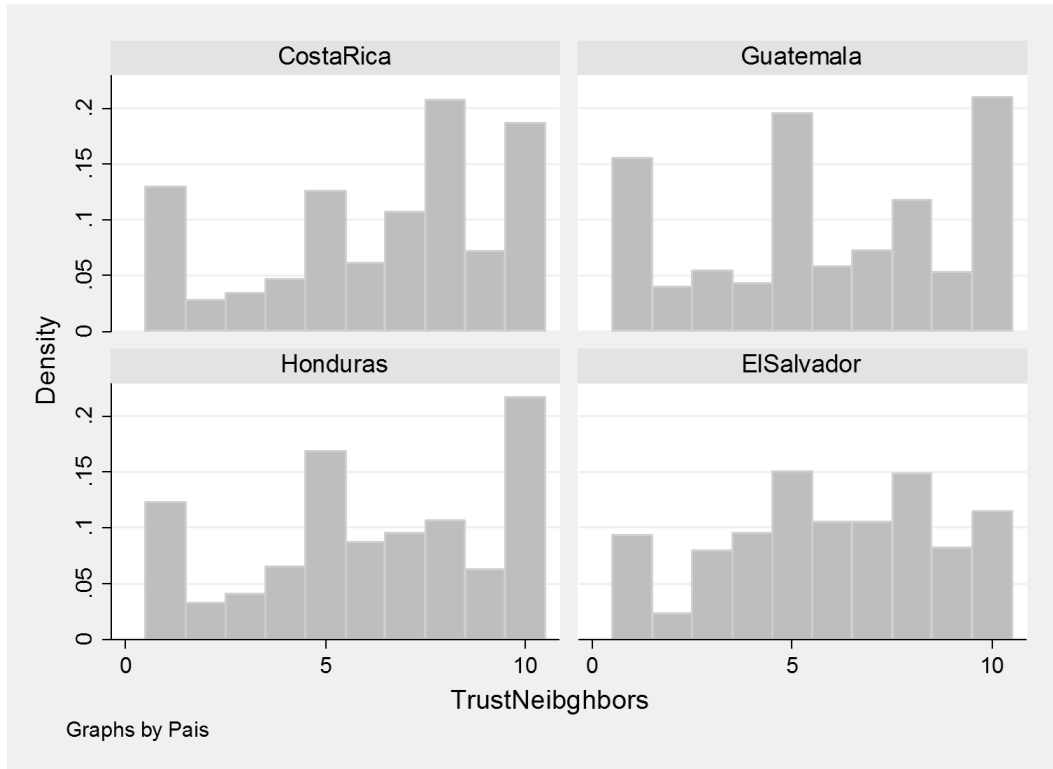
Nonetheless, in terms of how respondents believe different social groups are

being favored (or not) there is a clear difference across countries. As evidenced in

Table 3.4 on one side, Guatemala and El Salvador show a specific pattern while

Costa Rica and Honduras show quite the opposite. For instance, respondents in

the former set of countries seem to believe that the rich are not being benefited or

favored by the system -at least with a higher proportion than the other two

countries. As for El Salvador, declining levels of inequality and poverty, in

particular, may explain this perception of fairness. However, in the case of

Guatemala, the erratic pattern of level of inequality across the years fail to provide

an explanation for these quite positive perceptions. On the other side of the

spectrum, respondents in Costa Rica and Honduras seem to believe the system does not favor the poor enough.

Table 4. 4 Perceptions of how different groups are benefited by country.

		Costa Rica	Guatemala	Honduras	El Salvador	Total
Rich	Favored	**92.81**	85.02	**91.4**	74.29	85.92
	Not favored	7.19	14.98	8.6	25.71	14.08
Poor	Favored	17.65	21.38	14.13	41.93	23.73
	Not favored	**82.35**	78.62	**85.87**	58.07	76.27
People like you	Favored	22.39	19.8	11.07	22.63	18.97
	Not favored	77.61	80.2	88.93	77.37	81.03
	Total	100	100	100	100	100

There is no clear pattern in terms of how respondents trust in their neighbors and their distribution across different educational levels (see table vi in Appendix). As seen in Table 4.5, respondents with higher education –possibly a proxy for higher income- consider themselves as more benefited than the other two education-level groups. Accordingly, less educated respondents perceive themselves as a less favored group.

*Table 4. 5 Perceptions of how **people like you** are benefited by education levels.*

	up to primary complete	up to secondary complete	college or higher	Total
Favored	16.52	20.47	21.45	18.97
Not favored	83.48	79.53	78.55	81.03
Total	100	100	100	100

I will turn now the attention to how two key variables relate to each other. As seen in tables 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8, there is a clear association between perceptions of

fairness of the income distribution and how respondents perceive different social groups are being benefited or not. For example, those who tend to believe income distribution is fair or very fair tend to believe that rich people are not being favored. Whereas, believing the rich are being benefited is associated with perceiving income distribution as unfair or very unfair. The same pattern is shown for how poor people are benefited, and for "people like you". Naturally, if you perceive your social group is not being favored, you are likely to perceive unfairness on income distribution.

*Table 4. 6 Perceptions of fairness on income distribution (percentage) by perceptions of how **rich** people are benefited.*

	Favored	Not favored	Total
very fair	4.14	4.01	4.13
fair	21.68	35.54	23.53
unfair	51.39	47.04	50.81
very unfair	22.78	13.41	21.53
Total	100	100	100

*Table 4. 7 Perceptions of fairness on income distribution (percentage) by perceptions of how **poor** people are benefited.*

	Favored	Not favored	Total
very fair	5.75	3.64	4.13
fair	34.51	20.25	23.53
unfair	45.81	52.3	50.81
very unfair	13.93	23.8	21.53
Total	100	100	100

*Table 4. 8 Perceptions of fairness on income distribution (percentage) by perceptions of how "**people like you**" are benefited.*

	Favored	Not favored	Total
very fair	5.9	3.71	4.13
fair	33.66	21.17	23.53
unfair	44.47	52.29	50.81
very unfair	15.97	22.83	21.53
Total	100	100	100

4.4.3 Distribution of Dependent Variable by main Independent Variables

As shown below in graph 3.4., the DV (confidence in the election) increases with the main independent variables trust in your neighbor or your community. In spite of the clear linear association, the correlation between these two variables is 0.15 –although the variables are not strictly continuous, both have a scale from 1 to 10. The mean for the DV ranges from 5.11 to 7.12 –for more detailed information see table X in the Appendix. This data illustrates a strong link between trusting the people in your community and what they think about the quality of the electoral process. Later I will show that this local mechanism is very powerful in defining how much people trust the election, even with certain pre-eminence over considerations about fairness of the system.

Figure 4. 4 Mean trust in the electoral process by community trust.
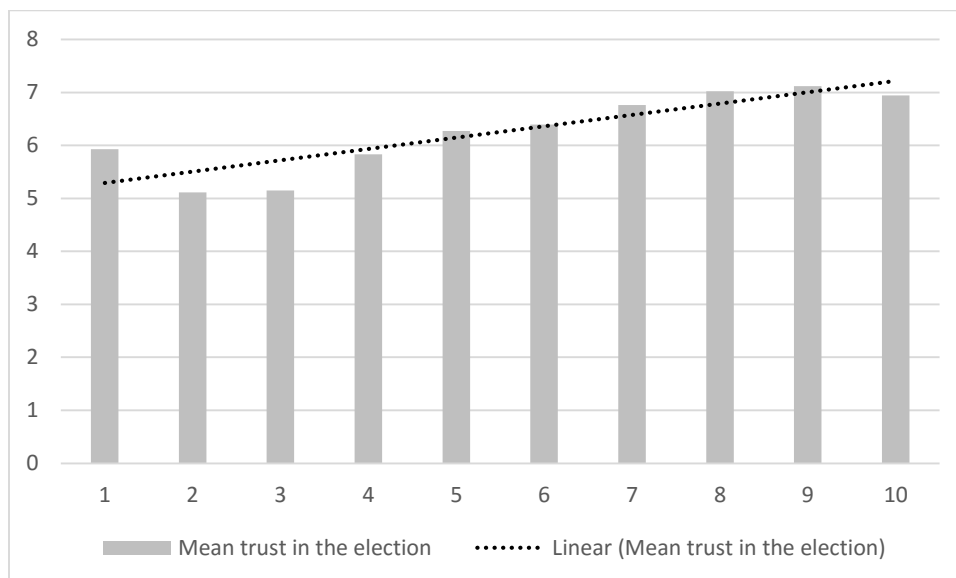
In terms of perceptions of fairness of income distribution, the dependent variable shows a clear pattern: those respondents who believe the distribution is unfair

show lower levels of confidence in the electoral process, as shown below in Table

3.9 and the spineplot in graph 3.5. In the appendix table xi shows how this

relation is statistically significant (t student test).

The direction of this association is consistent with the theoretical framework in

this dissertation and reinforces the link between perceptions of unfairness –in this

case unfairness in terms of income distribution– and the level of trust in the

electoral process. As the election is the clearest manifestation of equality in a

democracy –every vote is equally counted–, the idea that not everyone is equally

treated undermines the whole process. It can be understood as a *sociotropic*

consideration of the global mechanism in the theory.

Table 4. 9 Trust in Elections (percentage) by perceptions of fairness of income distribution.

	Fair	Unfair	Total
1	7.34	**17.73**	14.86
2	2.95	3.71	3.5
3	2.19	4.22	3.66
4	2.45	5.06	4.34
5	12.66	13.64	13.37
6	5.99	6.61	6.44
7	8.35	7.22	7.53
8	13.59	10.25	11.17
9	9.7	6.25	7.21
10	**34.77**	25.31	27.92
Total	100	100	100

Figure 4. 5 Trust in Elections by perceptions of fairness of income distribution.
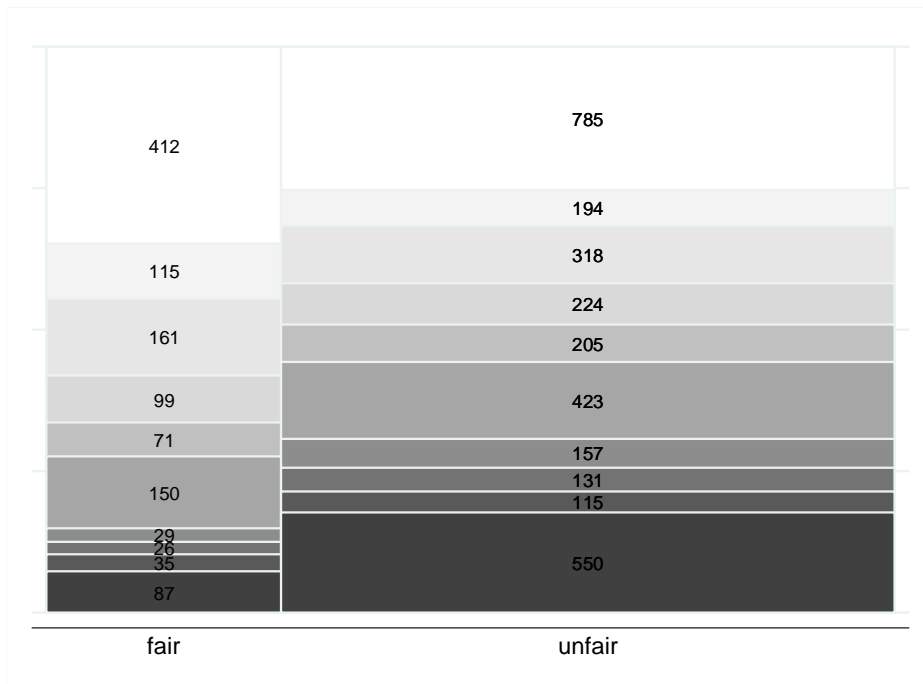
How people consider they are treated by the system is the other variable that taps into the same dimension as fairness of income distribution, but with a personal focus –*egotropic* consideration. As it is shown in table 3.10 and the t-test in table 3.11, there is a clear relationship between trust in the election and how respondents perceive themselves in terms of being favored or not by the system. Those who think they are left-out have a considerable lower trust in the quality of the election.

Table 4. 10 Mean trust in the electoral process by perceptions of how "people like you" are benefited

	Mean trust in the election	Standard Deviation
Very favored	7.35	2.95
Somewhat favored	7.09	2.85
Barely favored	6.62	2.98
Not favored	6.09	3.40
Total	6.45	3.20

Finally, there is the relationship between the DV and "voting for the winning party", which in this dissertation is approximated by "support for the winning party". As expected, there is a strong relationship between supporting the party that won the election and the level of confidence respondents have about the quality of the process. As this result is extensively confirmed in the literature (Alvarez 2008; Atkeson 2010; Birch 2008; Hall, Monson, and Patterson 2008; Rosas 2010, among others) and the magnitude of the effect is considerable, I use this variable as a control -even within the context of an experimental design-in order to turn results in the next chapter more robust.

Table 4. 11 Trust in Elections (mean) across winning party supporters; opposition and independents.

		Mean	Std. Dev.
Winning party supporter	No	5.93	3.26
	Yes	7.57	2.75
Independent	No	6.52	3.23
	Yes	6.33	3.15
Opposition supporter	No	6.92	3.03
	Yes	5.51	3.33
	Overall	6.45	3.2

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I described in detail the data I am going to use to run the models in the next chapter. Particularly, I detailed the population-based experiment embedded in the survey that will allow me to control for possible co-founders in

the analysis of the global mechanism. Moreover, the survey conducted in four countries in Central America allowed me to explore the relationship between confidence in the quality of the last election and respondents' trust in their community. The bivariate analysis showed a positive relation in line with the expectations about the local mechanism in the theory. Also, I describe the relationship between confidence in the election and perceptions of fairness of income distribution. I show that those who consider income distribution in their country as unfair express lower levels of trust in the electoral process. Likewise, those who consider themselves as not favored –'losers' of the system–, have less trust in the election.

In the next chapter, I turn to describe the hypotheses derived from the theory. I then test those hypotheses empirically through a series of models showing the primacy of the local over the global mechanism. I analyze the priming treatment that shows how considerations of unfairness have a detrimental effect on the level of confidence in the electoral process.

Chapter 5. Confidence in Elections, Trust in the Community, and Perception of Fairness in the System: Data Analysis and Model Results.

5.1 Introduction

Cross-national surveys across Latin America show low level of Confidence in the Electoral process (see Latin America Public Opinion Project or Latinobarómetro[37]). However, the Organization of American States (OAS) – which is the entity running the most comprehensive electoral observation missions- did not make any denounce of widespread fraud in the region for several years[38].

My theory provides two reasons to explain this apparent contradiction. First, this theory expects that differences in how people perceive their peers and their involvement in the electoral process will affect their perceptions of how transparent and adequate is the electoral process. As voters interact with members of their community, they build ties to those who administer the electoral process, party monitors and poll-workers, with whom they interact at the local level. This *"local experience"* affects their perceptions of the trustworthiness of the electoral administration and its fairness. Second, I argue that voters trust more or less the electoral process conditioned on their perceptions of fairness in how different

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[37]http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/ and http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp
[38]http://www.oas.org/en/spa/deco/moe.asp

social groups are treated. This *"global effect"* has to do with perceptions that certain groups of society are systematically amongst the disadvantaged (*'losers'*). Particularly disadvantaged groups are perceived as not being favored by the system, and therefore decreases the hopes that the electoral process as a whole could work as a fair mechanism of translating their preferences.

In the previous chapter, I provide a detailed description of the results of a survey conducted in four countries in Central America, which is used to test the relationship between how people view their local peers and their opinion about the quality of the electoral process. The bivariate analysis showed a clear positive relationship between confidence that the election was fair and free from fraud and the level of trust respondents expressed they have in their neighbors. Also, I describe an experimental design embedded in the survey that allows me to test the link between perceptions of fairness of how certain groups in society are treated and their confidence in the electoral process. Again, the bivariate analysis shows a strong support to the link between being primed with the existence of social injustice and the level of confidence in the election.

