

The rise of the ‘voice of the people’: Social inclusiveness versus a populist agenda in Honduras’ first  
24/7 news channel ‘*Hable Como Habla*’

## ABSTRACT

Honduras is a country where distrust in journalism and the media is a normality. After a series of political events in the year 2009 that led to the first coup d'état in Central America since the cold war, the condition of the disbelief in the media had been severely aggravated. Nevertheless, a novel news channel, HCH (Talk How You Speak) has managed as of recent years to position itself among the top watched news programs in the country and have branded themselves as “the voice of the people”. With innovative practices such as the minimizing of gatekeeping by allowing for audience to have direct access to the news anchors, including religion as a pillar of their news style, solving societal issues live on television and other differentiative practices, HCH has also been branded by many as a populist channel that utilizes sensationalism to appeal to the masses. As HCH’s founder denies these claims, it becomes clear the existence of a tension between the claim of HCH being a socially inclusive channel and the criticism that places them as a medium with a populist agenda. In socio-cultural context where distrust in the media is the norm, the case of the *HCH Morning Show* provides for a fascinating study into how it has contributed to opening a space where the working class feel heard and recognized and to comprehend the formula that has helped HCH rise to prominence, while at the same time, has faced strong criticism. The research question posed into trying to understand this phenomenon better is the following: In a time of distrust in the news media, how could HCH rise to become the most popular TV news program in Honduras? For the analysis, a full transcript of the 11 episodes containing the most views on the channels official Facebook page has been produced. Through the implementation of thematic analysis and discourse analysis as suggested by Tonkiss (1998) and visual analysis, and while utilizing the concepts of Populism, Populist religion, inclusive communication and Othering, an in-depth analysis of the text has been done. The findings of the analysis show that the *HCH Morning Show* has adopted both elements of populist media, sensationalists practices as well as the implementation of the counter-narratives posed by Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin (2010) to minimize Othering of the working class showing that all of these ideals can co-exist to an extent. These elements have played a prominent role in the success of the channel. The dichotomy of these theories and practices highlights tensions and contradictions within the practices of HCH as well. With these findings, this case study delivers a relevant contribution not only to inclusive communication and populist media studies, but also sheds light on how populist religion is a key theme that is spread through the text.

**KEYWORDS:** *Media Populism, Honduras, Othering, Inclusive, Journalism*

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
Media Context in Honduras .....	7
2. Theoretical Framework .....	10
2.1 Sensationalism in Journalism .....	10
Foxification of News.....	11
Market Driven forces.....	12
2.2 Populism.....	12
Populism in the Media.....	14
Populist Religion.....	15
2.3 Socially Inclusive Communication & Othering.....	17
2.4 De-Westernization of Research.....	20
2.5 Discourse Analysis.....	21
3. Research Design and Methodology.....	23
Introduction to the HCH Morning Show.....	23
3.1 Units of Analysis and Sampling.....	25
Method of Analysis.....	27
Discourse Analysis According to Fran Tonkiss.....	28
3.2 Data Processing.....	31
4. Results.....	32
4.1 HCH Morning Show Segments.....	32
4.2 Key themes in the HCH Morning Show.....	32
The Role of Religion.....	34
The Voice of and For the People.....	37
The Call for Change.....	41
The HCH News Style.....	44
The Tension Between Them and Us.....	46
4.3 Visual Analysis.....	48
Sensationalist Images.....	48
Visual Indicator of Poverty.....	50
Actors on Screen.....	51
4.4 Final Interpretation of Findings.....	52
5. Conclusion.....	54
6. Limitations and Recommendations.....	58
7. Literature and References.....	59

## **The rise of ‘the voice of the people’:**

Social inclusiveness versus a populist agenda in Honduras’ first 24/7 news channel *‘Hable’*

*Como Habla’*

Vienna Sofía Reyes Villalta

Student number: 494663

Supervisor: dr. Isabel Awad Cherit

Master Media Studies – Media, Culture & Society

Faculty of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master Thesis

June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020

## 1. Introduction

“Our objective is to be close to the people, we don’t have barriers with them, we promote solidarity. This project is God’s project, and people have placed us in their hearts and on the first place because HCH is not just about the journalists, cameras and microphones. HCH is about all of us as Hondurans.”

