Some Indicators of Political Culture of University Students in Croatia

Anja Gvozdanović

Institute for Social Research
Amruševa 11, Zagreb
anja@idi.hr

ABSTRACT This paper describes political culture of university students by using empirical data from quantitative research conducted in 2004. The research was part of a scientific-research project *Youth and European Integration Processes*, Institute for Social Research in Zagreb. The basic sample (N=2000) consisted of high-school students, employed, unemployed and university students. The subsample of university students (N=446) and a control group (N=532) were extracted from the basic sample of youth representatives. The control group comprised high school students, employed and unemployed young people. The political culture of university students is described using the indicators of political culture that were derived from Almond and Verba's theoretical framework: interest in formal politics, support for democratic values and attitudes and trust in institutions. The analysis indicates that university students, compared to other youth (high school students, employed and unemployed), have more interest in politics, their acceptance of democratic values and attitudes is higher, but they lack trust in institutions. These findings indicate that the political culture of university students in Croatia, compared to that of other youth, has greater potential to contribute to democratic processes.

Key words: political culture, university students, youth, trust, democratic values,
            democratic attitudes.

Introduction

Today's generation of Croatian young people was growing up in the period of economic, political and cultural transition. The period was characterized by economic crime, general pauperization, war, social anomie and shiftless implementation of democratic principles combined with intensive retraditionalization based on nationalistic and patriarchal views. "Spiritual renewal" or re-invention of Croatian national identity as part of socio-cultural transition, used institutions such as media and educa-

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tion to restore historic mythology, traditional values, religion and emphasize national-
ist values (Baranović, 2000). In 2000 the center-left coalition won the parliamentary
elections and set a new main objective of Croatian domestic and foreign affairs – the
EU accession, that demanded more decisive steps towards building a democratic
society. Thus, being an EU member implies well established and functioning socio-
structural and socio-cultural aspects of liberal democracy. Namely, liberal democracy
can be defined as: "a system based on the principle 'government of the people, by the
people and for the people', with multi-candidate elections, an independent judiciary
and separation of powers, and an uncensored press, and committed to the principles
of rule of law, the protection of human rights, tolerance, respect for the harm prin-
ciple, equality, and the neutrality of the state in matters of religion" (Ramet, 2007:4).
However, despite the existence of formal structural democratic institutions, there is a
need for creating political, economic and social space free of "informal institutions"
such as corruption and clientelism that prevent the institutions from functioning ef-
fectively and by democratic laws. Thus, the culture could be a supporting as well as
an inhibiting factor of the economic, commercial and social development (Rimac and
Štulhofer, 2004; Mežnarić, 2006) which means that "specific norms and collective
habits can, behind the façade of formal institutions, make a mockery of market and
democratic competition" (Rimac and Štulhofer, 2004:305).

The existance and maintenance of democracy are defined by its socio-cultural
aspect, more specifically – political culture. Political culture is not only a prerequi-
site for democratic society, but is also its consequence, since "cultural and political
heritage, traditions, values, beliefs and attitudes shape the subjective orientation
to politics" (Maldini, 2008:328), thus the political behavior of citizens and po-
litical elites. Important civil characteristics of an imaginary citizen of a successful
democratic society should include belief in individual liberty and personal political
choices of others, certain distrust of political authority but trust in fellow citizens,
obedience whilst asserting rights against the state (Tessler, 2002). Citizens who
support and share these values and are able to recognize their distortion and dis-
respect constitute one of the key factors of liberal democracy.

Political Culture and Youth

Implementation of formal democratic institutions is very important for consolida-
tion of liberal democracy and the process should be supported by the transfor-
mation of civic culture. That is, by the change of an individual's relationship to
political institutions, processes and symbols through civic or participative political
culture that requires an informed, competent, responsible and active citizen (Ilišin,
2008): the higher the level of civic culture, the higher level of democracy (Vester-
dal, 2007). Almond and Verba note that the democratic model of a participative
political system requires corresponding political culture. However, the societies
of new democracies face a difficult path of adopting democratic political culture
for two reasons (Almond, Verba, 2000). The first are the active principles of civil
culture in which the political elite is responsible for making decisions and setting

the norms for citizens' attitudes and relations to government. The second reason that makes the adoption of democratic political culture difficult lies in objective obstacles: anachronous technologies and old social systems. This paper is focused on the first problem with the emphasis on values and attitudes of citizens, more specifically, university students in Croatia.