In this chapter, I use the survey data described previously to conduct models to test the relationship between trust in the community and trust in the election – *"local experience"*- between perceptions of unfair treatment of certain social groups and opinion of how fair and free from fraud was the election –*"global effect"*. To test the local mechanism I use the survey as an observational study

and to test the global mechanism I take advantage of the described priming experiment embedded in the survey.

In all four models where I test the *"local experience"* mechanism, the predicted positive relationship holds. Those who trust their peers have higher confidence that the election was conducted appropriately. This finding holds even when controlling by support for the winning party, the most common and strong positive effect found in the literature –which provides robustness to the models. The models I use to test the "*global effect"* are simpler since I profit from an experimental design. There is empirical support for the negative relationship between perceptions of unequal treatment of certain social groups and levels of confidence in the electoral process. Interestingly, the finding holds among those who consider themselves as part of the discriminated group and not when they see themselves as part of the benefited social group –egotropic consideration. When analyzed regarding respondent's perceptions of fairness of income distribution in their country, the *"the global effect"* holds among those who think it is unfair – sociotropic consideration. Finally, analyzing the *global* and *local mechanisms* altogether yield interesting results. Considerations about unfairness of equal treatment of certain social groups –*global effect*- only holds among those respondents who do not trust the people from their community. In this line, clarity of responsibility plays a major role. Attribution of responsibility for those respondents who do not trust their peers is clear and simple, and leaves no room for a more diffuse mechanism such as unfairness of the political system.

These findings are important in the context of a region with huge social debts. Besides major improvements in lowering income inequality, there are still substantial disparities, even more for educational indicators. Scholars and policy makers frequently debate over institutional problems and possible institutional reforms that countries in the region should carry out. The main goal of the proposed reforms is to improve the electoral process and the political reality, often missing the point that the highest threat to the legitimacy of democracy in the region is associated to socioeconomic issues.

This chapter is organized as follows. In the first section I derive a series of hypotheses to test my theory. In the second section I describe the data and models I am using to test empirically the theoretical claims. In the third section I present the results of those models. Finally, I conclude the chapter describing the main findings.

5.2 Hypotheses

In chapter 2, I layout a theory to understand the levels of confidence in the electoral process in Latin America. This theory describes two different mechanisms that explain the low levels of trust in the elections in a context of not known massive fraud. First, I contend there is a *"local experience"* mechanism that relates the level of voters' trust in the community with their evaluation of the

quality of the election. Second, I describe a *"global effect"* mechanism that link perceptions of unfairness in the system with assessments about the election transparency. This link could be motivated by personal or selfless -egotropic and sociotropic, respectively. Third, I put together both mechanisms to argue that clarity of responsibility matters. Namely, voters attribute responsibility neighbors more easily than what they can attribute to an unfair system. Now, using this theoretical background I derive a series of hypotheses to be empirically tested with the survey data from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

Worldwide, the administration of the election is delegated to members of the community with whom voters routinely interact. Baker, et al (2006) show that informal and incidental discussions within social networks (friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues for instance) play a primary role in short-term attitude change and vote choice. In this line, I consider that social context plays two important roles in shaping perceptions about the electoral process. Voters gather information about the election from their social network and neighborhood. In a context of unknown events of fraud, this local information allows them to assign responsibility to their community about the quality of the electoral process. Since the community is involved in the implementation, voters' trust in the people from their neighborhood impacts directly on how confident they are that the election was properly conducted. If a voter has a low opinion of those in charge of their polling station, she will likely have doubts about their performance or impartiality.

Hypothesis 1: voters with higher trust in the people from their community are more confident that the election is clean and fair (LOCAL EXPERIENCE).

On a different line, what impacts mostly the idea that the electoral process is fair is the fact that people can feel their voice is being heard. When citizens believe they are able to effectively express themselves through the electoral process, they definitely trust its results. Social inequality and heterogeneity in the distribution of income creates the conditions for the formation of identities that affect the beliefs they hold about the electoral process. Perceptions that certain groups of society are systematically amongst the disadvantaged ('*losers'*) decrease the hopes that the electoral process behaves as a fair mechanism of translating preferences of every citizen into decision-making processes and political outcomes. In other words, perceptions of unequal treatment within the society affect the way people perceive the transparency of the electoral process.

Hypothesis 2: voters who perceive the system as unfair with certain social groups are less confident that the election is free and fair (GLOBAL EFFECT).

Therefore, perceptions of fairness about equal treatment in the society impact on how much people (dis)trust certain sectors of society. Ultimately, this process greatly influences voters' opinions about the electoral process. This mechanism is enabled by egotropic or sociotropic considerations. The former implies people

perceiving themselves as not being favored by the system. Whereas for the later

mechanism, people not only care about their own position, but also care about

equal treatment and social justice in general.

Hypothesis 2a: voters who perceive themselves among those not benefited

by the system ('losers') show lower levels of trust in the election

(EGOTROPIC).

Hypothesis 2b: voters who perceive income distribution in their country is

unfair show lower levels of trust in the election (SOCIOTROPIC).

The *"local experience"* and *"the global effect"* are two possible mechanisms of

attribution of responsibility over the quality of the election. Following Powell and

Whitten (1993), the concept of clarity of responsibility allows to identify how

certain contexts or situations facilitate the attribution of responsibility by voters.

The level of trust people have in their community has an immediate and clear

effect on their opinion about the quality of the election. Voters meet at the polling

station with neighbors, who they happen to either like or dislike. Perceptions of

unfair treatment for certain groups in the country have a more diffuse effect.

Thus, following the idea behind the concept of clarity of responsibility, I expect

that in the presence of low trust in the community, it is easier for voters to assign

responsibility for the low quality of the election to their neighbors. Accordingly,

in the context of high levels of trust in the community, negative opinions about

the election are not attributable to voters' peers. Therefore, there is room to blame the unfairness of the system as a whole.

Hypothesis 3: the LOCAL EXPERIENCE (attribution of responsibility to their community about the election) has a more predominant impact on voters trust in the election than the GLOBAL EFFECT (perceptions of systemic unfairness) (CLARITY OF RESPONSIBILITY).

Hypothesis 3a: When the LOCAL EXPERIENCE exists and is NEGATIVE (voters distrust their community, hence they tend to distrust the election), the GLOBAL EFFECT (unfairness in the system) does not influence the level of confidence in the election (CLARITY OF RESPONSIBILITY).

Hypothesis 3b: When the LOCAL EXPERIENCE exists and is POSITIVE (voters trust their community, hence they tend to trust the election), the GLOBAL EFFECT (unfairness in the system) lowers the level of confidence in the election (CLARITY OF RESPONSIBILITY).

5.3 Data and Models

To test the hypotheses, I use the data described in the previous in chapter 4: the survey conducted by CID Gallup in four countries in Central America during

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May/June 2014. This wave of their omnibus survey included Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. The survey covers a nationally representative sample of about 1,200 cases, clustered by region within each country; resulting in a total of 4,838 respondents. I use the data from the survey in two different ways. To test the "*local experience*" implications, I use the survey as an observational study. To test the *"global effect"*, I take advantage of the population-based experiment embedded in the survey, where respondents were randomly assigned to a different order of questions. The treatment group were primed in order to make salient the unfairness of the system with some social groups before they were asked about their trust in the electoral process (DV). As mentioned before, the dependent variable in every model in this dissertation is the level of confidence that the election was fair and free from fraud in a scale from 1 to 10, where the lowest value means the election was perceived unfair and fraudulent while the highest, clean and fair.

The observational models illustrate my theoretical claim on the relationship between trust in the electoral process and people's opinion about their community. The main independent variable in these models is the level of trust respondents have in the people from their neighborhood. For this variable, the scale goes from 1 to 10, where 1 means no trust in their neighbors/peers and 10 means absolute trust. Then, the models using the experimental design allow me to test the relationship between trust in the election and perceptions about unfairness in the system. For these models, the main independent variable is belonging to the treatment group or not. That is to say, being in the treatment group represents

those respondents who received the question about unfairness in the system right before they were asked about the quality of the electoral process.

Two more variables are of theoretical relevance for these models. The first one indicates whether the respondent perceives herself as part of a benefited social group or not. The second one indicates the respondent's perception about fairness of income distribution in the country. Both variables originally had four categories, but I use them as dummy for the ease of understanding –results using the four categories have similar results.

Table 5. 1 Expected relationship between Trust in the Election (DV), main Independent Variables (IVs), and controls

	Trust in the election
Main IVs	
Trust in the Community	+
Unfairness of the System Treatment	**-**
You not (respondent) benefited	**-**
Fairness income distribution	**-**
Controls	
Support for the winning party	+
Trust the poor	*no expectation*
Trust the rich	*no expectation*
Female	*no expectation*
Age	*no expectation*
Education	+
Rural	**-**

As noted before, the dependent variable takes values from 1 to 10. Strictly speaking, it is an ordered variable and it would require to run ordered models – ologit or oprobit. However, it is an accepted practice to use OLS models with

ordered variables with more than 7/10 categories. In this chapter I follow that path

for simplicity and ease of understanding. OLS models allow me to interpret

coefficients without any posterior transformation. In order to check if this solution

was sound, I run every model using OLS and oprobit. All the results reported in

this chapter were equivalent using both approaches. For completion, however, I

provide results from ordered models in the appendix of this chapter.

5.4 Results

5.4.1 The local experience

The implementation of elections, on a single day and across all electoral districts,

is one of the most important and delicate tasks in any democratic country. This

burden requires an enormous number of non-professional personnel to be

administered by peers with whom voters interact with on a daily basis. My

argument is that voters can assign responsibility about the quality of the election

to their neighbors. Simply put, voters' embeddedness and trust in members of

their community affects their perceptions of trustworthy electoral administration

and fairness. Table 5.2 presents the results from the models used to test the stated

relationship. In all four models the dependent variable is the level of trust that the

election was clean and fair. The main independent variable is the level of trust

voters have in the people in their neighborhood. In model 1, I present the simplest

specification using only socio-economic variables for controls. The relationship

between the levels of trust in the community and confidence in the quality of the

election is positive and statistically significant, as expected from hypothesis 1. An

increase of one point in the level of trust in the neighbors predicts an increase of

0.164 in the level of confidence in the election.

Table 5. 2 The local experience*: Trust in the election and confidence in neighbors with clustered standard errors by region*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Trust in the Community	0.164***	0.150***	0.140***	0.083**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Female	-0.152	-0.171*	-0.208*	-0.207*
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Age	0.070**	0.077**	0.091***	0.092***
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Secondary Education	0.378*	0.410**	0.474**	0.441**
	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.14)
College Education	0.897**	0.963***	1.120***	1.049***
	(0.27)	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.24)
Rural	-0.416	-0.394	-0.399	-0.388
	(0.30)	(0.32)	(0.36)	(0.35)
Support for the winning party		1.604***	1.450***	1.451***
		(0.36)	(0.34)	(0.34)
Unfairness of income distribution			-1.125***	-1.044***
			(0.18)	(0.19)
Trust the Poor				0.048
				(0.03)
Trust the Rich				0.106*
				(0.04)
Constant	5.057***	4.556***	5.326***	4.926***
	(0.31)	(0.43)	(0.37)	(0.39)
N	4788	4788	4287	4287
R²	0.04	0.09	0.11	0.12

Models from 2 to 4 incorporate variables of substantive relevance. As mentioned

in previous chapters, the most common finding in the literature about confidence

in elections is that voting for the winning candidate has a positive effect on

perceptions about the quality of the electoral process. Hence, Model 2 to 4 include

a variable indicating respondents' support for the winning party. As anticipated by the literature on the subject, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between voting for the winner and trusting the process that made that candidate precisely the winner (Alvarez 2008; Atkeson 2010; Birch 2008; Hall, Monson, and Patterson 2008; Rosas 2010, among others). Being a supporter of the winning party increases the level of confidence in the election in 1.604 points (in models 3 and 4 the effect is 1.451) compared to those who voted for a political party that lost the election. There are two advantages of these results for my models. It makes the models more robust given that the finding is compatible with all previous works. Even though I control by the support for the winning party, the predicted effect of the *"local experience"* is still positive and statistically significant. An increase of one point in the level of trust in the neighbors predicts an increase of 0.150 points in the level of confidence in the electoral process in model 2 (the effect is 0.140 in model 3 and 0.083 in model 4).

In addition, models 3 and 4 also control for perceptions of fairness of income distribution in the respondent's country. As discussed in the theoretical framework, the *"global effect"* could be triggered by either an egotropic or a sociotropic motivation. This variable measuring fairness of income distribution taps into the second kind of motivation and, according to my theory, it should impact respondent's trust in the election. For that reason, I include it as a control variable in the modeling of the *"local experience"* mechanism. In line with the theoretical assumptions, those who think the distribution of income in their

country is unfair have a 1.125 points (1.044 in model 4) less trust in the electoral process, comparing with those who think the distribution of income is fair.

In model 4, further control variables are introduced: the level of trust respondents have in rich and poor people. These two variables are part of the same question that originates my main independent variable: trust in neighbors. This model specification is useful to check the quality of respondents' answers and a way to provide a more sound and complete model. As I mention in the previous section, I do not have any expectation about the direction of effect of these variables. Results show trust on the poor has no effect in opinions about the quality of the election and there is a positive effect in the level of trust on the rich. This last finding might be compatible with the idea that winners of the system would trust elections, but I do not have enough information about who trust the rich to support this claim with this result. That is to say, I do not have enough information on each respondent's income level in order to place her in a specific social group, so that is possible to identify which social group distrust who. In line with this reasoning, it is relevant to mention that in all four models, being more educated has a positive and statistically significant effect on the level of confidence in the election. In countries like the ones for which the survey was conducted, finishing the secondary or being a college educated indicates certain place of privilege in the social scale. Thus, the shown positive relationship could be understood in this line. However, further research and information about the respondents' income - not provided in this survey- would be necessary to explore this finding.

Summing up, there is empirical support for hypothesis 1: people's opinions about their peers in the community influence a great deal their considerations about how clean and fair the electoral process is.

It is important to point out, these models are based on observational data. While, I include substantive control variables to isolate the effect of my main independent variables, it is always possible to find other factors contributing to explain confidence in the electoral process. A plausible missing information has to do with clientelistic practices. Although I mention in chapter 3 reports stating in favor of the quality of the process, it might be possible that clientelistic corruption still happened. Unfortunately, the survey conducted by CID Gallup does not include any question about this topic.

5.4.2 The global effect

In this subsection, I examine how perceptions of unequal treatment in the society affect the way people perceive the transparency of the electoral process – *"global effect"*. As I argue in the theoretical chapter, if people feel there are social groups in the country that are consistently left-out, they will be suspicious that those in office achieved their power in a corrupted or unfair manner (You and Khagram 2013: 140). This is the underlying mechanism to link perceptions of an unfair system to believing the electoral system is untrustworthy. Even in the absence of material evidence of fraud occurring, believing that casting a ballot does not change the composition of winners and losers in the system contributes to voters considering that the process itself is corrupt or unfair. Consequently, perceptions

of fairness about unequal treatment of different social groups create distrust in certain sectors of the society, which greatly influences their opinions about the electoral process.