*(Eduardo Maldonado, Journalist & Founder of HCH)*

This statement illustrates the way in which the first 24/7 news channel in Honduras, *Hable como Habla* (Talk How You Speak), has presented itself to the Honduran audience. In the central idea of this statement it is visible the importance that the people, the viewers, have for HCH as a channel. While this focus is praised by some who claim for it to be the first news channel to be socially inclusive of the poor, which is the majority in Honduras, on the one hand. On the other hand, it is criticized by many who argue that it presents a message with a populist agenda executed through sensationalist practices with the end of solely gaining audience. It seems that there is an existing tension between these two models and arguments as it becomes unclear whether or not HCH does actually contribute to a more equal society by serving poorer Hondurans. There is existing theory on the effects of populist messages and sensationalist practices in journalism, however, most of these studies are carried out on western contexts through western practices. De-Westernization calls for this study to dive into the particularities of the Honduran context and how the theory on populism in journalism and sensationalist practices are carried out on this specific environment and how these might have played a role in the channels rise to success.

Journalism is vital for the proper function of democracy and the upkeep and progress of the socio-cultural life in any context (Franklin, 2014). This is no different in the poorest country in Latin America: Honduras. According to a 2018 report by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) the highest poverty rate is registered by Honduras with a 64.4% (ECLAC, 2018), 17.2% live in extreme poverty according to the World Bank report in 2019 (World Bank, 2019). This means that 17.2% of people live with the equivalent to USD 1.90 per day. Honduras also possesses one of the highest inequality rates (GINI 50.5) in the region and in the world (World Bank, 2019). This inequality has been the root of social and political crisis. The lack of quality education, health care, precarious jobs, and the rise of crime continue to be the reality for most Hondurans. As shocking as this is, the current polarized political climate as a result of the 2009 coup d'etat, and distrust in the media is just as alarming. In 2009, the Honduran president Manuel Zelaya, attempted to hold a referendum that would allow him to seek reelection (Mejia, 2009), however that concluded in the

first coup d'etat in Central America since the cold war (Boyd-Barrett, 2010). Access to credible news was blocked inside the country and local news channels were censored (Forero, 2009). News outlets became a way for politicians to censor debate and sway public opinion. According to the Inter Press Service (IPS), the majority of the Honduran news corporations are owned by six families whom all have very strong connections to Honduran political parties (Mejía, 2008).

In the midst of the chaos and uncertainty a novel news program called *Hable Como Habla (Talk How You Speak)* started gaining momentum through its distinct and straight forward way of covering news. Led by the veteran journalist Eduardo Maldonado, *Hable Como Habla* (HCH) arguably filled the space that the distrust of local audiences in dominant news outlets had left after the 2009 coup (Hondudiario, 2017). However, before rising to its current success HCH was a news program that rented spaces in various local news channels. After years of being removed from different channels and failing to acquire a television frequency in the country, Maldonado decided to digitalize his channel and launch it via satellite, including a live stream through YouTube and Facebook, with 12 employees (Montenegro, 2015). Eventually, cable companies began to download the signal and HCH began gaining popularity especially among Hondurans living in poverty which accounts for the majority of the country's population within the big cities, which according to Maldonado is the targeted audience of HCH (Montenegro, 2015).

In present day, HCH is no longer a news program, but the first ever 24/7 news channel in Honduras with, arguably, the most watched news programs and, now, 107 employees. The principal characteristic of the channel according to Maldonado is that "The doors are never closed for the audience. Our duty is to attend to all the needs of the people that look for us in order to express themselves." (Hondudiario, 2017, p. 3). HCH argues that as a channel it presents itself as a believer on social inclusiveness through its openness to hear the people's opinion (Montenegro, 2015). Another significant element to the HCH formula, according to Maldonado, is the importance they give to religiosity by starting each program with prayer and a reflection on the Bible. According to the report by Latinobarometro in 2018, 75% of the Honduras trust the catholic church (Latinobarometro, 2018). This fact becomes a distinctive characteristic of HCH and could even be the reason behind its connection to the vast majority of Hondurans. While other channels do not mention religion, Maldonado deliberately mentions it when speaking about the channel and its content (Hondudiario, 2017). However, this is yet to be unpacked in this research.