If we regard the youth of Croatia as a resource of society, in other words, view them as a mirror of dominant social values as well as actors of future social and value changes (Ilišin and Radin, 2007), it can be concluded that they are the key bearers of future democratic society development and adoption of related values. It is known that the young distance themselves from formal political participation and that a decreased interest in political matters is characteristic for this demographic. The reasons for that are various and complex and range from possible radical individualism of youth (Kestila-Kekkonen, 2009) to insufficient accessibility of parties for the young. However, young people should have a certain level of understanding of the foundations of democratic politics in order to recognize and distinguish democratic from undemocratic behavior in public spheres.

Croatian society's attitude towards youth is quite distrustful and paternalistic, and there is a lack of youth representation in the public scene (Ilišin, 2008) which indicates that the young are regarded as a problem and not as a resource. Although late adolescence is an age of special significance in political socialization, it has been hardened not only by the war, economic deprivation and global lack of youth's interest in politics but also because of a value system change that was taking place: the new value system was not established fully and the old one was losing its legitimacy in the society. Transitional period, although marked by somewhat incoherent, changing system of values, created a space for intensified social and political engagement of youth. However, youth in Croatia didn't make themselves visible as a relevant political subject. When it comes to political engagement, university students excel especially in periods of socio-historical turbulences, meaning that autonomous political organization of youth was usually led by university students. They differ from other young people in at least two aspects: being more likely to be active members of an organization (Badescu, Sum and Uslaner, 2004) and advantaged in sense of "superior socio-economic status compared with individuals whose parents have lower educational qualifications and incomes" (Adnanes, 2007:55). In other words, university students posses more cultural capital with regard to knowledge, language and culture, differentially accessed and possessed which indicates that amount of cultural capital guides the decisions made and actions taken considering the continuation of education[1] (Archer, 2005; Doolan, 2009).

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[1] Although this text is not aimed to define cultural capital of university students from our sample, it is necessary to make a short analysis of their social background in comparison with general population of Croatia. University students are mostly born and raised in urban areas (72.2%) according to this survey, while 57.1% of population in Croatia are from urban areas (Akrap, 2004). Students' fathers level of education also significantly differs from general population's level of education. Elementary school or less is level of education of 40.4%,

Recent researches show that university students possess higher democratic potential than the rest of the youth (Ilišin, 2007, Ilišin 2008), which can be explained by their political culture that is not completely shared with other young people. Political culture is a set of "frequency of different kinds of cognitive, affective and evaluative orientations toward the political system in general, its input and output aspects, and the self as political actor" (Almond, Verba, 2000:22). The term "political culture" includes a subjective relationship with politics, attitudes towards different models of political order and evaluation of political achievements. Gaiser et al. (2007) refer to conceptual framework of political culture by Almond and Verba and operationalize aforementioned three dimensions: relationship with politics as people's interest in politics and information about political activities (indicators of input dimension); attitudes towards different models of political order as support of democratic attitudes (indicators of system dimension) and evaluation of political achievements as respondents' trust in institutions (indicator of output dimension) (Gaiser et al., 2007). The focus of this text will be on these indicators of political culture of university students.

Methodology

The quantitative data used in the text were collected in 2004 as part of a scientific-research project *Youth and European Integration Processes*, Institute for Social Research in Zagreb. The original basic sample of youth (N=2000) was stratified according to socio-demographic attributes: gender, regional status and socio-professional status. The latter comprised four categories: university students, employed, unemployed and high-school students. University students (N=446) were extracted from the basic sample of youth representatives (N=2000) and through random sampling a control group was extracted (N=532) from the remaining number of youth, which was then compared to the student sample[2]. Univariate and bivariate data analyses were used. The first was used to determine the answer distribution and the latter for calculating the significance of differences by using the χ^2 test. Political culture of university students is portrayed along indicators of aforementioned three dimensions: interest in formal politics, support for democratic values and attitudes and trust in institutions. The hypothesis is that political culture of university students differs from that of the other young people in our sample.