To test empirically the *"global effect"*, I analyze the results of the experiment embedded in the survey. The experiment consisted in randomizing the order of the specific question about unequal treatment of certain social groups. Those in the treatment group had to provide their opinions about fairness in the system to later respond about the quality of the last election cycle. In general terms, due to randomization, experimental-designed models do not need control variables. However, in some cases where there is a specific variable that -theory suggests- might affect the dependent variable, including it as a control turns the experiment result into a more robust one (Mutz 2011).Specifically, for the subject of this dissertation, literature suggests that generally voting for the winner party is positively correlated with trust in the electoral process (Alvarez 2008; Atkeson 2010; Birch 2008; Hall, Monson, and Patterson 2008; Rosas 2010, among others). For instance, in this study voters in El Salvador and Honduras show a 2.5 positive difference (in a 10-points scale) in the electoral trust variable, for those who support the winner party. For this reason, in order to strengthen the results for the following models, I include a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent supports for the winning party or not.

Table 5. 3 The global mechanism: Trust in the election and perceptions of fairness of the system with clustered standard errors by region

	(1)	(2)
	Model 5	Model 6
Unfairness of the system treatment	-0.287**	-0.239*
	(0.10)	(0.09)
Support for the winning party		1.618***
		(0.38)
Constant	6.621***	6.067***
	(0.28)	(0.41)
N	4788	4788
R²	0.02	0.06

Table 5.3 presents the results of the simplest analysis using the experimental design. In line with hypothesis 2, both models show that those who were primed making unfairness of the system salient, express lower levels of trust in the election. Model 5 shows there is a negative effect on the level of trust in the election for those in the treatment group. Respondents who were primed with the question about unfairness in the system report 0.287 points less confidence in the electoral process, on average. As predicted by hypothesis 2, the relationship is negative and statistically significant. Following Mutz (2011) suggestion about adding controls to the analysis of experiments, model 6 controls for support for the winning party, given that this is a strong predictor of my dependent variable. Resembling the results in models 1 to 4, supporting the winning party has a sizable effect on the level of trust in the election. On average, winner supporters have an increase of 1.6 points in the level of trust for the electoral process. The good news is that even when controlling by this variable, the treatment of

unfairness of the system is still statistically significant and the size of the effect does not change dramatically. Those who were primed about unfairness in the system for certain social groups, have on average 0.239 points less trust in the electoral process.

At this stage of the analysis, it is not clear if the effect of the treatment is explained by personal consideration –egotropic- or social ones –sociotropic. In order to approximate an answer, I assess the effect of the treatment by different subgroups. Table 5.4 presents a regression analysis of the treatment divided into six groups. Models 7 and 8 test the effect of the treatment within those who consider themselves as benefited and not benefited by the system, respectively. Models 9 and 10 test the effect of the treatment between those respondents who believe the system benefits (or not) the rich. Finally, models 11 and 12 do the same analysis among those who consider the poor are being benefited or not.

Interestingly, in models 7 and 8, the treatment effect is heterogeneous between those who consider themselves winners and those who perceive themselves as losers of the system. When respondents place themselves in the group of 'winners' (i.e. benefited by the system), the treatment has no effect. But when respondents consider themselves 'losers' of the system, the treatment has a negative effect on the level of trust in the electoral process -egotropic. The null effect among those who consider themselves benefited makes sense because the experiment primed a negative situation about unfairness in the system. If respondents feel they are not among the harmed, their view about the election

should not change. Those who consider themselves as part of a social group that is unfairly treated by the system are, on average, 0.219 points less confident in the election. This effect is statistically significant and confirms hypothesis 2a that stated egotropic considerations play a role, like classic pocketbook motivation in economic voting literature. Also, this result goes in line with the general finding in the literature that disadvantageous groups of society usually show lower levels of trust.

Table 5. 4 The global mechanism: Trust in the election and perceptions of fairness of the system by perceptions of respondent's position in the system, the rich and the poor with clustered standard errors by region

	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
	You benefited	You not benefited	Rich benefited	Rich not benefited	Poor benefited	Poor not benefited
Unfairness of the system treatment	-0.330	-0.219*	-0.220*	-0.356	-0.024	-0.297**
	(0.21)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.26)	(0.17)	(0.09)
Support for the winning party	1.078**	1.701***	1.543***	2.035***	1.391**	1.672***
	(0.36)	(0.38)	(0.36)	(0.46)	(0.42)	(0.38)
Constant	6.975***	5.880***	6.065***	6.077***	6.265***	6.019***
	(0.45)	(0.40)	(0.43)	(0.40)	(0.35)	(0.44)
N	914	3874	4123	665	1141	3647
R^2	0.04	0.06	0.05	0.1	0.05	0.06

Models 9 to 12 do not specifically address any hypothesis, but they are consistent with the premises of the theory chapter. Building upon You (2006, 2012 and 2013 with Khagram), I argue that the rich tend to think they deserve their wealth and the poor tend to think the rules are not fair and their group is unfairly treated by

the system. If the rich are perceived as unfairly advantaged, that will contribute to a broad-spectrum of distrust in the system by the disadvantaged. Results in model 9 support this argument. For those who consider the rich are unfairly benefited, the treatment effect is statistically significant and negative. On average, people who consider the rich are benefited by the system have 0.220 points less confidence in the election. In the theory section, I emphasized the *"global effect"* is relevant in the presence of a group that is perceived as constantly undermined. The result from model 12 supports in part that claim. There is a negative and statistically significant relation between perceptions of the poor not being benefited and the level of trust in the electoral process. The null findings of models 10 and 11 point to the theoretical consistency of the findings in the other four models.

In order to test the previously mentioned sociotropic motivations, I analyze the effect of the treatment dividing respondents between those who think the distribution of income in their country is fair and those who consider it is unfair. Following the economic voting literature, I use the question about the fairness of income distribution as an equivalent to questions about the state of the economy – as I did before using the perception of the respondent that is being unfairly treated as equivalent to pocketbook motivations.

Table 5. 5 The global mechanism: Trust in the election and perceptions of fairness of the system by fairness of income distribution with clustered standard errors by region

	Model 13	Model 14
	FAIR distribution of income	UNFAIR distribution of income
Unfairness of the system treatment	0.071	-0.319[**]
	(0.16)	(0.10)
Support for the winning party	1.308[***]	1.511[***]
	(0.33)	(0.39)
Constant	6.784[***]	5.800[***]
	(0.31)	(0.51)
N	1185	3102
R^2	0.05	0.05

Results in model 13 in table 5.5, show there is no effect of the treatment among those who consider the income distribution in the country is fair. This is compatible with previous results. The treatment points out to a negative situation in the society, namely the existence of unequal conditions between certain social sectors. It is highly likely that those who perceive income distribution as fair won't be affected by the priming strategy. On the contrary, the effect of the treatment in model 14 points out to the existence of sociotropic motivations in the link between unfairness in the system and the level of trust in the electoral process. Among respondents who consider income distribution unfair, being in the treatment group lowers 0.319 points the confidence in the election. The effect is statistically significant and, as predicted by hypothesis 2b, negative. In other words, priming respondents to the unfairness of the system (treatment) has a

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negative impact in their thoughts about the quality of the election, among those who consider the distribution of income in the country is not fair either.

Table 5. 6 The global mechanism: Trust in the election and perceptions of fairness of the system by fairness of income distribution and respondent being benefited or not, with clustered standard errors by region

	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18
	FAIR income distribution and You FAVORED	UNFAIR income distribution and You FAVORED	FAIR income distribution and You NOT FAVORED	UNFAIR income distribution and You NOT FAVORED
Unfairness of the system treatment	-0.035	-0.459	0.080	-0.290**
	(0.24)	(0.30)	(0.21)	(0.10)
Support for the winning party	0.901*	0.855*	1.412***	1.614***
	(0.34)	(0.40)	(0.36)	(0.40)
Constant	7.443***	6.719***	6.589***	5.640***
	(0.42)	(0.51)	(0.28)	(0.51)
N	321	491	864	2611
pseudo R^2	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.05

5.4.3 The local experience and the global effect together

In the theory chapter, I propose to use the concept of clarity of responsibility to compare how the two theoretical mechanisms explain low level of confidence in elections in the absence of extended fraud. As previously elaborated, part of my theory builds upon Powell and Whitten (1993) who describe how different institutional or political contexts affect the possibility of attribution of responsibility and upon Alcañiz and Hellwig (2011) who describe how voters reduce uncertainty in the assignment of blame by using informational cues. In this

line, I argue that *"the global effect"* is a more diffuse mechanism vis-à-vis *"the local experience"*. In the presence of untrustworthy neighbors, the clarity of responsibility is immediate, voters use their views as informational cues to form their opinions about the electoral process. When voters trust their neighbors, perceptions about the unfairness of the system can play a more significant role in the formation of voters' opinions about the election.

In the following paragraphs I assess how the two mechanisms play a role together in the models results. In table 5.7, I test the unfairness of the system treatment among respondents who trust the people from their neighborhood and those who do not trust their community. In model 19, the priming treatment has no effect with respondents that have a low opinion about their neighbors. This null finding partially supports hypothesis 3a. Respondents already distrust the election -since they distrust their peers-, thus there is no room for consideration about unequal treatment of certain social groups. Perceptions of socioeconomic fairness does not affect their level of trust in the system, because for them the main mechanism driving their lack of trust in the elections is something more immediate within their every-day lives (i.e. distrust in their peers). The clarity of responsibility and informational cues highlight the role people from the community has in the process, leaving a more blurry mechanism in a second stage.

Table 5. 7 The global and local mechanism meet: Trust in the election,
Confidence in Neighbors and Perceptions of Fairness of the system with clustered
standard errors by region

	Model 19	Model 20
	No Trust in Neighbors	Trust in Neighbors
Unfairness of the system treatment	-0.113	-0.264[*]
	(0.17)	(0.12)
Support for the winning party	1.744[***]	1.458[***]
	(0.41)	(0.38)
Constant	5.477[***]	6.486[***]
	(0.37)	(0.44)
N	2058	2730
R^2	0.06	0.05

In model 20, results show that the *"global effect"* is negative and statistically

significant. In the context of trustworthy neighbors, those in the treatment group

are 0.264 points less confident in the electoral process, on average, than those in

the control group. To be precise, perceptions about unfairness toward certain

social groups in the system lower the level of trust in the election among voters

with a positive *"local experience"*. As hypothesis 3b states, a group who initially

trusts those involved in the election -their peers-, might be permeable to other

informational cues to form their opinion about the process -such as unfairness in

the system-, increasing their distrust of the election.

5.5 Conclusion

In this dissertation, I provided two explanations to understand distrust in the

electoral process in countries where there is no extended fraud and results are

accepted by the competing parties and the international community. The "local experience" side of my argument postulates that voters can assign credit or blame their neighbors for the quality of the election. Given that the community is involved in the implementation, how much voters trust the people from their neighborhood impacts on how assured they are that the election was conducted appropriately. The other side of my argument that I have called the "global effect" illustrates the linkage between perceptions of unequal treatment in the society and the way people perceive the transparency (or the lack thereof) in the electoral process. The fact that certain groups are systematically disregarded by the system triggers the notion that the electoral process is flawed.

In this chapter, I derived from the theory a series of hypotheses to empirically test my theoretical claims. For this purpose, I used data from a survey conducted by CID Gallup in four countries in Central America. The survey included a priming experiment that it allowed me to test the "global effect". In order to test the "local experience", I use the survey as observational data, which required me to control by a series of variables to pin down the effect that trust in the community has in the level of confidence in the election.

In all four different model specifications, the relationship between the levels of trust in the community and confidence in the quality of the election is positive and statistically significant. Even though I controlled by the "support for the winning party", the predicted effect of the "local experience" still holds. Thus, community

characteristics represent a key factor in order to comprehend why in certain context people tend to maintain critical views to the electoral process.

In the analysis of the embedded survey experiment, the models showed that the "global effect" is in place. Respondents in the treatment group –who were primed to think about social unfairness before asked about the dependent variable- expressed less confidence in the quality of the election in comparison to those that did not receive the experiment question in that order. Later in this chapter I provided empirical evidence that being in the treatment group had negative effect among those who consider themselves as part of the "losers" of the system – egotropic motivations. In this line, I also showed being in the treatment group had negative effect among those who consider the distribution of income in the country is unfair –sociotropic motivations.

Finally, I analyzed the effect of the unfairness of the system treatment among those who trust and those who do not trust their community. Combining both explanations (the "local effect" and the "global effect") was theoretically interesting, taking into consideration the concept of clarity of responsibility. Although there might be necessary to run further tests, these findings confirm the intuition in the theory that there is a certain preeminence of the "local experience" explanation, over the "global effect". The immediacy of voters with their peers works as an informational cue about the quality of the process. As a more abstract concept, the unfairness of the system seems to be more blurry and distant. Hence, its effect is activated in the absence of negative views about the community.

In the next chapter, I provide further evidence to support my argument, this time extending the empirical analysis to the whole Latin American region. In chapter 6, I test my main hypotheses using a dataset from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) from 2006 to 2012.

Chapter 6. Confidence in Elections, Trust in the Community, and Perception of Fairness in the System: Evidence from a Cross National Survey in Latin America

6.1 Introduction

My dissertation so far has focused on four specific countries in Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. In the previous chapter I have shown statistical results supporting my theory through a 2014 wave in the CID Gallup omnibus survey in these four countries. By using this dataset, I was able to provide empirical evidence for the two mechanisms in my theoretical framework: the local experience and the global effect. In a few words, my argument sustains that to understand the existing distrust in the electoral process –in the absence of extended fraud- attention should be drawn to the interaction between voters and their peers as well as perceptions of unfairness of the system. First, to test the first part of the argument -the local experience- I use observational data, and show that in all model specifications, the relationship between the levels of trust in the community and confidence in the quality of the election is positive and statistically significant. Furthermore, I show robustness of the results by controlling by the variable "support for the winning party". Second, for the global effect, I take advantage of an embedded survey experiment, priming respondents to think about the unfairness in the system, right before asking them about the dependent variable. In this line, I have shown that being in the treatment group (i.e. being primed to think about how unfairly some specific social groups are treated) predicts a lower level of confidence in the electoral process, compared to

those in the control group (i.e. did not receive the experiment question in that order).

After having focused only on those four countries, in this section, now I extend the empirical analysis to the whole Latin America region. Using data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), I proceed to test the main hypotheses in this dissertation for all Latin American countries. The dataset comprises four waves of surveys for the years 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012. The model results describe below are in line with the empirical results of chapter 5. It confirms the influence of the "local experience" and the "global effect" as determinants of the level of confidence in the electoral process. The level of trust in the people from the community helps to predict the level of confidence in the election. The size of the effect increases as trust in neighbors goes up. Therefore, voters assign responsibility for the quality of the election to their neighbors.

To test the "global effect" I used two different operationalization. First, I built a variable that works as a proxy for perceptions of unfairness of the system variable by combining opinions about the government fighting poverty and the role the state should have in reducing social inequality. In all six model specifications, the unfairness of the system effect is negatively associated with the level of trust in the election as expected, and it is statistically significant with 99% confidence interval. Second, I introduce the variable that measures how much voters think the government cares about their opinion. The results support the predicted positive

effect of perceived external political efficacy on opinions about the quality of the election.

This chapter is organized as follows. In the first section I recapitulate the two main hypotheses of the dissertation. In the second section I describe the data and models I am using to test empirically the theoretical claims. In the third section I present the results of those models. Finally, I conclude the chapter describing the main findings.

6.2 Main Hypotheses Recap

In the previous chapter I derive two main hypotheses to test my theoretical claims. On the one hand, I argued that voters gather information about the election from their social network and neighborhood. They use this information to assign responsibility to their community about the quality of the electoral process. Since the community is involved in the implementation, voters' trust in the people from their neighborhood impacts directly on how confident they are that the election was properly conducted.

> *Hypothesis 1: voters with higher trust in the people from their community*
> *are more confident that the election is clean and fair (LOCAL*
> *EXPERIENCE).*

On the other hand, I pointed out perceptions that certain groups of society are systematically amongst the disadvantaged ('*losers'*) decrease the hopes that the

electoral process behaves as a fair mechanism of translating preferences into political outcomes. In other words, perceptions of unequal treatment within the society affect the way people perceive the transparency of the electoral process.