Maldonado sees HCH as a way of breaking with the television culture in Honduras and while doing that, he has found the formula to gain the audiences affection and loyalty. However, HCH has also been strongly criticized for its sensationalist practices, distasteful way of covering news and presenting them to the public through, what some could argue seems like, a populist discourse. Their

news anchors have been labeled as unprofessional and even ridiculous (Estrada, 2016). According to a 2015 study by the National Autonomous University in Honduras (UNAH), HCH presents an average of 30 violent news acts per week, being the news channel that does it the most (Ramírez, 2015). HCH founder, Eduardo Maldonado, states that “Television has stopped being exclusive. We allow everyone to come and express themselves. We don’t have barriers with people” (Hondudiario, 2017). From this statement and the one presented at the beginning of this paper, it seems that Maldonado attributes the inclusivity of HCH as a strong characteristic of the channel.

The *HCH Morning Show* is the first live news show on the daily programming of the channel. As the first live daily transmission of the channel, it sets the pace of the agenda for the day as far as news content goes. In other words, the most relevant topic of news according to HCH are covered during this hour, as well as other important elements including the interaction with its audience.

Furthermore, according to the number of Facebook views in HCH’s official page, this show is the one with the most viewership. The *HCH Morning Show* promises to deliver a extensive range of news content tied up to commentary, interpretation and opinion from Maldonado, Lanza and Mejía, which highlights the possibility for rich and insightful data. The HCH phenomenon rises many questions and doubts that could resume in: how did HCH rose to become such a prominent news channel in Honduras? Is it true that HCH is a socially inclusive channel where the voices of the usually marginalized are heard? Or is it just another commercial strategy? There is an evident tension that rises between HCH’s claim of bringing social inclusion by giving a voice to the poorest Hondurans on one hand. On the other hand, there’s the large amount of criticism it receives from other’s that have branded them as a news channel that implements sensationalist practices to gain popularity among its audience. It remains unclear whether and how HCH may actually serve poorer Hondurans and contribute to a more equal society. This study aims to analyse the practices HCH has relied upon and resulted in an existing tension among the efforts of social inclusion driven by justice and equal opportunity of having a voice, and a populist discourse driven by sensationalist practices.

While there is existing literature on populist discourse in journalism and social inclusiveness practices, there is no previous research available on how these practices are present in such a context as the Honduran one, which suggests a need for analysis to further unpack how this tension plays out in this socio-cultural context. Literature on populism discusses inclusive and exclusiveness in relation to what this ideal look like in the political spectrum of western countries on one hand (Aarato & Cohen, 2017) and how different types of populism can be noticed regionally from Europe and Latin America (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012) on the other hand. Even though the latter does speak to the Latin American context, it focuses on South America, not Central America. Specifically, it concentrates in the movements of Hugo Chaves in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia through a political lens.

This study aims to focus on the presence of populist discourse and social inclusive practices in the Honduran media, while no political figures are present this could potentially shed light into how the news media could be populist actor itself in this context and how its practices could be understood as inclusive or exclusive. To analyse this phenomenon, I pose the following research question: In a time of distrust in the news media, how could HCH rise to become the most popular TV news program in Honduras? In order to unpack this, three sub questions have been formulated as well: (1) To what extent has HCH relied on media populism? (2) To what extent is HCH inclusive in its communication efforts with and about people in poverty? (3) What does the combination of these two elements imply in the HCH formula? Before diving into this study, it is imperative to discuss the socio-cultural context of Honduras and what the media system looks like in this country, to better comprehend how it has developed to what it is today.