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high school of 47.1% and junior college, university or higher of 11.9% of population in Croatia older than 15 (Central Bureau of Statistics, Croatia) while students' fathers education level in our sample is: elementary school diploma or less in 5.4%, high school diploma in 54.6% and junior college, university diploma or higher in 24.9% of cases. These findings can point that university students are selected group concerning these elements of social background.

[2] The sample consists of young people aged 15 to 29 and many differences among participants can be explained by their age (Ilišin, Radin, 2007) but this article aims to detect certain specificities of university students in comparison to other young people. Whital, the students from this sample are averagely 22.6 and the other youth are 22.7 years old, so the age variable is not taken into account.

Interest in political life

The first dimension of political culture analyzed is the input dimension of political system whose indicator is the interest in political life. Involvement in civil society activities can help citizens develop skills for effective citizenship and advocating interests (Badescu, Sum, Uslaner, 2004) but usually there is a problem of insufficient motivation of young people for political engagement. In communist regimes, collective actions were highly controlled and therefore some forms of grouping based on similar political or any public interests were almost impossible. One of explanations for decreased political involvement is that after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the increased economic inequalities as well as the social uncertainty were additional de-motivators for collective action (Badescu, Sum, Uslaner, 2004). Another is that the youth are generally distanced from formal political life, especially because of general skepticism towards institutional power and authority (Shah et al., 2007) emphasized by radical individualism (Kestilla-Kekkonen, 2009), which is seen, for example, in their low election voting. Although they are much better educated than their predecessors, new cohorts of the young are the most passive group in almost all aspects of formal political participation (Kestilla-Kekkonen, 2009). Also, socialization process of today's youth is marked by consumerism and competition and as they internalize these ideologies, the voting becomes an option rather than civic duty (Kestilla-Kekkonen, 2009). It can, therefore, be argued that new generations have internalized ideologies that are not in tune with traditional organization of politics. Some research show that other forms of participation such as informal political participation are more present nowadays, especially among the young, women and highly educated individuals who express their political views through their lifestyle, e.g. using political consumerism (Shah et al., 2007). Low interest in active participation in formal politics[3] can be seen in membership of various public organizations. For example, only 3.8% of university students from our sample are members of a political party. Students are mostly members of sports organizations (17.7%) as well as of cultural organizations (7%). Percentage of all respondents that are members of other organizations such as youth, peace, environmental organizations, unions, and human rights organizations is below 6% for each organization. Regarding the low formal participation of university students and other youth in organizations, it can be concluded that they are prone to self-marginalization in this respect, refusing to make a change within existing forms of formal participation.

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[3] Institute for Social Research in Zagreb conducted a qualitative scientific research (2008) on a representative sample of students of University of Zagreb. Students were asked to specify reasons for generally low political participation of youth and university students as its segment. Lack of faith in possibility of change, lack of interest in politics, distrust in politics, disrespect of youth and youth's interest in other activities were recognized as reasons for apathy of students and other youth. Students' answers point to their dissatisfaction with external reasons such as lack of credibility of social institutions and encouragement of youth's political involvement. But, they are also self-critical in this respect (Ilišin, 2008).

Here, however, a cognitive aspect of political involvement of university students is presented. "The term 'political involvement' is frequently linked to the process of actively gathering political information (see Gabriel, 1986, p. 179) and the social aspects of political conversations (Inglehart, 1989, ch. 10)" (Gaiser et al., 2007:290). Respectively, the degree of interest in political life through subjective evaluation, frequency of communication on political topics with close ones, way of gathering information and participating in social and political life of the society are presented.