> *Hypothesis 2: voters who perceive the system as unfair with certain social groups are less confident that the election is free and fair (GLOBAL EFFECT).*

6.3 Data and Models

In this section, I test the two main hypotheses connected with the "local experience" and the "global effect" theoretical explanations, using available individual survey data from Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). The pulled sample includes surveys for four years -2006, 2008, 2010, 2012- in 22 countries in Latin America[39].

LAPOP has repeated measures of the level of confidence in election in the region for the period 2004-2012 for a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 22 countries. Specifically, people are asked a 7 category question for what I use as the dependent variable:

> "*On this card there is a ladder with steps numbered 1 to 7, where 1 is the lowest step and means NOT AT ALL and 7 the highest and means A LOT. For example, if I asked you to what extent do you like watching television, if you don't like watching it at all, you would choose a score of 1, and if,*

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[39] In 2006, there is information for 15 countries, missing Mexico, Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Belize and Argentina.

*in contrast, you like watching television a lot, you would indicate the
number 7 to me. If your opinion is between not at all and a lot, you would
choose an intermediate score. So, to what extent do you have confidence
in elections?*"

The survey also includes a question regarding the level of trust respondents have

in their neighbors. It is a variable that contains four categories and it is perfect to

test the "local experience" explanation:

*Now, speaking of the people from around here, would you say that people
in this community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very
trustworthy or untrustworthy...? [Read options]*
(1) Very trustworthy
(2) Somewhat trustworthy
(3) Not very trustworthy
(4) Untrustworthy
(88) DK
(98)DA

Testing "the global effect" is not straightforward. I follow two different strategies

to use as a proxy. First, I use two question to build a new variable indicating

fairness of the political system. One question refers to governmental actions to

fight poverty and the other ask about the role of the state in the reduction of

income inequality. Precisely the questions are:

*Now, using the same ladder, **NOT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A LOT***
To what extent would you say the current administration fights poverty?

And

*Now I am going to read some items about the role of the national
government. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the
following statements. We will continue using the same ladder from 1 to 7.*

> *The (Country) government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?*

Thus, in the former question higher values mean that the government is actually doing something to reduce the poverty rate in the country. The later one, higher values represent that in respondent's opinion, the state should reduce the income gap. Using this information, I create a new variable called *unfairness of the system* that takes values of 1 if a respondent said 1 to 3 in the poverty question, and 5 to 7 in the income inequality one. Therefore, this variable indicates that people consider the government is not fighting poverty and they think it is among the missions of the state to reduce inequality. The unfairness of the system variable express the contrast between what people think the state should be doing and what it is actually doing.

Second, I use a standard question about external political efficacy. I consider the definition of external efficacy as beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands (Niemi 1988; Craig and Niemi 1990). Lack of responsiveness is a good proxy to test "the global effect" as I previously argue in the theoretical chapter. The disconnection between voters demands and policy impact negatively in considerations about the quality of the election.

> *Now, using the same ladder, **NOT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A LOT**
> Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?*

The survey provides information about most of the mentioned alternative explanations for confidence in the electoral process in chapter 2. It includes variables tapping in the level of trust people have in political parties and in the electoral management body -7 point variables from not at all confident to totally confident. Also, I created a dummy variable Voted Winner that indicates voting for the winning presidential candidate to control for this strong predictor and to emulate the models from chapter 5. To capture how well informed respondents are, I created a scale using four questions regarding frequency of use of different media outlets. Then, I use a dummy variable that indicates whether the respondent lives in an urban or rural area, which I am using as a possible proxy for differences on electoral infrastructure. To build the variable Experience Corruption I follow the same coding criteria from Seligson (2002, 2006) using 7 different questions regarding direct experience with corruption in interaction with the state. Clientelism is a dummy variable, taking the value of 1 if the respondent says that a political parte ever offered something in exchange for their vote. This variable in only available for 2010 (20 countries) and 2012 (5 countries). The percentage of respondents saying *yes* is low, particularly for 2010 surveys. Finally, indicators of age, gender, education, and income were straightforwardly derived from survey questions.

Regarding the modeling strategy, as noted before, the dependent variable takes values from 1 to 7. Strictly speaking, it is an ordered variable and it would require to run ordered models –ologit or oprobit. However, it is an accepted practice to use OLS models with ordered variables with more than 7/10 categories.

Following the same approach from chapter 5, for simplicity and ease of understanding I use OLS models that allow me to interpret coefficients without any posterior transformation. In order to check if this solution was sound, I run every model using OLS and oprobit. All the results reported in this chapter were equivalent using both approaches. For completion, however, I provide results from ordered models in the appendix of this chapter.

Table 6. 1 Expected relationship between Trust in the Election (DV), main Independent Variables (IVs), and controls

		Trust in the election
Main IVs		
	Trust in the Community	+
	Unfairness of the System	**-**
	External Political Efficacy	**-**
Controls		
	Support for the winning party	+
	Trust the EMB	+
	Trust Political Parties	+
	Clientelism	**-**
	Experience Corruption	**-**
	Political Information	+
	Income	*no expectation*
	Female	*no expectation*
	Age	*no expectation*
	Education	+
	Rural	**-**

When considering the data was collected in 22 different countries in four waves, multilevel analysis seems the soundest methodological approach. However, an analysis of the intra-class correlation (ICC) indicates the data is not clustered. The ICC for the dependent variable among countries is 0.068 and among years is 0.094. Both values are almost cero, which indicates the absence of clustering,

making multilevel modeling unnecessary. I run the OLS models, using cluster standard errors by country-year.

6.4 Descriptive Results

6.4.1 Dependent variable

As I have outlined earlier, the dependent variable is a 7 point scale, where 1 means "not at all" confident in elections and 7 means "totally confident". Figure 6.1 shows the distribution of the dependent variable for the whole sample. The mean of 4.08 and the median of 4 speaks of a region where almost half of the people express low confidence in the electoral process –it has a dispersion of 1.9. As shown in appendix I, figures I.6 to I.8, there are countries where confidence is particularly low –Paraguay- and countries where it is particularly high –Uruguay. Also, some countries are stable across time –where the median stays the same- and others vary a great deal –the median changes between years. I expect the reason in part could be explained by the fact that some countries do not have elections between surveys and some do. Finally, the dispersion of the DV varies between countries and time (e.g. Nicaragua shows very high dispersion, while in Uruguay or Chile opinions are more concentrated).

Figure 6. 1 Confidence in Elections, whole sample
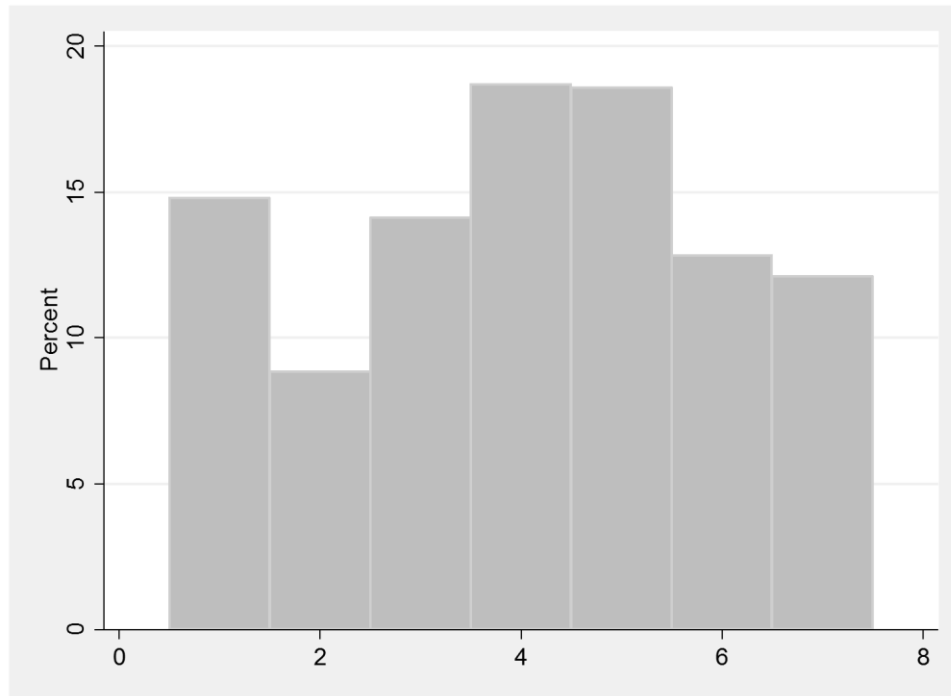
6.4.2 Independent Variables

The main independent variables indicating the level of trust in the community.

The category somewhat trustworthy is the mode response, with 41 percent. The

categories very trustworthy and not very trustworthy concentrate the 24 and 26

percent of the answers, respectively. The lower category, not trustworthy is the

one with fewer responses, with a 9 percent of the sample. Across countries, there

are few differences in the level of trust in the community; in all of them, the

median is 3 and the distribution is almost the same, only with slight differences.

Figure 6. 2 Speaking of the people from around here, would you say that people in this community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy or untrustworthy...?
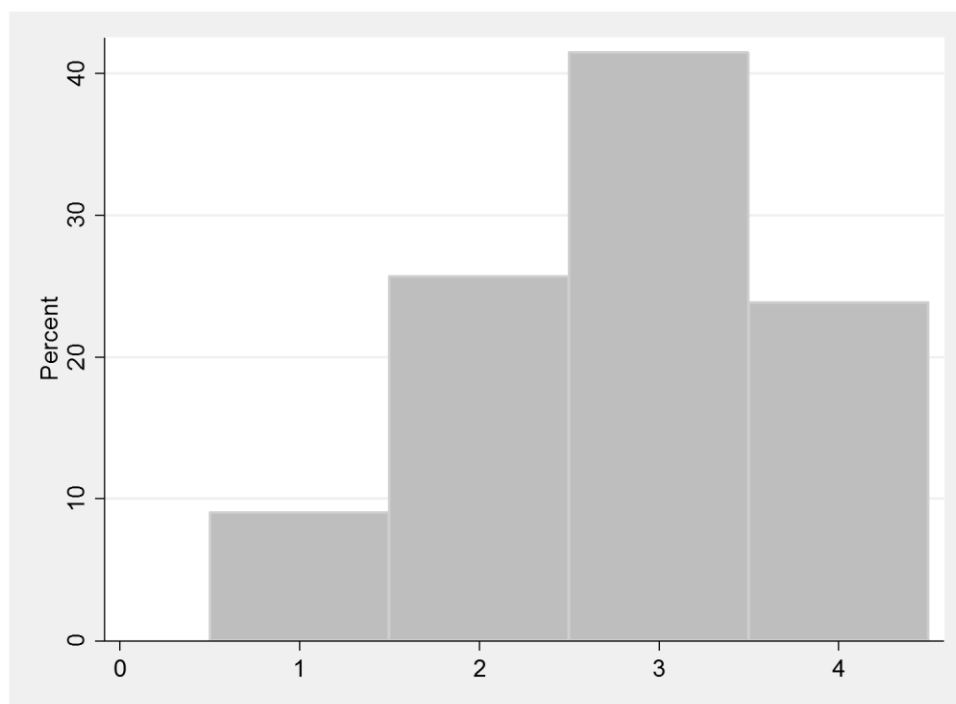
The responses capturing opinions about governmental actions against poverty in the region are negative too. For a variable with values from 1 to 7, the mean is 3.58 and the median 4, with a dispersion of 1.8. The cross-national analysis indicates that most of the countries are distributed around the general mean. In the upper bound, it is possible to mention that Uruguay with a mean of 4.6, the highest of the sample. It is followed by Brazil, with 4.1 –they are the only two countries averaging above 4. In the lower bound, it is located Paraguay, by only country with a mean less than 3 –it is followed by Honduras with 3.03.

Figure 6. 3 To what extent would you say the current administration fights poverty?
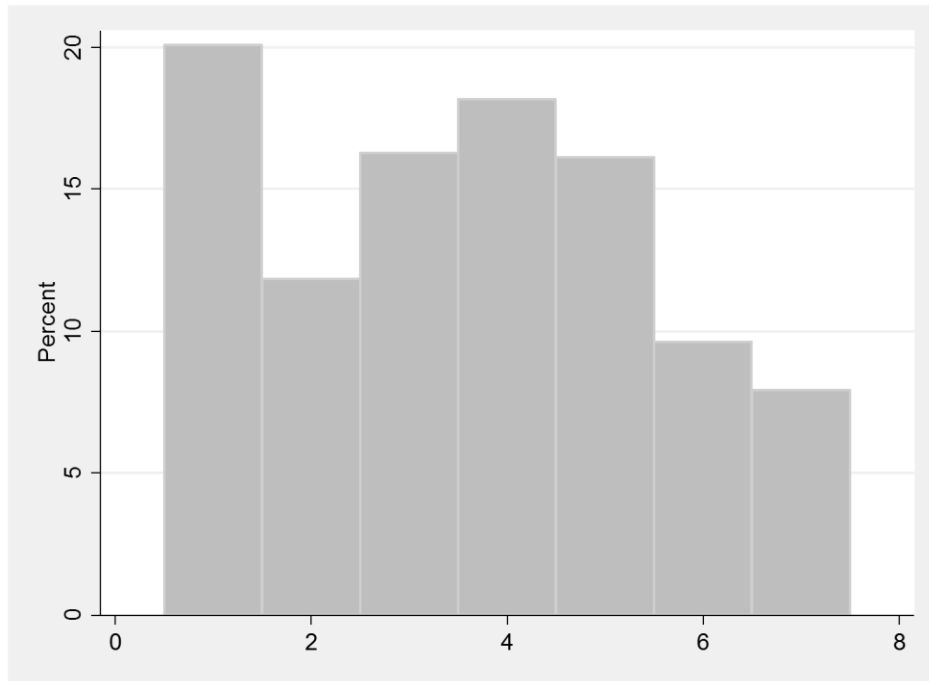
The opinions of about the role of the state in reducing income inequality are more concentrated. Almost half of respondents chose the high end of the scale -7-. The mean is 5.75 and the median is 6, with a dispersion of 1.6. When looking to the distribution by country, once again the dispersion is low. Interestingly, the country with the highest mean is Paraguay, with 6.21, which is the country with the lowest average regarding fighting poverty by the government. The country with the lowest average is Venezuela, with 4.97, followed by Honduras with 5.10.

Figure 6. 4 The government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

The combination of the three lower categories of the fighting poverty question, and the three upper ones from the duty of the state to reduce inequality, form the unfairness of the system variables as mention before. It results in a 40% of the sample with the value of 1. That is, 40 percent of respondents are part of the group that considers the government does not fight poverty and it should reduce inequality.

The last main independent variable included in the models below is external political efficacy. Again using a scale from 1 to 7, the mean is the lowers of the three with 3.31 and also the median in 3, with a dispersion of 1.9. The mode is 1, the lowers possible value. That is, clearly the majority of the people considers the government is not responsive to their opinions and demands. The behavior of this

variable by country is similar. The country with the highest external efficacy is Uruguay, with a mean of 4.15. While the lowest is again Paraguay, with an average of 2.79.