## 1.2 The Media Context in Honduras

Historically, Honduras is regarded as the typical banana republic. This derogatory term is often used to describe a “small and backwards, poor, and unstable country with widespread corruption and submissive relationship with the United States of America” (Bucheli, 2008, para. 1) and often depends on a one-crop economy (Rockwell & Janus, 2003). This relationship with the United States dates back to 1910 when the American banana corporation Cuyamel Fruit, now the United Fruit Company, established a banana trading monopoly in the region of Central America (Bucheli, 2008). The United Fruit Company established very important advancement in local infrastructure and ports in the producing areas which were possible through concessions from local government headed by dictator Tiburcio Carías, who had a close relationship with the company (Rockwell & Janus, 2003). By 1950 the United Fruit Company accounted for “90 percent of the government’s tax Revenues” (Rockwell & Janus, 2003, p. 14), highlighting their importance to the nation. The crooked clandestine political businesses of this time in the country’s history continue to form the Honduran context in the present (Rockwell & Janus, 2003), and this includes its media system. Today, Honduras is still a developing country struggling to overcome the catastrophic 1998 Hurricane Mitch which severely damaged the economy (La Prensa, 2018) which depended on banana and coffee exports, and the country’s infrastructure.

In the book *The Media Power in Central America*, Rockwell and Janus (2003), offer a truly insightful look at how the media system in Honduras came to be. For the purpose of this study, I will unpack the historical context found in this book of how media has been developed in the country to offer a clear perspective of how HCH fits, and to an extent, might challenge the otherwise dominated media landscape in Honduras. Nevertheless, it is important to note that given the restricted amount

of theory available on the Honduran context this might be a limitation to fully grasping the landscape. Central America is not a stranger to a small group of powerful families and a few giant companies historically dominating the economic landscape, and Honduras is no different (Rockwell & Janus, 2003). Throughout its history, the country of Honduras, has lived through battles between the military and the political elite over power and dominance (Rockwell & Janus, 2003). However, in 1990 under President Carlos Reina's administration, this shifted away from military control and toward civilian control of the government. This meant that the telecommunications system of Honduras would no longer be under the military control either, which had been for decades, and would move over to private ownership (Rockwell & Janus, 2003). CONATEL (Honduran Communication Commission) was established in 1995 and began regulating broadcasting and transmission rights and laws for the citizens. However, as stated above, Honduras has been historically controlled by a small group of families and this is no different in the media landscape where these families with political ties control the media landscape (Rockwell & Janus, 2003). "These powerful families are the Canahuatis, Sikaffys, Rosenthals, Ferrari and Facussés", stated Rockwell & Janus (2003, p. 18), who have succeeded in combining the control of communication media with political and economic power. These families have large stakes in the Honduran industry and are known as the Arab Honduran families called "turcos" commonly in Honduras. These groups immigrated from Lebanon and Syria in the twentieth century and later intermarried, slowly building family empires amongst themselves (Rockwell & Janus, 2003).

The Ferrari family owns a four station TV group in Tegucigalpa, the capital city, and in San Pedro Sula the second largest city. They also own the nation's largest medio production company, as well as various radio networks known as Emisoras Unidas (United Stations) in Tegucigalpa. The Canahuatis own the most circulated newspapers in Honduras, La Prensa and El Heraldo. The Honduran *Turcos* essentially own most of the nation's newspapers, as well as the most popular radio and television operations (Rockwell & Janus, 2003). The Facussé family owns the newspaper La Tribuna, which played an important role in the candidacy run and later win of Carlos Flores Facussé as the president of Honduras in 1998 (Rockwell & Janus, 2003). This is an example of how these families have used their control of information flow and their political influence to intensify their media power and country politics. With these families owning most of the popular media in Honduras, it is difficult for an outside force to gain enough support and economic strength to challenge this system (Rockwell & Janus, 2003).

Essentially, media owners in Honduras tend to protect their market interests by supporting an institutionalized hierarchy that supports their control of the information flow and media revenue, as opposed to supporting an open media system which could help build the nation's democratic forces.