Table 1
Interest in political life (%)

		Other youth	Uni. students
Degree of respondents' interest in political life	Strong	9.2	15.1
	Average	51.9	49.9
	None	38.9	35.1

χ^2=8,13; df=2; p=.017

Around 50% of university students and the same percentage of youth consider themselves to be averagely interested in political life (Table 1). A large percentage of each group, however, has no interest in those issues at all. The difference between the two is found in category "strong", where students are more interested in political life than other youth.

Although political orientation is more of a socio-demographic characteristic, the following table conveys one of the various aspects of interest in political life – having a political party preference (or not)[4].

Table 2
Political orientation (%)

Political orientation	Other youth	Uni. students
Center-left	19.7	28.4
Center-right	33.4	29.3
Center	7.4	7.4
Other party	3.6	6.1
Do not know, do not support	35.9	28.8
Total	100.0	100.0

χ^2=15.67; df=4; p=.003

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[4] Political parties were specified in the questionnaire but are here presented as political orientations.

University students' political orientation is almost evenly distributed along three lines – close to one third of this population are center-right and center-left supporters as well as indifferent in choosing a preferable political party. Although little less than 30% of students are undecided or indifferent, students are still less indifferent than the rest of the youth. Also, compared to other youth, students are significantly more inclined to center-left political parties. There is a considerable segment of both groups that is made of young people who are either disappointed or indifferent. However, these percentages indicate higher level of political interest among students, since their choice is quite probably based on information about their preferred political party.

Table 3
Interest in information and conversations on political life (%)

		Other youth	Uni. students
Frequency of respondents	**Following political parties issues**	χ^2=18.430; df=2; p=.000	
	Never	38.5	27.6
	Sometimes	51.9	55.9
	Often	9.5	16.5
	Following foreign policy	χ^2=37.128; df=2; p=.000	
	Never	42.6	25.3
	Sometimes	46.4	54.5
	Often	11.0	20.1
	Following local politics	χ^2=16.380; df=2; p=.000	
	Never	40.0	28.5
	Sometimes	46.9	59.3
	Often	13.1	12.2
	Reading daily and weekly newspapers	χ^2=17.626; df=2; p=.000	
	Never	5.3	2.0
	Sometimes	51.1	42.4
	Often	43.6	55.6
	Talking to friends about politics and society	χ^2=13.722; df=2; p=.001	
	Never	35.7	24.9
	Sometimes	43.5	48.9
	Often	20.8	26.3
	Talking to parents about politics and society	χ^2=16.407; df=2; p=.000	
	Never	35.9	27.3
	Sometimes	51.0	50.8
	Often	13.1	21.9

Interest in information and conversations on politics was analyzed through frequency of following political parties, foreign policy and local policy issues; reading daily and weekly newspapers, talking to friends and parents about politics and society. Table 3 indicates that there are statistically significant differences in these six variables: university students are more frequently informed about political life and have conversations on the subject.

Most of both students and other youth sometimes practice these activities, which only confirms their average interest in politics noted above. University students, however, follow the issues related to political parties and foreign policy more often than other youth. Local politics is not that interesting to students but they do follow it more from time to time while 40% of the young never follow local politics. University students more often read newspapers, which implies that their involvement in gathering information on politics is much stronger than that of the other youth. Also, they communicate more on these topics with family and friends.

Acceptance of some democratic values and attitudes

Political culture expressed as orientation toward levels of system was analyzed and is here outlined as differences between the students and other youth with regard to acceptance of constitutional democratic values and democratic attitudes.