Figure 6. 5 Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think.
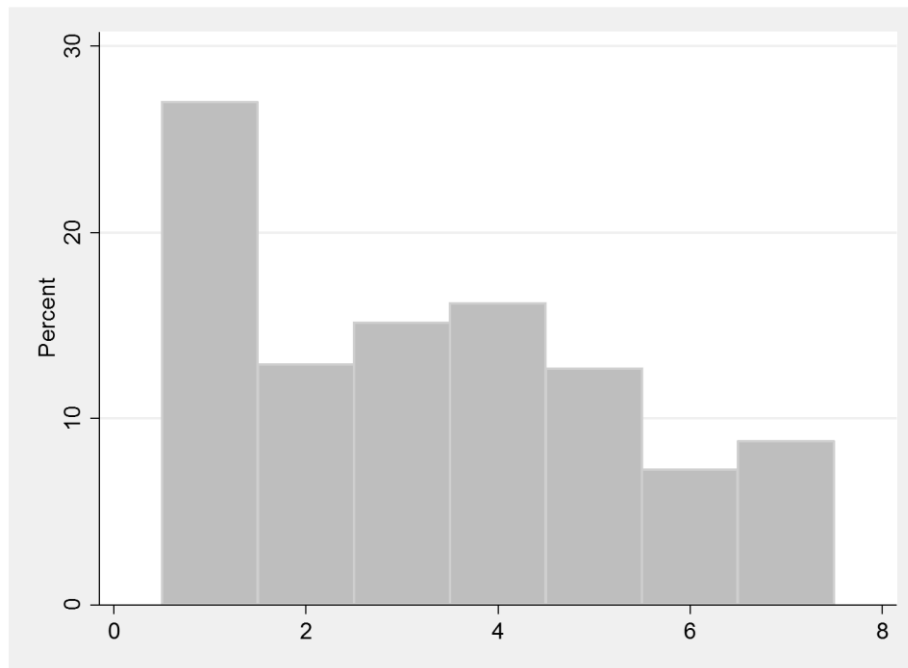
6.4.3 Distribution of Dependent Variable by main Independent Variables and some relevant controls

The bivariate analysis between the dependent variable and main independent variables anticipates a relationship in the correct direction of effect. Figure 6.6 shows positive relationship between higher confidence in the election and how trustworthy voters think people from their community are. Those who do not trust their neighbors have an average level of trust in the election of 3.63, while those who do trust people in the community have an average confidence in the electoral

process of 4.32 points in the scale. This relationship demonstrate preliminary

support for the "local experience" explanation.

Figure 6. 6 Confidence in the Election by Trust in the People from the Community
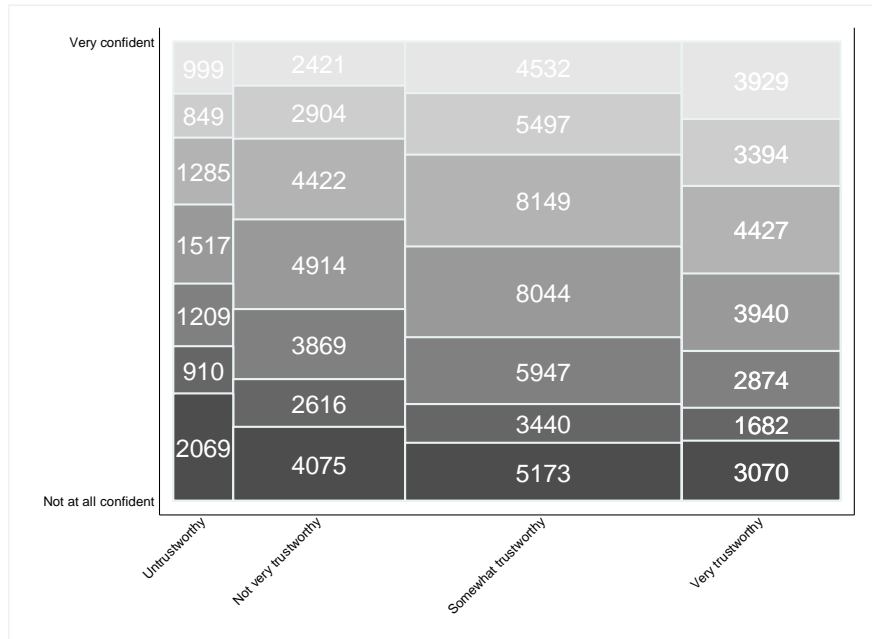
In Figure 6.7, I present graphically the relationship between confidence in the

election and the two variables I use as a proxy to measure the "global effect"

explanation. The upper portion of the plot shows the bivariate relationship

between level of confidence in the election and the variable unfairness of the

system I created by combining opinion about governmental actions against

poverty and about the role the state should have regarding inequality. From the

graph, it is possible to see the predicted negative relationship. Those who consider

the system is unfair, expresses lower levels of trust in the electoral process.

Specifically, those of consider the political system is unfair have an average

confidence in the election of 4.50, while those who consider the system is unfair have an average trust in the election of 3.35 point in the scale.

The lower portion of the plot shows the relationship between voters' confidence in the election and external political efficacy. Clearly, there is a positive relationship between thinking the government is more responsive to what people think and their level confidence in the electoral process. Those who consider the government does not care at all what citizens think have an average confidence in the election of 3.38. Those who consider the government is fully responsive have an average trust in the electoral process of 4.90 points in the scale.

Figure 6. 7 Confidence in the Election by the "Global Effect"
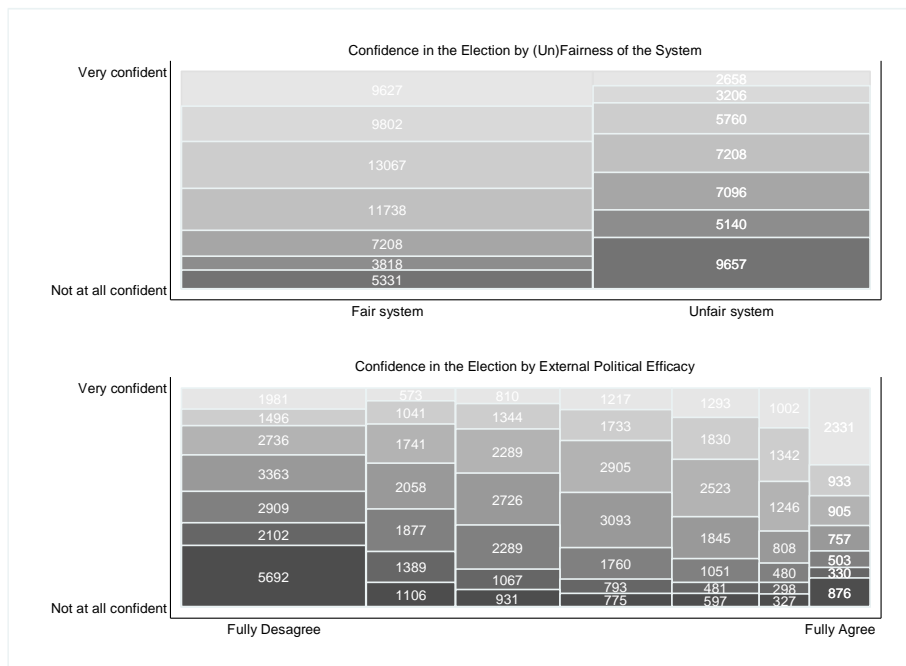
To finish this section, I consider important to show the relationship between the dependent variable and the control variable Confidence in the EMB. As mention

before, it is potentially problematic to use the level of confidence in the electoral management body and the level of confidence in the election because it is possible that both variables are tapping into the same dimension of the problem. To use the variable confidence in the electoral office as predictor of the level of confidence in the elections, it is necessary to assume that respondents fully understand the qualitative difference between the two questions. However, there are some works (Kerevel 2009; Kerr 2009) that explain the trust in the electoral process using as main independent variable the confidence in the EMB.

Figure 6.8 show the strong and positive relationship between the two variables. The correlation of both variables is 0.6. Those who do not trust the electoral management body have an average confidence in the election of 2.31. While those who fully trust the EMB have an average confidence in the electoral process of 5.81 point in the scale. Therefore, I later present models with and without this variable.

*Figure 6. 8 Confidence in the Election by Confidence in the Electoral
Management Body*
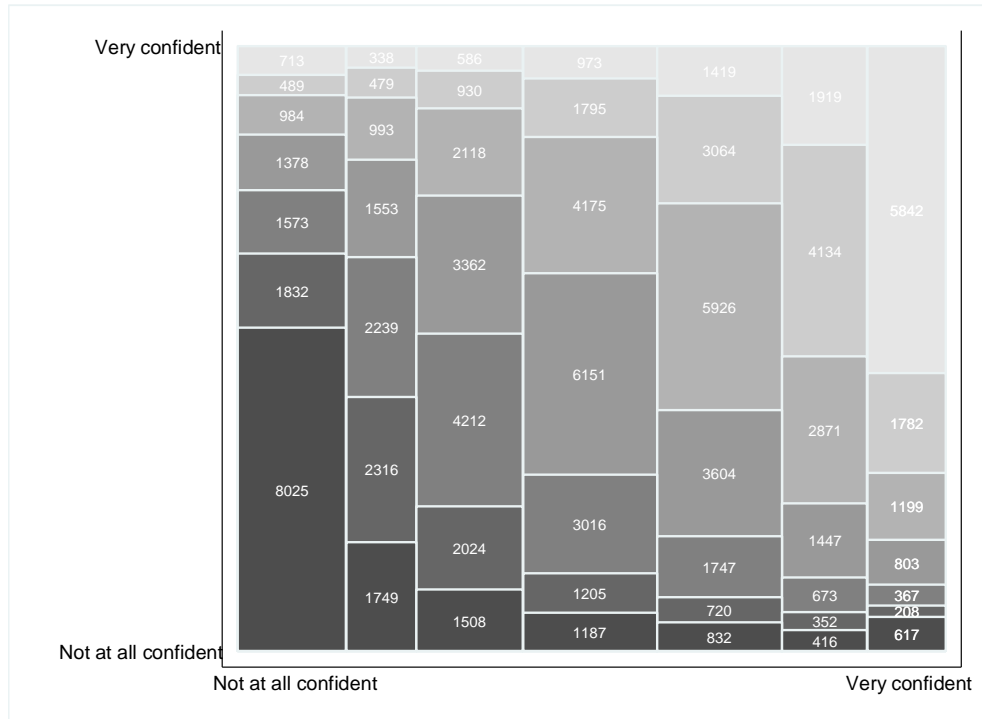
6.5 Models Results

In this section, I present the results of a series of models that empirically test the
two main hypotheses of this dissertation. First, the positive relationship between
trust in the people in the community and confidence in the electoral process.
Second, the negative relationship between perceptions of unfairness in the system
and trust in the election. In all models, I test the "local experience" theoretical
claim, including the variable Trust in the Community as a factor variables using
the category Untrusworthy as the baseline. Thus, the coefficients express the
differences in the level of trust in the electoral process, compared to those who do
not trust their neighbors. In all models, but model 4, I use as proxy to test the
"global effect" argument, the variable unfairness of the system. In model 4, I use

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the variable External Political Efficacy to test the mention mechanism. In model 5 and 6, I present models using both "global effect" variables together.

Models 1 and 2 use the entire sample, not controlling by voter's experience with clientelism. In model 2 and 6, I control by the variable of confidence in the EMB, which as I argued before might be problematic because of potential endogeneity problems. Also, it might be too strong of an assumption to make that respondents actually distinguish confidence in elections and confidence in the EMB. In model 3, I include the variable clientelism as a control, but not confidence in the EMB. This model is has a more restricted sample because there is data on clientelism only for 2010 wave and only for 5 countries in the 2012 round.

In general, the results presented in table 6.2 are in line with the empirical results of chapter 5. It confirms the influence of the "local experience" and the "global effect" as determinants of the level of confidence in the electoral process. The level of trust in the people from the community helps to predict the level of confidence in the election. Being the base category "Untrustworthy", there is a positive and statistically significant relationship. Only in model 3 with the restricted sample and model 6 with the full specification –includes EMB confidence, besides the three main IVs-, changing form "untrustworthy" to "not very trustworthy" is not significant overall. However, in models 1, 4, and 5 being in the second worst category of community trust increases about 0.10 the level of trust in the election in comparison with the not trust category. This effects are all statistically significant. The size of the effect increases as trust in neighbors goes up. Comparing those in the "fairly trustworthy" category with the "untrustworthy"

one, there is an increase in the level of confidence in the electoral process of about

0.2 –being 0.22 the highest effect in model 4 and 0.11 the lowest in model 2. In

all six models the effect is statistically significant. Finally, those in the "very

trustworthy" category are, on average, approximately 0.30 –being 0.35 the highest

effect in model 4 and 0.21 the lowest in models 2 and 4. Again, all effects are

statistically significant in every specification. In sum, there is empirical support

for hypothesis 1- as voters' trust in their peer's increases, they perceive the

electoral process is more reliable. Therefore, voters assign responsibility for the

quality of the election to their neighbors.

Above I mentioned two different operationalization to test the "global effect"

hypothesis: unfairness of the system variable built combining opinions about the

government fighting poverty and the role the state should have in reducing social

inequality. In all six model specifications, the unfairness of the system effect is

negatively associated with the level of trust in the election as expected, and it is

statistically significant with 99% confidence interval. The size of the effect varies

across models. In the first model, being among those who perceive the system as

unfair predicts a 0.708 less points in the level of confidence in the electoral

process. In model 2, where I control by the level of confidence in the EMB, the

effect is reduced to 0.443. The effect of perceptions of unfairness of the system in

model 5 –where I introduce the other "global effect" proxy- is 0.590. Meaning

that voters that perceive injustice is associated with 0.6 less trust in the election on

average.

In model 4 to 6, I introduce the variable that measures how voters in Latin America position themselves in a scale from 1 to 7 in relation to how much they think the government cares about people's opinion. Empirical results support the predicted positive effect of perceived external political efficacy on opinions about the quality of the election. In the three models, the mention effect is statistically significant at the 99% confidence interval. In model 4, the coefficient of the external political efficacy variable predicts an increase in the perceive trust in the election of 0.158 as efficacy goes up. When introducing both proxies for hypothesis 2, the size of the effect does not change much decreasing the coefficient only to 0.130 more confidence. Thus, it seems both variables tap into different dimensions of the "global effect".