According to Rockwell & Jannus (2003) the media owners in Honduras have managed to evolve into the nation's business elites, as well as have crossed over to become political leaders. In other words, the Honduran media system has fused into media owners who are linked to business elites, who provide advertising, and also to political elites—into the oligarchy power that now represents the Honduran *turco* family. Rockwell & Jannus (2003) conclude that the current media system seems to support a transfer of power from military elites in the 1950's to civilian elites in a country that "has rarely opened power to truly democratic forces or given voice to the dispossessed, the underemployed, or the uneducated" (Rockwell & Jannus, 2003, p. 29). Who, then, speaks for the millions of Hondurans living in poverty? In a country where information systems converts into a coterie of wealthy families with similar interests, families who have business and personal political goals at stake, how are those who are not part of this elite group represented in the information media? This is where the fascinating case of HCH comes in. This is a channel that vows to represent the poor by challenging the predominant media system structure that has reigned Honduras for decades by, arguably, allowing for the dispossessed, underemployed and uneducated to have their voices heard.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

In this section relevant theory supporting this research will be presented and discussed.

Firstly, a discussion on news sensationalism and populism seems imperative to understand where this phenomena stands as opposed to socially inclusive journalism and how it may be present in the study. To understand better what inclusive journalism may mean in the Honduran context, I will also touch upon the notion of poverty in this specific case and how this group of people might be seen as excluded from the general media discourse. In order to fully grasp and analyse these two models of populism and social inclusivity, a literature review on these theories is necessary to comprehend what factors constitutes sensationalists practices and how these may be present on populist media, as well as what can be understood as socially incisive communication content. A discussion on de-Westernization of media studies will be applied as it is important to keep in mind that not all western models may fit in this specific case and context and can therefore be challenged through the results of this research.

### 2.1 Sensationalism in Journalism

As mentioned in the introduction of this research, HCH, has been accused of achieving its success through sensationalism (Estrada, 2016) The term sensationalism in news content, is defined by Wang (2012) as “news stories that deal with crime-related news, accidents/disasters, sex, terrorism, war, violence, public fears and human interest through sensory stimulation” (p. 714). These news stories are gossipy or scandalous topics which display news stories through exuberant productions which, in turn, cast a shadow over real informative and relevant news (Wang, 2012). HCH has been branded by some as including a large number of violence & crime news stories that push to the extreme of what is and should be acceptable. Some authors claim that sensationalist practice stimulates unwholesome emotional responses (Grabe et al., 1962) and “shocks and thrills our moral sensibilities” (Tannenbaum & Lynch, 1960, p.637). Sensationalist practices are significant to this research because of the financial motivation that is commonly stated as the incentive behind this journalistic practice (Grabe et al., 2010). Maldonado, HCH’s founder, has spoken out about how profits are not the primary goal of the channel, however, theory points out that some of the strongest contributors to sensationalism in news are market driven forces and low levels of journalistic professionalism (Wang, 2012). Professional journalistic routines are understood as the practice of informing individuals about the world through factual reporting and balance (Cushion & Lewis, 2009) and assessing the significance of a story (Nadler, 2019). All of these practices are expected to be known and understood among trained journalists (Nadler, 2019). In other words, this is what the norm would be, however sensationalist practices have caused news companies to redirect their

journalistic practices into satisfying what they believe their audience wants to see and hear, which in turn leads the media into focusing in stories involved in sensationalistic storytelling techniques and neglecting relevant news stories (Nadler, 2019). These characteristics have been highly criticized in HCH.

There is currently an ongoing debate as to what is an “acceptable” and “proper” use of sensationalist practices as a means by which journalists provoke strong and shocking emotions on the audience as an effort to bring attention to relevant social issues (Grabe et al., 2010). In a way, some could argue that not all forms of sensationalism should be seen on a negative light. Especially when these are being used as a tool to reach a greater good. There are times where these practices are used as a way of “the end justifying the mean.” In the present study I find it very interesting to make an effort to comprehend how the alleged sensationalism in HCH is present during the *HCH Morning Show* and how could these practices be seen from the “proper” and “acceptable” perspective. Media critics have also stated concerns about two of the characteristics of this type of news: how over the top it is and the fast-paced packaging. The latter refers to the loss of sense of what is important in news stories over an easy and quick way of delivering them to the audience. This is also referred to as the “foxification of news” (Grossman, 1997; Stark, 1997; as cited in Cushion and Lewis, 2009).