Values are ideas or beliefs regarding desirable goals and behaviors that can be organized in systems. Also, they direct our attitudes and behaviors (Ferić and Kamenov, 2007). These very important characteristics of values give them a special position in development of democracy research. Values, organized in a relatively stable system, affect attitude formation of individuals, so affirmation of democratic values as human rights, personal freedom etc. is equally important as sharing mutual attitudes on democratic order. Welzel, in his research, discusses the effect of mass attitudes on levels of democracy. The assumption is that when there are more widespread pro-democratic attitudes, the more likely is that a society attains and sustains high levels of democracy (Welzel, 2007). Welzel argues that "pro-democratic mass attitudes should be conducive to democracy because they increase public support for pro-democratic forces and distract support from anti-democratic forces" (Welzel, 2007:399), so mass support plays a significant role in balancing these two important political forces. Where democracy is scarce, pro-democratic mass attitudes operate as a support factor which facilitates democracy attainment while in societies with higher democracy level, pro-democratic attitudes function as a support factor for democracy sustainment (Welzel, 2007). When the democratic attitudes are more widespread, there is higher possibility of pro-democratic mass actions to emerge which then help shift the power balance toward pro-democratic forces. These ideas point to the importance of democratic values and attitudes persistence in society for democracy to be stabile, however they are relevant for defining orientation toward democratic system, too. The type of orientation points to the political culture of university students.

Table 4
A comparative outline of the acceptance of constitutional values (%)

Constitutional values	Other youth	Uni. students
Respect for human rights	92.7	94.1
Freedom	93.4	94.6
Equality	84.2	86.3
Social justice	82.7	83.6
Gender equality	79.8	79.7
Pacifism	76.4	77.5
Protection of nature and human environment	78.0	77.3
Inviolability of ownership	72.8	75.7
Ethnic equality	70.0	72.1
The rule of law	61.5	65.8
Democratic and multiparty system	59.1	61.9

The percentages show respondents that think of these values as "very important" (a four degree scale consists of answers from "very important" to "completely unimportant"). Although respondents weren't aware that values of respect for human rights, freedom, inviolability of ownership, gender equality, social justice, equality, pacifism, protection of nature and human environment, democratic and multiparty system, ethnic equality and the rule of law were in fact values noted in Croatian constitution to be respected and protected, large majority of university students support them. Democratic and multiparty system and the rule of law are regarded as not very important, perhaps indicating disappointment in political protagonists[5]. Also, it is possible that political pluralism is thought to be self-understandable (Ilišin, 2007). All values that constitute democratic-liberal system of values are accepted on a declarative level. There are no statistically significant differences between students and other youth considering acceptance of democratic values.

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[5] Regarding perception of democracy level in Croatia, Institute for Social Research in Zagreb made a qualitative research in 2008 where students of Zagreb University were asked to estimate the level of democracy of political order of Croatia. The results showed that students are not agreed on this matter. Around 30% are very critical of the reached democracy meaning they think of Croatian political order as non-democratic. 25% think that democracy is saturated with considerable non-democratic elements, 22% regard political order as democratic but needing to improve; 20% of students rejected to answer mostly because of lack of interest in political matters (Ilišin, 2008). These results point to high criticism of university students towards democracy in Croatia, meaning they think of it as insufficient in number of aspects. However, it shouldn't be neglected that even fifth of respondents were not interested in answering the question.

Table 5

A comparative outline of the acceptance of democratic attitudes (%)

Democratic attitudes	Other youth	Uni. students
Everyone has the right to express their opinion, even if the majority thinks opposite.	98.1	99.1
True democracy cannot be imagined without opposition	67.4	78.0
Every citizen has the right, if the need arises, to express his or her beliefs in the streets	71.0	77.9
Conflicts of different interest groups in our society are harmful to the general interest of the state	67.4	68.9
The interests of the whole nation must be above all specific interests	69.6	65.1
Every political party must have a chance of gaining power	65.1	63.0
The President, so far, has controlled actions of the Government to a legally allowed extent	56.8	56.0
The President, Parliament and the Government share the power in our Republic according to the law	56.5	53.7
The Parliament, so far, has controlled the actions of the Government to a legally allowed extent	43.6	46.3
Citizens have no right to strike if that disturbs the peace	46.3	38.1
The opposition's duty is not to criticize the government, but to support its work	44.1	37.6
There are conflicts in every society that must be resolved by force	23.1	26.2
The Croatian constitution has its weaknesses, but it is the best compared to all the others	23.0	16.6