Figure 6. 9 Coefficient plot Models 5 and 6
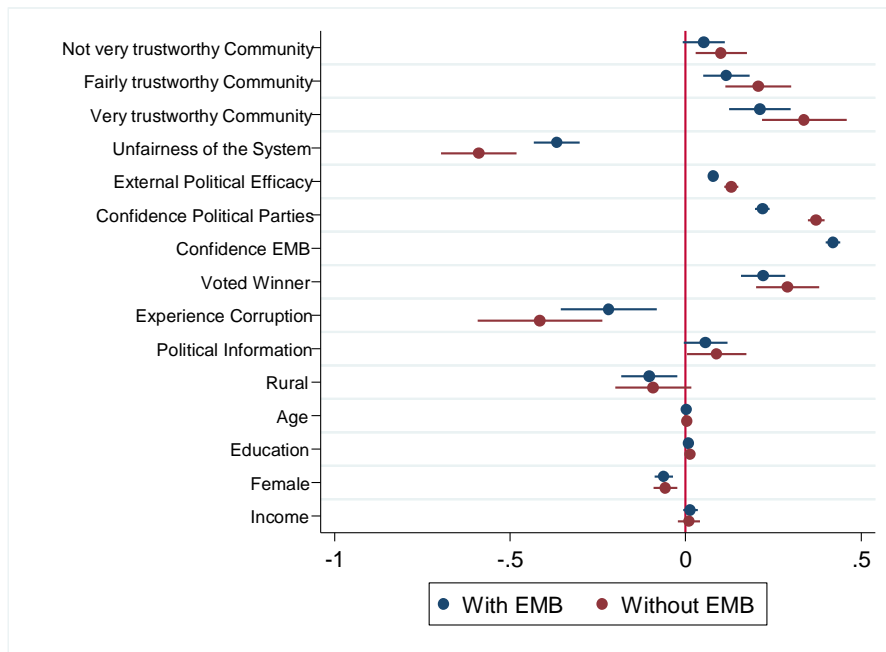
Table 6. 2 Confidence in Elections with clustered standard errors

	(1) Model 1	(2) Model 2	(3) Model 3	(4) Model 4	(5) Model 5	(6) Model 6
Not very trustworthy Community	0.096** (0.03)	0.058* (0.03)	0.095 (0.06)	0.118** (0.04)	0.102** (0.04)	0.052 (0.03)
Fairly trustworthy Community	0.199*** (0.04)	0.114*** (0.03)	0.190** (0.06)	0.221*** (0.05)	0.207*** (0.05)	0.117*** (0.03)
Very trustworthy Community	0.340*** (0.05)	0.212*** (0.04)	0.328*** (0.07)	0.355*** (0.06)	0.338*** (0.06)	0.212*** (0.04)
Unfairness of the System	-0.708*** (0.05)	-0.443*** (0.03)	-0.683*** (0.08)		-0.590*** (0.05)	-0.367*** (0.03)
External Political Efficacy				0.158*** (0.01)	0.130*** (0.01)	0.079*** (0.01)
Confidence EMB		0.428*** (0.01)				0.421*** (0.01)
Clientelism			-0.088 (0.06)			
Voted Winner	0.371*** (0.05)	0.270*** (0.04)	0.354*** (0.08)	0.361*** (0.05)	0.290*** (0.04)	0.221*** (0.03)
Confidence Political Parties	0.403*** (0.01)	0.235*** (0.01)	0.410*** (0.02)	0.402*** (0.01)	0.372*** (0.01)	0.219*** (0.01)
Experience Corruption	-0.452*** (0.08)	-0.255*** (0.07)	-0.422** (0.14)	-0.439*** (0.09)	-0.416*** (0.09)	-0.219** (0.07)
Political Information	0.059 (0.04)	0.043 (0.03)	0.108*** (0.03)	0.097* (0.05)	0.088* (0.04)	0.057 (0.03)
Rural	-0.117* (0.05)	-0.124** (0.04)	-0.036 (0.08)	-0.100 (0.06)	-0.092 (0.05)	-0.104* (0.04)
Age	0.005** (0.00)	0.003** (0.00)	0.004 (0.00)	0.004** (0.00)	0.005** (0.00)	0.003** (0.00)
Education	0.013** (0.00)	0.009* (0.00)	0.003 (0.01)	0.013* (0.00)	0.013** (0.00)	0.009* (0.00)
Female	-0.068*** (0.02)	-0.069*** (0.01)	-0.040 (0.03)	-0.063*** (0.02)	-0.058** (0.02)	-0.062*** (0.01)
Income	0.017 (0.01)	0.019* (0.01)	0.034 (0.02)	0.008 (0.02)	0.009 (0.02)	0.014 (0.01)
Constant	2.363*** (0.13)	1.319*** (0.09)	2.230*** (0.16)	1.524*** (0.16)	1.954*** (0.15)	1.106*** (0.10)
N	66833	65076	21989	53571	53571	52335
R^2	0.253	0.397	0.259	0.248	0.268	0.406

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Turning now to the controls, it is possible to see that the level of confidence in the

electoral management body is positively related to levels of confidence in the

elections. This finding is compatible with the works of Kerevel (2009) and Kerr (2009). Although, it might be problematic as I mentioned earlier. In all models there is a positive and significant relation between voting for the winner. This positive relationship between voting for the winning candidate and confidence confirm the findings of the literature.

In the models, being in contact with non-electoral corruption with the state, reduces the level of confidence in the election. -it is statistically significant in the four models. In models 3, the variable on experience with electoral corruption – clientelism- is included. The predicted negative relationship with confidence in elections is correct, but it is not statistically significant. The lack of stronger results might be explained by the small proportion of respondents that admit experiencing clientelism and the restricted sample that includes the question about the topic.

In models 1, 2, and 6, living in a rural area decreases the level on confidence in elections as expected. In the rest of the models, though the direction of the effect is negative as predicted, it is not statistically significant. The rural variable could work as a proxy for traveling long distances to vote or poor electoral infrastructure. This might be a strong assumption, but it is especially true for some countries in the region where there are very few polling stations in rural areas. The lack of significant results in the two other models might call for a better indicator to test the influence of electoral infrastructure.

The interpretation of the variable information is not straightforward. As I argued

earlier, better informed people can have less or more confidence in the election,

depending on the existence or not of problematic events in the process which in

turn depends on how public those events are. Generally, I expected a positive

relation between confidence and level of information because there were not any

major problematic events in the last few years. I also predicted a positive

relationship because more information about the electoral process –knowing how

to vote, etc.-, increases the level of confidence in the election (Gerber et al. 2012).

In all models, the direction of effect is positive, but it is not statistically significant

in models 1, 2, and 6. A possible interpretation for the lack of significant results in

this models, is that in different countries or within the same country among

different years, the effect of being better informed could be positive or negative,

depending on electoral events.

Regarding the demographic variables, age predicts higher levels of confidence. I

have no previous theoretical predictions although it could be interpreted as being

a more experienced voter (Alvarez, Hall, and Llewellyn 2008). Income is

positively related with confidence in the election, but statistically significant in

model 2. I do not have theoretical expectations for this relationship. Gender

differences are strong. Being female is negatively correlated with confidence in

elections in all models at a 99% level. Kerevel (2009) also finds a negative

relationship and argues that it is explained by the underrepresentation of women

across the region. This interpretation is compatible with the negative effect of

being a 'losers' of the system in opinions about the quality of the electoral

process. Finally, having more years of education have a positive and statistically significant effect on the level of trust in the election.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I extended the empirical analysis from the four countries in Central America to the entire Latin American region. Using four waves of surveys conducted across 22 countries by LAPOP, I conducted a series of models to test the "local experience" and "global effect" theoretical explanations described in previous chapters of this dissertation. First, this theory expects that differences in how people perceive their peers and their involvement in the electoral process will affect their perceptions of how transparent and adequate is the electoral process. Second, I argued that voters trust more or less the electoral process conditioned on their perceptions of fairness in how different social groups are treated.

Empirical results confirmed the influence of the "local experience" and the "global effect" as determinants of the level of confidence in the electoral process. The level of trust in the people from the community helps to predict the level of confidence in the election. Being the base category "Untrustworthy", there is a positive and statistically significant relationship, comparing with the three categories from "not very trustworthy" to "very trustworthy". The size of the effect increases as trust in neighbors goes up. In sum, there is empirical support for hypothesis 1- as voters' trust in their peer's increases, they perceive the

electoral process is more reliable. Therefore, voters assign responsibility for the quality of the election to their neighbors. Both "global effect" proxies showed support for the stated influence in the level of trust in the election. First, perceptions of unfairness of the system variable –combination of opinions about the government fighting poverty and the role the state should have in reducing social inequality- is negatively associated with the level of trust in the election as expected, and it is statistically significant with 99% confidence interval. Second, the results support the predicted positive effect of perceived external political efficacy on opinions about the quality of the election. This results allow me to extend the finding to the entire Latin American region, providing empirical support to my theory.

In the next chapter, I provide an overview of the dissertation, including a brief recap of the most important theoretical claims, the main characteristics of the cases under study, and the survey results and models findings. I finish the dissertation stating possible future research directions on the agenda of confidence in the electoral process.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation was to address an existing gap in the literature of confidence in the electoral process. Most Latin American countries experience elections that are generally fair and transparent. However, their citizens tend to hold negative opinions over the electoral experience as a whole, being trustworthiness of the results their main concern. In a region where extensive fraud is mostly absent, these perceptions of lack of transparency and unfairness in the election bring forward an interesting puzzle.

This project makes a contribution within the field of Electoral Studies, from two different perspectives: the theoretical and the empirical one. Theoretically, my original argument emphasizes the importance of attribution of responsibility to assess what voters believe of the electoral process. In this line, the novelty in my theory has to do with the relevance of the community in the implementation tasks the day of the election. What was defined in this dissertation as the Local Experience refers to the influence on voters' confidence in the election that has their relationship with their neighbors. Citizens attribute responsibility to those in charge of implementing tasks the day of the election, who are often part of their own community. Hence, if voters hold negative views about their neighbors and they see them working while they cast their ballot, these perceptions cast a shadow on their confidence in the electoral process.

Besides 'the local experience', my argument highlights a second explanatory factor to address the puzzle, what was formerly described as 'the global effect'. My argument is that when socioeconomic inequality and unfairness in the system become salient issues in voters' thinking, perceptions of injustice translate into their general distrust of the electoral process. In other words, voters who believe some social groups are unfairly treated by the system, are more likely to find the results of the election untrustworthy. The linkage mechanism has to do with beliefs that certain groups of the society are systematically amongst the disadvantaged ('losers'), which decreases their hopes that the electoral process function as a fair mechanism of translating preferences of every citizen into decision-making process and political outcomes. When the political system does not succeed in addressing issues of social injustice and socioeconomic inequality, voters tend to cast doubt over the election. This reasoning has to do with either sociotropic considerations (people care about equal treatment and social justice) or egotropic considerations (people perceive themselves as not being favored by the system).

The empirical contribution in this dissertation is circumscribed to four countries in Central America: Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. Taking advantage of an embedded experiment in a survey conducted by CID Gallup I was able to test the following hypotheses. The first hypothesis relates to what I have called the local experience: voters with higher trust in their community members are more confident that the election is clean and fair. The data has supported this hypothesis, an increase of one point in the level of trust in the

neighbors predicts an average increase of 0.150 points in the level of confidence in the electoral process. The second hypothesis explains the global effect: voters who perceive the system as unfair with certain social groups are less confident that the election is free and fair. To test this hypothesis more precisely, I run a simple model with the treatment (of the survey experiment) as the main independent variable. As my theory anticipated, respondents who were primed with the question about unfairness in the system report 0.287 points less confidence in the electoral process, on average. As predicted, the relationship is negative and statistically significant. Yet, to isolate which mechanism is triggering these results, I run specific models to differentiate sociotropic from egotropic motivations. Results show that when respondents place themselves in the group of 'winners' (i.e. benefited by the system), the treatment has no effect. But when respondents consider themselves 'losers' of the system, the treatment has a negative effect of 0.219 points on average on the level of trust in the electoral process (egotropic). Then for the sociotropic motivations, the data shows that among respondents who consider income distribution unfair, being in the treatment group lowers 0.319 points the confidence in the election.

Finally, I provide a theory for the interaction of the two main theorized explanations based on the premise of clarity of responsibility. The third hypothesis states that "the local experience" has a more predominant impact on voters trust in the election than "the global effect". Results in the data show that the priming treatment has no effect within respondents who have a low opinion about their neighbors, for whom the electoral process is already untrustworthy.

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Perceptions of socioeconomic fairness does not affect their level of trust in the system since for them their lack of trust in the electoral process is something more immediate to their every-day lives (i.e. distrust in their peers). To the contrary, when voters do trust their community members, the effect of the treatment is on average 0.264 points less in the level of confidence in the electoral process. In other words, among voters with a positive "local experience", perceptions about injustices of the system (how social groups are unfairly treated) lower their level of trust in the election.

To strengthen the theory and the empirical results tested in those four countries in Latin America, I use a cross national survey conducted in 22 countries by LAPOP to test two main mechanisms described as determinant of the level of confidence in the electoral process. The analysis confirms the influence of the "local experience" and the "global effect" as determinants of the level of confidence in the electoral process.

In the cross national analysis, the level of trust in the people from the community helps to predict the level of confidence in the election. Being the base category "Untrustworthy", changing to "not very trustworthy" increases -0.10 points- the trust in the election, expressing a positive and statistically significant relationship. The size of the effect increases as trust in neighbors goes up. Comparing those in the "fairly trustworthy" category with the "untrustworthy" one, there is an increase in the level of confidence in the electoral process of about 0.2 –being 0.22 the highest effect in model 4 and 0.11 the lowest in model 2. Finally, those in

the "very trustworthy" category are, on average, approximately 0.30 –being 0.35 the highest effect in model 4 and 0.21 the lowest in models 2 and 4. In sum, voters' trust in their peer's increases, they perceive the electoral process is more reliable.

To test the "global effect" in the entire LatAm region I used two different operationalization. First, the unfairness of the system variable built by combining opinions about the government fighting poverty and the role the state should have in reducing social inequality. In all six model specifications, the unfairness of the system effect is negatively associated with the level of trust in the election as expected, and it is statistically significant with 99% confidence interval. The size of the effect varies across models from the lowest effect of 0.443 to the highest of 0.708 points less in the level of confidence in the electoral process. In model 4 to 6, I introduced the variable that measures how much voters think the government cares about their opinion. Empirical results support the predicted positive effect of perceived external political efficacy on opinions about the quality of the election. In the three models, the mention effect is statistically significant at the 99% confidence interval. In model 4, the coefficient of the external political efficacy variable predicts an increase in the perceive trust in the election of 0.158 as efficacy goes up. When introducing both proxies for hypothesis 2, the size of the effect does not change much decreasing the coefficient only to 0.130 more confidence. Thus, it seems both variables tap into different dimensions of the "global effect".

7.1 Policy Implications

A starting point to discuss how policy makers can take advantage of these contributions resides in clarification. In this dissertation I have shown that two important aspects –quite disregarded so far- deserved special attention while studying possible explanatory factors for electoral confidence. As widely discussed, the global effect and the local experience bring forward the influence of community trust, perceptions of unfairness of the system and inequality as contributors to how people build their opinions on the electoral process.

Nonetheless, policy recommendations so far did not include these considerations. Oftentimes, International Organizations – OAS for instance – develop policy memos after a specific election addressing particular problems in the process and suggestions on how to improve it. These recommendations have generally focused on the institutional design as a form of promoting the legitimacy of the ballot. However, every intent to reform institutions in Latin America have not solve the puzzle of the divergence between actual fraud and persistent beliefs of fraud. Particularly for this reason, this dissertation contributes to the clarification of the matter through emphasizing the importance of some elements that were previously overlooked. In other words, when analyzing how to boost trust in the election, now governments can factor in new elements (namely, voters' trust in the neighbors, socioeconomic inequality and perceptions of unfairness).

What are the specific implications of this new information for policy makers? In the first place, by paying attention to the role of the community in the electoral

process, government officials can design specific policies to address these two variables together (confidence in the ballot and community trust). For instance, administrators can organize training sessions and other pre-election activities right in the neighborhood. Community outreach activities associated to the electoral process will not only improve related skills but will also nurture trust among neighbors. By focusing on the neighborhood, confidence in the election is elevated through the process of fostering confidence between neighboring voters. Furthermore, training at the very local level contributes to general confidence. If voters see the government offering guidance sessions right to their door, they will know other members of their community are being trained as well, which increases the likelihood that voters will trust their performance as poll workers. Overall, trust in the community increases with social capital, which could be an interesting area for governments to work with, for specific reasons concerning confidence in the electoral process.

Another policy implication considering the empirical evidence in this dissertation has to do with the Global Effect. By knowing that perceptions of socioeconomic inequality impact the level of confidence in the electoral process, governments are able to address their concerns differently in each neighborhood. In other words, policy makers can anticipate higher distrust in the ballot experience within more unequal electoral districts. Therefore, government officials could target particularly unequal localities with specific policies to address these negative perceptions, originated in the system's injustice (how different social groups are unfairly treated).

7.2 Further Research

There are some relevant variables that were missing in my data because the survey questionnaire did not include questions to measure them. Unfortunately, I had no control over the questionnaire design that CID Gallup implemented. In consequence, the data in this dissertation lacks variables to measure income, wealth or any form of socioeconomic level. I could proxy socioeconomic status with educational level, but further work with this project should address this missing factor and intend to include a proper income variable in the models. Due to the fact that I was not able to classify respondents in specific social groups, it was not possible to analyze some interesting points regarding the variables of specific social groups being unfairly treated (specially, when the survey asked about 'people like me' as a group).