### **Foxification of News**

Fox News is attributed as one of the news channels that mostly falls under the sensationalism umbrella with its emphasis on attention-seeking comments and opinions rather than on “straight reporting of facts, which has in turn undermined important journalistic values” (Cushion & Lewis, 2009, p.132). Studies have debated about how 24-hour news channels have been influenced greatly by the Fox News practices (Cushion & Lewis, 2009). Despite Fox News blatant statements on being fair and unbiased, recent studies have revealed the channel engaging in populist, right-wing practices (Ackerman, 2001 as cited in Cushion & Lewis, 2009). Some of these practices include, but are not limited to, emphasizing on sensationalism, scandalous style, and speculation rather than balance and objectivity (Schiffers, 2003; Raspberry, 2005; as cited in Cushion & Lewis, 2009). Moreover, breaking news are packaged in a way in which they lose their journalistic value as a result of most stories branded this way being simply developments in daily news stories. For instance, this could happen with police statements, developments on government actions or, in the case of HCH, being the first in the scene of a petty crime. As stated before, HCH is the first 24/7 news channel in Honduras which could represent a relevant and fascinating opportunity to analyse further the Foxification practices that the theory points out in a different context than that of the USA. The number of voiced criticisms over Fox News overlaps in significant ways to the criticism commonly voiced against HCH and in many

ways offers a framework for comparison. Nevertheless, it is vital for this study to bear in mind that de-westernization theory suggests that, as a researcher, I cannot take for granted that what is known to be true from the case of Fox News can be applied to the case of HCH wholly because of the vast difference in social and professional contexts between Honduras and the United States of America.

### **Market Driven Forces**

To recapitulate, sensationalism is a journalistic practice with the tendency to displace socially significant stories with flashy, tabloid production styles which in turn override substantive information (Grabe et al., 2001). This begs the question, if the essence of professional journalism is at stake when engaging in sensationalist practices, what drives the spike in use of this practice? According to research, market-driven forces, as well as commercial influence, are considered to be the causes behind it in some countries (Wang, 2012). However, the diverse media culture, context and societal differences represent distinct mediascapes and variations in what commercially driven journalist looks like. In other words, media driven journalism might look different in Honduras than in Europe. These market driven forces arguably decrease the integrity of TV news and journalism in some regions (Curran et al., 2009; De Swert, 2008; Lin, 2009; as cited by Wang, 2012). Moreover, researchers have also indicated that while the news topics and more formal features and practices have been studied in previous studies on sensationalism practices, the actors involved in this news tend to be unnoticed (Wang, 2012). As far as HCH goes, it becomes interesting to analyse who the primary actors in the news are and why they might be present. Considering that according to Wang (2012), “sensationalist news stories focus on private citizens to personalize news stories” (p. 714), this becomes an interesting framework into understanding why certain actors might or might not be present in the HCH content. Could this be a sensationalist practice with which the channel looks to personalize their news stories?

### **2.2 Populism**

The definition of the concept of populism is widely contested and has represented a challenge for researchers due to the normative considerations around it (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012). In an effort to fully grasp the implications of this concept and to better understand the literature and research around it, I will touch upon a few conceptualizations of the term by researchers in the field. Populism has an ever-changing nature in regards to the fact that it is not exclusive to specific landscapes, but it can appear in different contexts. In other words, it can take on elements of the environment where it finds itself in, nevertheless it will link back to the essence of a populist movement (Taggart, 2000; as cited in Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012). Bearing in mind all of the elements

that may impact the form of populism found in certain contexts, there are a few key characteristics that all populist manifestations encompass and that has resulted in a scholarly consensus. According to Nadler (2019), “populism entails an affirmation of ‘the people’ and puts it against the critique of an elite or a political establishment” (p. 2). Moreover, “the people” are viewed as pure individuals who have fallen under the consequences of the corrupted elite. There is a third element present in this ideology; “the general will of the people” (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 151). These three elements can be found in any populist movement or practice. Interestingly enough, the group of individuals who would be considered as belonging to ‘the people’ might be different in Latin America compared to Western countries. This links back to the idea that that populism varies depending on the context where it finds itself in. (Taggart, 2000; as cited in Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012)