Table 5[6] shows that a vast majority of university students support most of democratic attitudes but not consistently. They believe that one has a right to express his/her opinion, which may or may not be accepted by the majority of citizens. They understand better that there is no democracy without opposition and give more support for the idea of public protests if the need arises. Interest groups, on the other hand, as well as their conflicts are mostly seen as harmful to the society which indicates that students see interest groups as ones that need to have a common interest and that is the benefit of the state. However, they are less in favor of subjecting specific interest to the interest of the state than other youth. Individuals are perceived to have "more rights" to accomplish their objectives regardless of the interests of state, while interest groups are perceived to possess more power than an individual and therefore have more responsibility to the society in sense of decreasing conflicts among themselves because of their harmful effects on the state. It is not recognized that interest groups and their conflicts, on the other hand, are

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[6] Table 5 holds the distribution of affirmative answers since the question was dichotomous.

elements of democracy. Students are skeptical regarding successful Parliament's control over Government. Also they are less doubtful about right to strike even if it disturbs the peace as well as opposition's role to criticize the government. Students are more critical to option of resolving conflicts in society by force and to regarding constitution to be the best compared to others.

Difference between students and youth is statistically significant (p<.05) in the following attitudes: *True democracy cannot be imagined without opposition* (χ^2=13.22 df=1; p=.000); *Every citizen has the right, if the need arises, to express his or her beliefs in the streets* (χ^2=6.06; df=1; p=.015); *Citizens have no right to strike if that disturbs the peace* (χ^2=6.61; df=1; p=.011) *The opposition's duty is not to criticize the government, but to support its work* (χ^2=4.26; df=1; p=.042); *The Croatian constitution has its weaknesses, but it is the best compared to all the others* (χ^2=6.13; df=1; p=.015).

Students are more convinced of the importance of political opposition to a democratic society and its duty to be critical and not supportive of government. The other youth show a tendency to support the idea of harmonious political life which regards disagreements as threatening for the society as a whole (Ilišin, 2007). Students show more support to the right of expressing beliefs in the form of public protests or demonstrations, even if it disturbs the peace. Also, they perceive Croatian constitution more critically. Although university students understand the functioning of democratic processes in politics better than the rest of the youth, there is a lot of room for the improvement of knowledge on democratic processes. Withal, attitudes regarding affirmation of the functioning of legislative and executive power also indicate a crisis of trust in political institutions' performance.
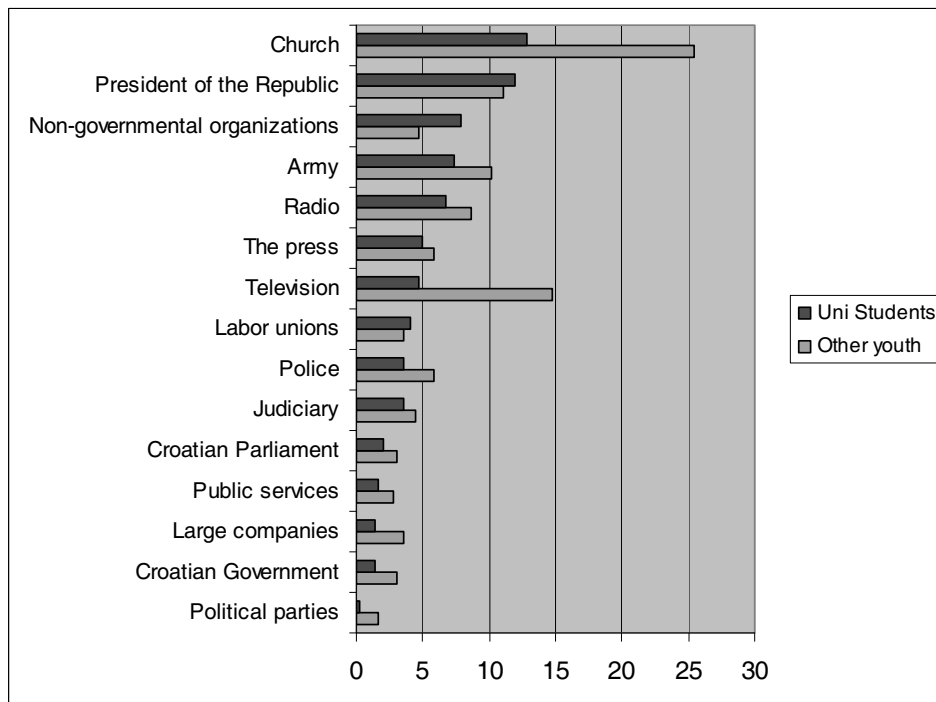
Trust in institutions