Another question that was missing in the survey and could have resulted in relevant information to my analysis has to do with personal experiences during the day of the election. For instance, asking respondents whether they witness or experience themselves any form of corruption the day of the election could have been an interesting element to consider as a control variable. Most studies about elections in Latin America describe the presence of clientelism as a specific form of political corruption. Naturally, if voters witness or even experience first-hand clientelistic practices, most surely this could contribute to their beliefs that the ballot results are not trustworthy. Moreover, the interaction of clientelism with community trust could affect the underlying mechanism in my argument.

Although, my anticipation is that even controlling by negative experiences of electoral corruption, 'the local experience' will still be a powerful influence on voters' perceptions. Anyhow, for completeness, future research in this line should include data on the topic of personal experiences during the day of the election.

Finally, as formerly developed in the theoretical chapter, the ultimate part of my argument is the interaction of the two effects: the global and the local. I theorized that when compared, the local experience is more salient than the global, meaning that when community trust in low, perceptions of unfairness do not have an effect on electoral confidence. My interpretation of the empirical evidence resides on the concept of clarity of responsibility. Voters assign responsibility over the election to different entities and factors, but some of them are more direct and clear to them. For this reason, the local experience is more distinguishable for any citizen than the global effect. The immediacy with their peers, make voters more plausible to assign responsibility to them when something does not work in the electoral process. While casting their ballot, contact and interactions with community members are frequent and quite real whereas the concept of unfairness of the system is definitely more abstract. However, this is an interpretation of the data according to my reasoning, but in terms of empirical evidence further tests should be run to reach more solid conclusions.

Although these findings are preliminary and some weakness in the data should be addressed in the future, my work takes a first step in the necessary task of explaining such a key element in any democracy as it is confidence in the

election. This dissertation's main purpose was to shed light on the topic and find deeper knowledge on what factors makes us more prone to distrust electoral results, even in the absence of extensive fraud.

Appendices

Appendix I: Chapter 1

Latinobarómetro has repeated measures of confidence in the election, for the period 1995-1998, 2005-2006, and 2009 for a minimum of 8 to a maximum of 19 countries. People are asked a two category question for the DV: "*Speaking generally, do you think that the elections in this country are clean or rigged?*"

Figure I. 1 Latinobarómetro: Confidence in Elections
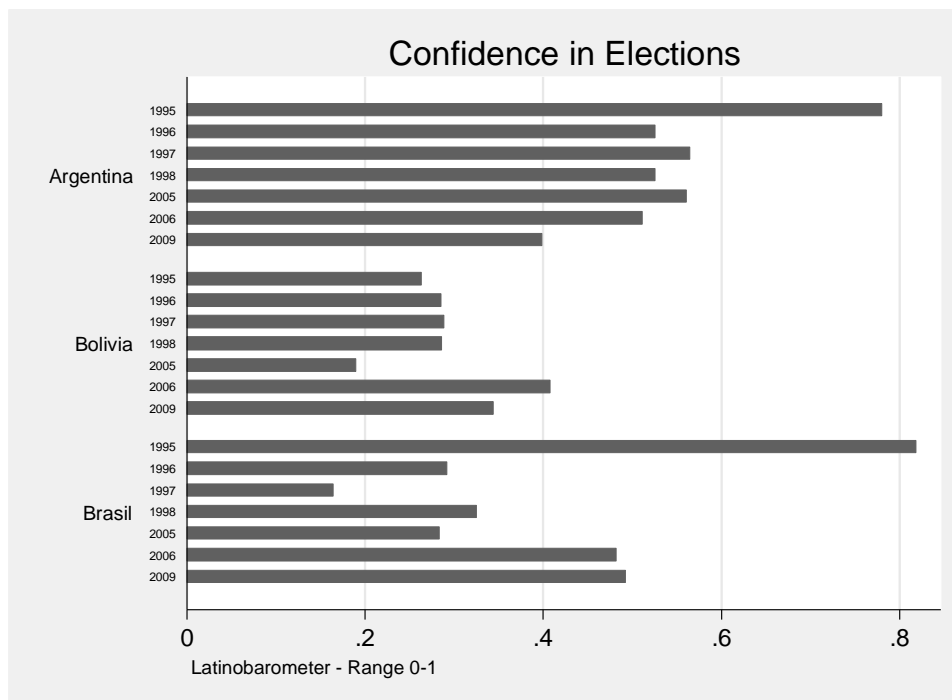
Figure I. 2 Latinobarómetro: Confidence in Elections

Confidence in Elections

Latinobarometer - Range 0-1
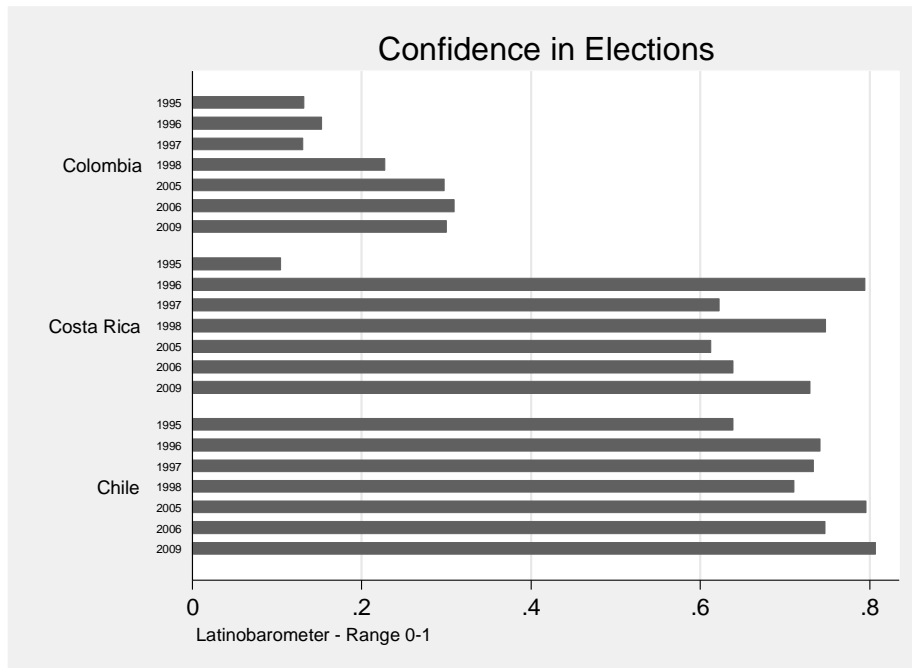
Figure I. 3 Latinobarómetro: Confidence in Elections

Confidence in Elections

Latinobarometer - Range 0-1
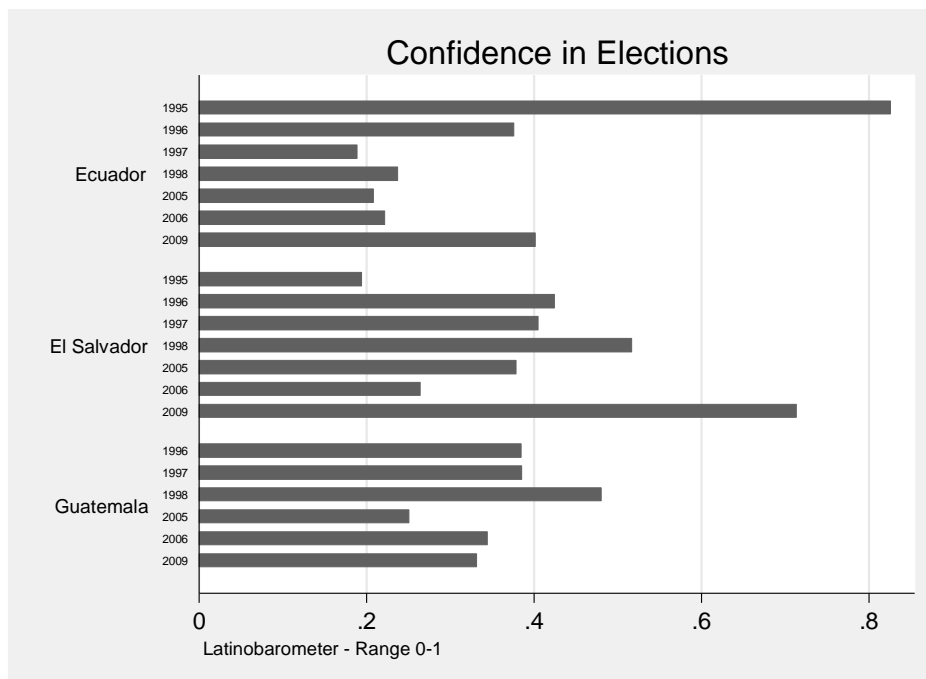
Figure I. 4 Latinobarómetro: Confidence in Elections
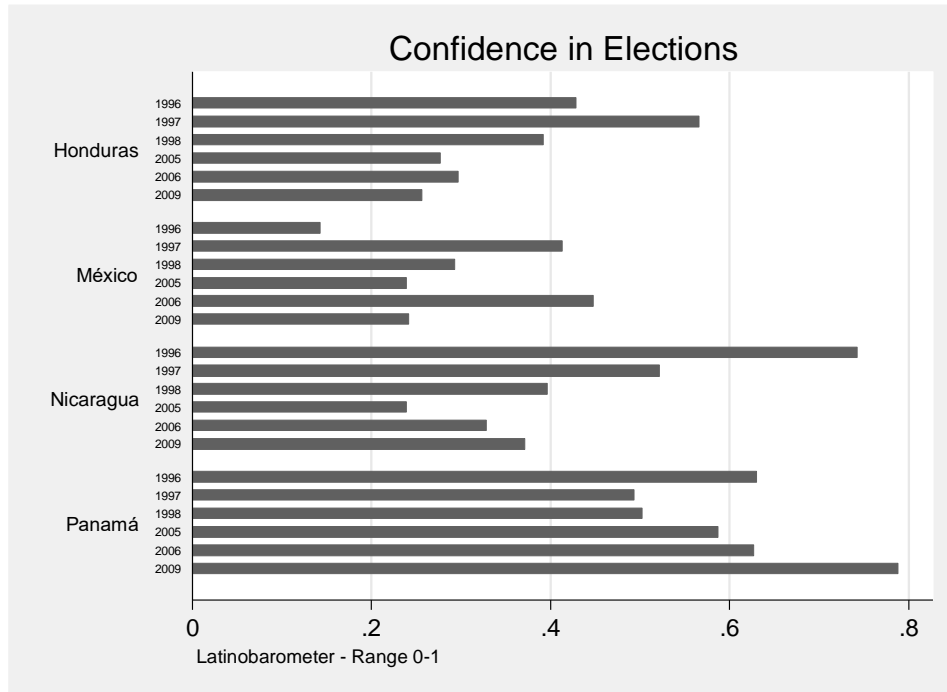
Figure I. 5 Latinobarómetro: Confidence in Elections
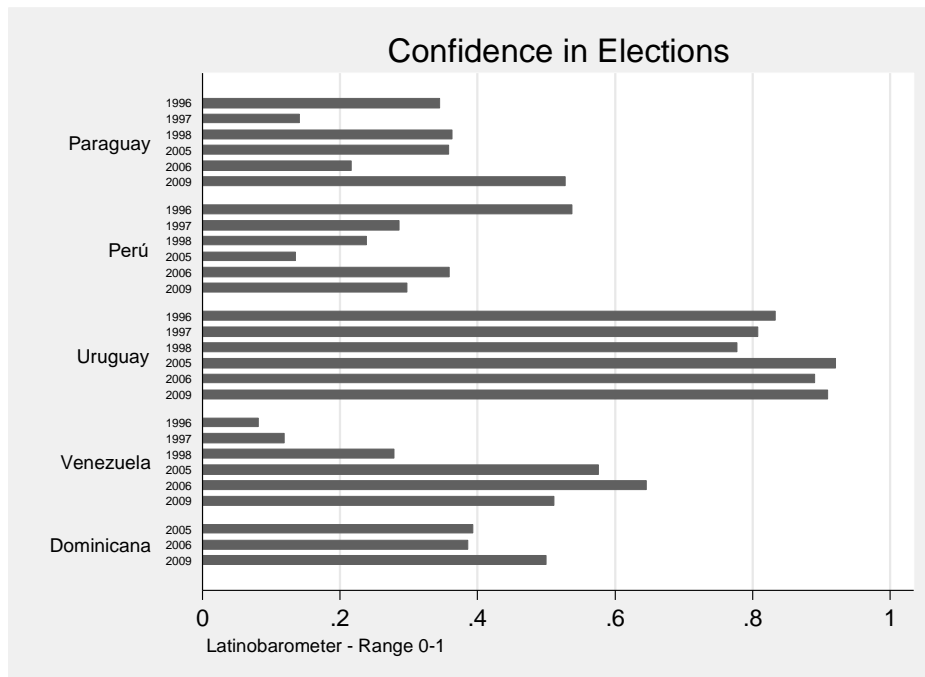
The Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) has repeated measures of confidence in the election for the period 2004-2012 for a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 22 countries. People are asked a 7 category question for the DV: "*On this card there is a ladder with steps numbered 1 to 7, where 1 is the lowest step and means NOT AT ALL and 7 the highest and means A LOT. So, to what extent do you have confidence in elections?*"