In the concept of political culture, trust in institutions is an indicator of the output of political processes which describes respondents' relation to democratic institutions as well as evaluation of the achievements of politics.

Trust is, as Canttenberg and Moreno note, important for democratic governments since they cannot rely on coercion to the same extent as other regimes. There is a double-edged element inherent to political trust: democracy requires trust but also presupposes an active citizenry with a healthy skepticism of government. The citizenry should also have willingness to suspend trust and assert control over government in case their rights or democratic processes are violated (Cattenberg and Moreno, 2005). The decline of trust in institutions in new democracies, as these two authors argue, is linked to "post-honeymoon" trend or disillusionment and not to awakening of more critical citizenry. The research of Cattenberg and Moreno points to explanation of higher political trust influenced by well being or financial satisfaction and external efficiency or government responsiveness, both in societies of established and new democracies. Also, democratic attitudes and political inter-

est are dimensions that significantly affect the level of political trust in new democracies. Higher support for democratic attitudes and higher level of political interest can indicate higher trust in institutions (Cattenberg and Moreno, 2005). The level of trust in institutions held by students and youth is displayed in Chart 1.

Chart 1
The ranking scale of trust in institutions – other youth and university students (%)

The participants answered on a five-degree scale and Chart 1 illustrates the answers for the degree "complete trust" (other answers were as follows: "trust", "undecided", "distrust", and "complete distrust"). Generally, institutions are "completely trusted" in very low percentages. Church is the only institution quite highly positioned in the youth sample, which supports the fact that Church holds an important position in Croatia's public arena. Church is completely trusted by 12.8%, the President of the Republic by 11.9% and non-governmental organizations by little less than 8% of students in our sample. Students are most distrustful of political parties, the Croatian Government, large companies and institutions of public services. Youth completely trusts Church (25.4%), television (14.7%) and the President of the Republic (11%) and distrusts political parties, public services, Croatian Government, and the Croatian Parliament. This can indicate not only respondents' trust in institutions as such, but it can point to their evaluation of institutions' performance, too.

Statistically significant differences (p<.05) between the two groups is found in their trust in *television* (χ^2=28.661), *police* (χ^2=13.139), *Church* (χ^2=36.448), *large companies* (χ^2=9.525) and *non-governmental organizations* (χ^2=15.781). What the differences in trusting these four organizations have in common is that university students are less trustful, except in case of NGOs, where relations are opposite. Students are more distrustful to public institutions (public services, judiciary, and labor unions), media (TV, press, radio), institutions of protection (army and police) and institutions of political power (political parties, government, and parliament). These findings are indicative because NGO is the only organization of those offered that students trust significantly more than the other youth. NGOs in Croatia are (or trying to be) usually very critical to institutions of power and the support of students in sense of their higher trust in NGOs reaffirms students' critical attitude to these institutions. President is the only one of several institutions of power that is trusted by somewhat more than 10% of respondents, while political parties, Government and the Parliament hold less than 5% each. Reason for President's relatively high percentage of trust lies in the overall popularity of Croatia's second president Stjepan Mesic throughout his 10-year mandate.

Conclusion

Transition from socialist to democratic political culture is a long and demanding process which requires adoption of a new value system and a new relation to the ruling system. It is logical to seek bearers of democracy in groups such as youth since they are, among other, the least burdened with the old socialist ideas of citizenship and state. Croatian university students have higher democratic potential (Ilišin, 2007) than those who are not enrolled in the system of higher education, which could arguably be justified by their political culture. In other words, students' political culture should be different from the political culture of other young people. Using Almond and Verba's conception of political culture as theoretical framework, this text intended to define differences that make university students more democratically potent than the rest of the young in the survey. Input, system and output dimensions of political system were described by interrelated indicators: interest in politics, support for democratic values and attitudes and trust in institutions.

The survey showed that university students and other youth in Croatia strongly differ in some aspects of political culture, while they are, expectedly, quite similar in others. The students mostly show average interest in political life and they are, as opposed to other youth, more interested in at least two aspects of politics: communicating about and gathering information on political topics. Both university students and youth largely support main principles and values that are inseparable from democracy. Nevertheless, support for principles such as the rule of law and democratic and multiparty system are not recognized as important, possibly because respondents perceive them to be self-understanding for a democratic system. Regarding democratic attitudes, students are more likely to understand the com-

petitiveness of politics whilst youth have a more harmonious view of politics. Also, students are more likely to support specific interests over national, which points to their awareness of the importance of individualistic dimension of democracy as opposed to collectivistic interests above individual. Last indicator of political culture analyzed was trust in institutions. This dimension is at the same time the only one where students had lower scores. The level of trust in institutions among university students is generally lower than that among the other youth who, in 25% of cases, have complete trust in Church (as well as 12% of students), indicating their traditional orientation. Taking into account that television is the second most trusted institution, it can be concluded that the youth are not particularly critical of the main source of information. On the other hand, they might be generally resigned because of disappointment in other institutions of power. The only institutions that students trust more than the youth are NGOs. That can indicate that students took a critical standpoint which reveals their distrustful attitude toward majority of institutions, especially political parties, government, companies, parliament, judiciary, police, unions and television.

To summarize, students have more interest in politics and higher acceptance of democratic values and attitudes, but they lack trust in institutions. These findings indicate that university students in Croatia are not ideal representatives of democratic political culture, but compared to other youth, students have greater potential to contribute to the democratic processes. Therefore, the aim of future research in this field should be identification of university students' political culture dynamics in the time period after 2004.

Also, in order to establish democratic political culture processes, it is necessary to emphasize that both students and other young people need some form of compulsory education on democracy and citizenship, which is missing in Croatia. On the other hand, it is not enough to aim only for "cultural adaption" of youth. Political elite should make considerable steps towards being more open and adaptable to the needs and standpoints of new generations.

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Anja Gvozdanović
Institut za društvena istraživanja u Zagrebu
Amruševa 11, Zagreb
anja@idi.hr

Neki indikatori političke kulture hrvatskih studenata

Sažetak

Rad se bavi političkom kulturom studenata. Analizirani su empirijski podaci dobiveni u kvantitativnom istraživanju provedenom 2004. godine u sklopu znanstveno-istraživačkog projekta *Mladi i europski integracijski procesi* Instituta za društvena istraživanja. Studenti (N=446) su izdvojeni iz osnovnog uzorka mladih (N=2000) te su uspoređeni sa slučajno izdvojenom kontrolnom grupom mladih (N=532). Kontrolna grupa mladih sastoji se od srednjoškolaca, zaposlenih te nezaposlenih. Politička kultura studenata opisana je indikatorima izvedenima iz teorijskog okvira Almoda i Verbe: interes za formalnu politiku, potpora demokratskim vrijednostima i stavovima te razina povjerenja u institucije. Analizom je utvrđeno da studenti, u odnosu na ostale kategorije mladih, pokazuju veći interes za politiku, u većoj mjeri prihvaćaju demokratske vrijednosti i stavove, no nedostaje im povjerenja u institucije. Ovi nalazi indiciraju da politička kultura studenata u odnosu na onu ostalih mladih ljudi, ima veći potencijal za doprinos demokratskim procesima.

Ključne riječi: politička kultura, studenti, mladi, povjerenje, demokratske vrijednosti, demokratski stavovi.