Figure I. 6 Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP): Confidence in Elections
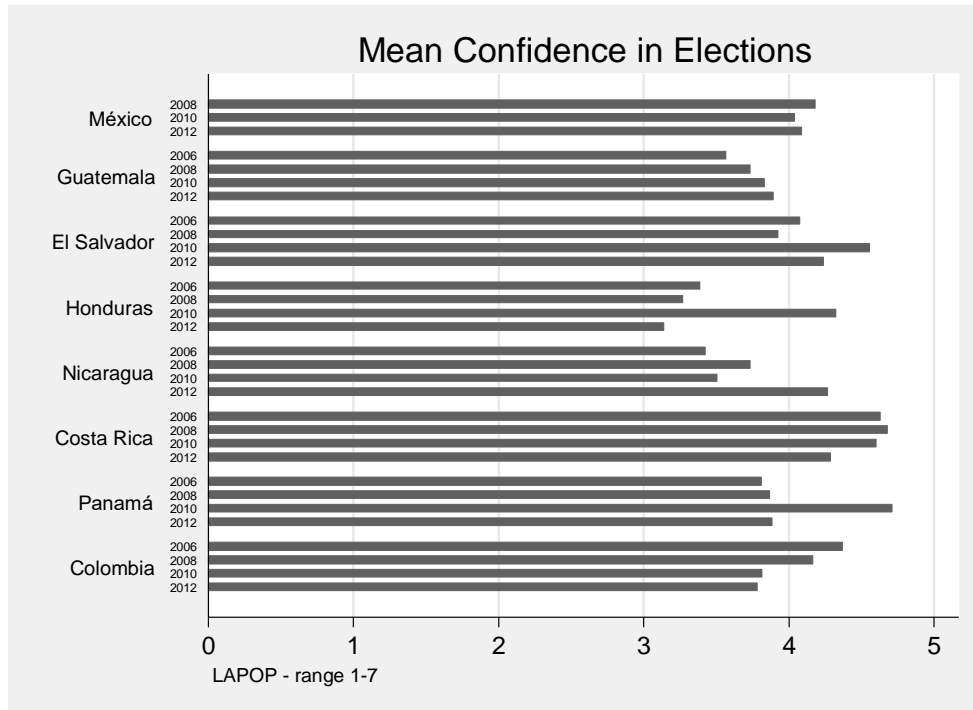
Figure I. 7 Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP): Confidence in Elections
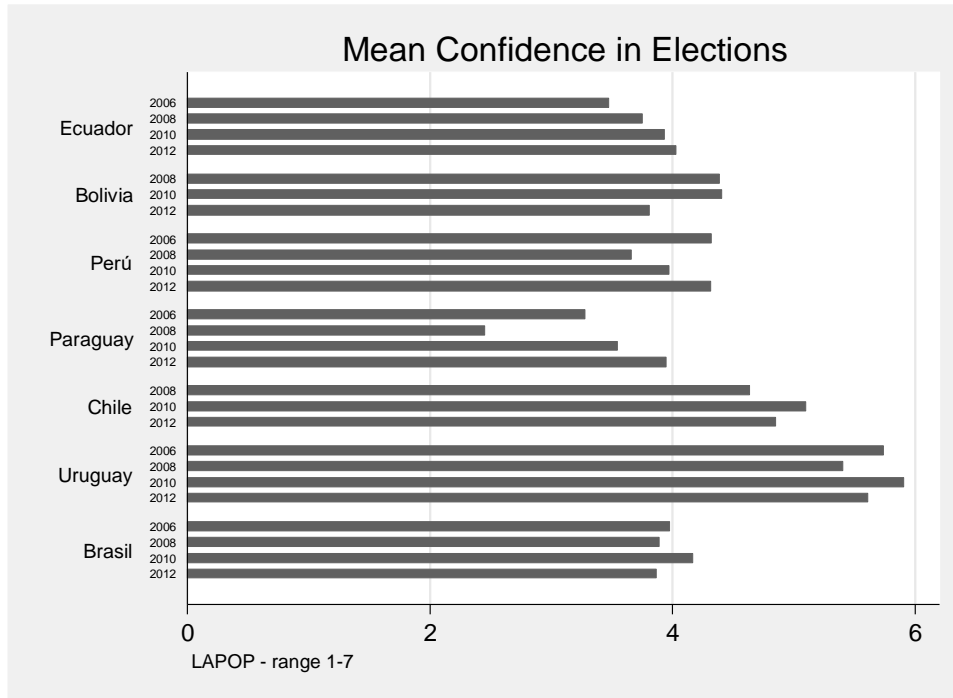
Figure I. 8 Latin America Public Opinion Project (LAPOP): Confidence in Elections
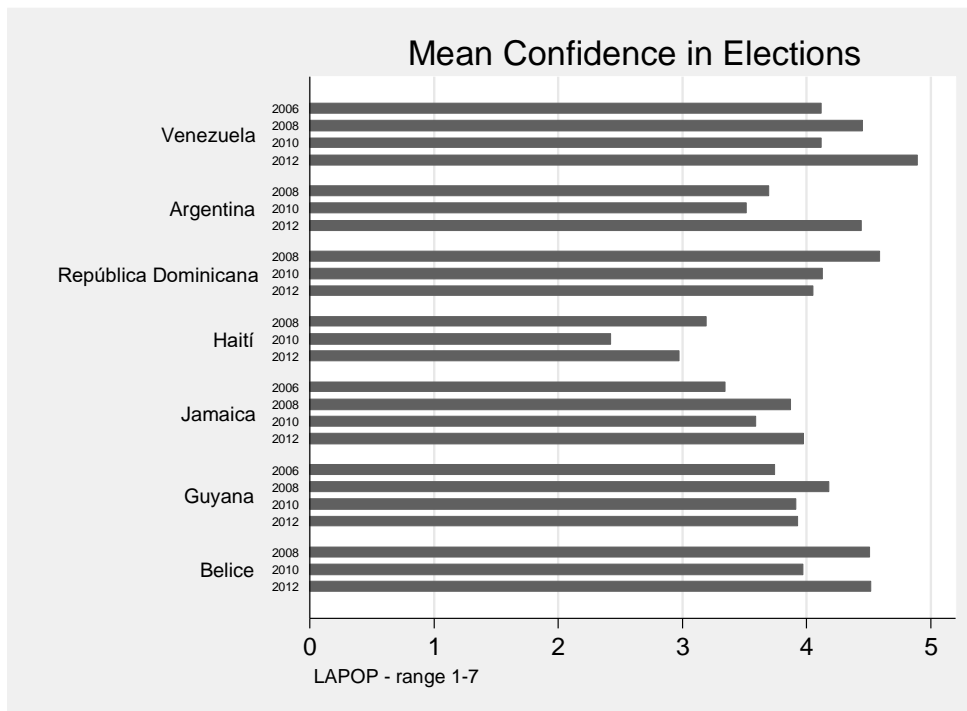
Appendix II: Chapter 3

Table II. 1 Gini Index (World Bank Estimate)

	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Costa Rica
1996	51.39		55.72	46.54
1997			52.73	45.62
1998	54.52		57.43	45.67
1999	52.20		55.35	47.67
2000	51.31	54.84		47.44
2001	51.14		54.08	51.10
2002	51.54	56.94	58.78	50.89
2003	50.72	54.10	58.66	49.93
2004	47.38	50.73	58.41	48.92
2005	47.88		59.51	47.77
2006	45.44	54.89	57.42	49.31
2007	45.24		56.16	49.49
2008	46.65		55.74	49.14
2009	45.93		51.56	50.97
2010	44.53		53.39	48.10
2011	42.43	52.35	57.40	48.60
2012	41.80		57.40	48.61
2013	43.51		53.67	49.18

Table II. 2 Poverty headcount ratio at $1.90/day (2011 PPP) (% of population)

	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Costa Rica
1996	21.95		30.35	7.96
1997			21.24	6.47
1998	20.02	13.18	25.93	5.06
1999	16.27		26.45	6.37
2000	11.81	10.1		6.48
2001	12.73		18.28	6.54
2002	13.08	18.37	29.06	6.34
2003	15.76	16.51	27.47	6.11
2004	9.95	14.45	26.32	5.59
2005	9.55		27.79	4.37
2006	6.36	11.51	23.79	4.37
2007	4.49		17.43	2.4
2008	6.92		16.14	2.71
2009	6.4		14.05	3.33
2010	7.24		15.47	1.61
2011	4.53	11.53	18.75	1.75
2012	4.16		21.36	1.72
2013	3.25		18.93	1.68

Appendix II: Chapter 4

Table III. 1 Trust in Elections (percentage) by country

	Costa Rica	Guatemala	Honduras	El Salvador	Total
1	4.82	13.28	26.03	13.64	14.43
2	1.14	2.86	4.38	4.74	3.28
3	2.04	3.65	3.31	5.32	3.57
4	2.29	3.73	3.72	7.82	4.39
5	8.09	19.88	16.69	10.82	13.78
6	4.41	7.73	6.94	7.9	6.73
7	6.05	8.59	6.69	8.65	7.48
8	12.75	13.54	6.86	11.15	11.05
9	8.82	4.95	4.05	9.57	6.87
10	49.59	21.79	21.32	20.38	28.43
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table III. 2 Trust in Elections (percentage) by age. (a)

	18-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
1	14.58	15.45	14.71	14.44	14.14
2	2.04	3.03	2.97	3.39	3.12
3	4.66	4.28	5.01	2.32	2.7
4	4.08	5.1	4.38	4.63	4.78
5	11.95	15.86	16.28	12.48	13.72
6	7.87	7.31	7.04	7.66	6.03
7	11.66	8.28	8.14	7.31	7.28
8	14.58	12.14	11.11	12.48	11.02
9	8.75	6.07	5.16	5.88	8.11
10	19.83	22.48	25.2	29.41	29.11
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table III. 3 Trust in Elections (percentage) by age. (b)

	40-44	45-49	50-54	55+	Total
1	14.02	13.55	15.31	13.56	14.43
2	3.04	4.88	4.41	3.08	3.28
3	3.27	1.36	3.94	3.7	3.57
4	3.27	5.15	5.1	3.33	4.39
5	13.79	10.03	11.83	14.43	13.78
6	7.94	4.88	6.26	5.67	6.73
7	9.11	4.88	4.87	6.41	7.48
8	10.51	13.55	7.89	8.38	11.05
9	6.31	9.76	7.66	6.66	6.87
10	28.74	31.98	32.71	34.77	28.43
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table III. 4 Trust in Elections (percentage) by education level.

	no schooling	primary incomplete	primary complete	secondary incomplete	secondary complete	college or higher	Total
1	11.96	20.62	12.84	14.15	13.66	12.67	14.43
2	4.31	5.09	2.84	3.22	3.16	2.02	3.28
3	5.26	3.21	3.92	3.68	3.33	3.23	3.57
4	5.74	4.15	4.31	4.49	5.08	3.1	4.39
5	18.66	15.26	14.41	12.2	15.07	9.84	13.78
6	6.7	6.16	6.86	6.33	7.41	6.47	6.73
7	6.7	4.69	7.94	8.63	8.16	7.41	7.48
8	8.13	7.63	10.39	10.47	13.16	13.48	11.05
9	6.22	5.35	6.37	7.25	7.24	8.22	6.87
10	26.32	27.84	30.1	29.57	23.73	33.56	28.43
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table III. 5Trust in Elections (percentage) by gender.

	Male	Female	Total
1	13.03	15.84	14.43
2	3.54	3.02	3.28
3	3.54	3.6	3.57
4	4.79	3.98	4.39
5	13.2	14.38	13.78
6	6.54	6.92	6.73
7	7.58	7.38	7.48
8	11.82	10.27	11.05
9	7.16	6.58	6.87
10	28.81	28.04	28.43
Total	100	100	100

Table III. 6 Trust in Elections (percentage) by rural cleavage

	Urban	Rural	Total
1	12.35	17.26	14.46
2	3.4	3.53	3.46
3	3.91	2.95	3.49
4	4.34	4.03	4.21
5	12.53	14.15	13.23
6	6.21	7.32	6.69
7	7	7.92	7.4
8	12.21	9.96	11.24
9	8.13	6.06	7.24
10	29.92	26.82	28.59
Total	100	100	100

Table III. 7 Trust in your community by education level.

	up to primary complete	up to secondary complete	college or higher	Total
1	13.19	12.72	10.32	12.55
2	3.08	3.23	2.82	3.1
3	5.06	5.3	5.5	5.23
4	6	6.36	6.7	6.26
5	15.23	16.71	16.09	16
6	7.59	8.29	6.97	7.79
7	7.79	9.87	13.27	9.53
8	11.46	16.04	18.77	14.55
9	5.95	7.76	6.17	6.76
10	24.65	13.73	13.4	18.23
Total	100	100	100	100

Table III. 8 Perceptions of fairness on income distribution (percentage) by country.

	Costa Rica	Guatemala	Honduras	El Salvador	Total
very fair	4.65	4.75	2.33	4.99	4.13
fair	15.88	29.55	18.52	32.01	23.53
unfair	50.61	48.55	54.01	49.64	50.81
very unfair	28.86	17.15	25.15	13.35	21.53
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Table III. 9 Perceptions of fairness on income distribution (percentage) by education level.

	no schooling	primary incomplete	primary complete	secondary incomplete	secondary complete	college or higher	Total
very fair	9.09	4.95	3.79	3.67	3.79	3.6	4.13
fair	23.86	26.12	24.83	23.8	23.62	18.88	23.53
unfair	49.43	49.15	50.89	49.62	51.4	53.03	50.81
very unfair	17.61	19.78	20.49	22.91	21.19	24.5	21.53
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table III. 10 Supporters for party in the government, in opposition or independent (percentage) by country

	Costa Rica	Guatemala	Honduras	El Salvador	Total
Government	27.37	12.48	40.5	47.09	31.85
Opposition	35.54	22.96	35.12	37.94	32.91
Independent	37.09	64.56	24.38	14.98	35.24

Table III. 11 Mean trust in the electoral process by community trust

Community Trust	Mean trust in the Election	Standard Deviation
1	5.9	3.8
2	5.1	3.4
3	5.2	3.1
4	5.8	2.8
5	6.3	3.1
6	6.4	2.8
7	6.8	2.8
8	7.0	2.8
9	7.1	2.9
10	6.9	3.5
Total	6.5	3.2

Appendix III: Chapter 5

Table IV. 1 OPROBIT - The local experience: Trust in the election and confidence in neighbors with clustered standard errors by region

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Trust in the Community	0.053***	0.051***	0.047***	0.029**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Female	-0.053	-0.061*	-0.077**	-0.077**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Age	0.029***	0.032***	0.038***	0.038***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Secondary Education	0.116*	0.129*	0.157**	0.148**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)
College Education	0.298**	0.326***	0.388***	0.368***
	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)
Rural	-0.135	-0.130	-0.129	-0.126
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Support for the winning party		0.538***	0.486***	0.488***
		(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Unfairness of income distribution			-0.384***	-0.361***
			(0.07)	(0.07)
Trust the Poor				0.016
				(0.01)
Trust the Rich				0.033*
				(0.01)
Cuts omitted				
N	4788	4788	4287	4287
R^2	0.009	0.023	0.028	0.030

Table IV. 2 OPROBIT - The global mechanism: Trust in the election and perceptions of fairness of the system with clustered standard errors by region

	(1)	(2)
	Model 1	Model 2
Unfairness of the system treatment	-0.083**	-0.071*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Support for the winning party		0.534***
		(0.12)
Cuts omitted		
N	4788	4788
R^2	0.000	0.013

Table IV. 3 OPROBIT - The global mechanism: Trust in the election and perceptions of fairness of the system by perceptions of respondent's position in the system, the rich and the poor with clustered standard errors by region

	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
	You benefited	You not benefited	Rich benefited	Rich not benefited	Poor benefited	Poor not benefited
Unfairness of the system treatment	-0.145 (0.09)	-0.057 (0.03)	-0.062 (0.03)	-0.129 (0.09)	0.011 (0.06)	-0.093** (0.03)
Support for the winning party	0.387** (0.14)	0.554*** (0.12)	0.511*** (0.11)	0.673*** (0.18)	0.475** (0.14)	0.549*** (0.12)
Cuts omitted						
N	914	3874	4123	665	1141	3647
Pseudo R^2	0.009	0.014	0.012	0.022	0.011	0.014

Table IV. 4 OPROBIT - The global mechanism: Trust in the election and perceptions of fairness of the system by fairness of income distribution with clustered standard errors by region

	Model 13	Model 14
	FAIR distribution of income	UNFAIR distribution of income
Unfairness of the system treatment	0.045 (0.06)	-0.098** (0.03)
Support for the winning party	0.480*** (0.12)	0.478*** (0.13)
Cuts omitted		
N	1185	3102
Pseudo R^2	0.012	0.010

Table IV. 5 OPROBIT - The global mechanism: Trust in the election and perceptions of fairness of the system by fairness of income distribution and respondent being benefited or not, with clustered standard errors by region

	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18
	FAIR income distribution and You FAVORED	UNFAIR income distribution and You FAVORED	FAIR income distribution and You NOT FAVORED	UNFAIR income distribution and You NOT FAVORED
Unfairness of the system treatment	-0.014 (0.11)	-0.190 (0.10)	0.052 (0.08)	-0.082[*] (0.03)
Support for the winning party	0.366[**] (0.14)	0.295[*] (0.15)	0.511[***] (0.13)	0.504[***] (0.13)
Cuts omitted				
N	321	491	864	2611
pseudo R^2	0.008	0.006	0.013	0.011

Table IV. 6 OPROBIT - The global and local mechanism meet: Trust in the election, Confidence in Neighbors and Perceptions of Fairness of the system with clustered standard errors by region

	Model 19	Model 20
	No Trust in Neighbors	Trust in Neighbors
Unfairness of the system treatment	-0.113 (0.17)	-0.264[*] (0.12)
Support for the winning party	1.744[***] (0.41)	1.458[***] (0.38)
Cuts omitted		
N	2058	2730
Pseudo R^2	0.014	0.012

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