Populist movements tend to claim to be the honest voice of the people (Arato & Cohen 2017), as they intentionally stand up and challenge the powerful elite group (Kessler & Ruland, 2006) who have allegedly usurped the rightful (Arato & Cohen, 2017). Essentially, its main claim is to “restore the good people to their rightful place and enable their unified and previously silenced and excluded, but ultimately general will to rule once more” (Mudde, 2017; as cited in Arato & Cohen, 2017, p.286). In other words, populism looks to take power back from the corrupted elite and restore it to the people, and one of the ways in which this can be done is by giving the people a voice that can ultimately grant them power in society. In many ways, these elites are perceived as the ones to blame for the hardships of the people. As a discourse, the populist ideology essentially places the people against the elite, promotes the people’s independence, and revolves around taking it back from the dominant group (Arato & Cohen, 2017) which is usually referred to as the corrupted elite. These key characteristics of the populist ideology essentially provide a solid framework with which the content in the HCH news show can be analysed to reveal if said characteristics are present or not.

Additional to this, another important aspect of the populist ideology is that as such is understood as a “thin ideology” (Nadler, 2019, p.286). This proposes that, unlike ideologies like socialism and communism, it does not require a broad worldview (Nadler, 2019). In other words, it does not equate to a fully constructed ideology, but rather as a partially formed one that can complement other more extensive ideologies (Laclau, 2012; Stanley, 2008; as cited in Nadler, 2019). This notion of a thin ideology also allows for other factors to come into play when engaging in the discussion of populism. According to Mudde & Kalwasser (2012) one of the key aspects of populism that has been discussed in literature is whether or not populism can be categorized as inclusive or exclusive in its nature, or sometimes even both. Interestingly enough, in their research they found that this is largely determined by the region where the populist ideal or practices take place in. For instance, in the study *Exclusionary vs Inclusionary: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin*

*America* by Mudde & Kaltwasser (2012), the cases of Bolivian President Evo Morales and Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez were analysed, both authors conclude that most of the research done on Latin America found that populism emphasizes on its inclusive character, while Europe's populism is predominately exclusive. The interrogation here lies as to what or who is being excluded and included in both scenarios. This is especially interesting considering the focus of this study which aims to analyse in what ways the *HCH Morning Show* is how populism and social inclusiveness might be combined and presented as a discourse. How, then, does this translate into the media field? The following section will dive more into this.

### **Populism in the Media**

In order to conceptualize the role that media plays in populists movements, Nadler (2019) proposes three overlying frameworks: “new opportunities arising from the diminishing of institutional gatekeepers, mediatization of political culture that, in turn, rewards populist communication styles, and a media populism that has helped cultivate dispositions and attitudes favorable to populist ideals” (Nadler, 2019, p. 5). The first framework refers to the fact that populist movements go against and challenge the corrupted elite and can gain momentum and strength due to the weakened institutional gatekeepers that anti-establishment (Nadler, 2019). New digital technologies have enabled for social media to become a new platform in which populists’ messages can be easily viewed and shared. Social media does not need an official gatekeeper filtering information and communication between the media and the people (Nadler, 2019). Within this first framework there are two major characteristics which highlight how media has changed to the extent in which some see it as encouraging a “populist communication style” (Nadler, 2019, p.6). The first one is the distancing of news outlets from professional journalistic practices, which are the “guiding philosophies that educated and trained journalists exercise their professional discretion to decide what news is the most important and how it should be presented” (Nadler, 2016; as cited in Nadler, 2019). While stirring away from professionalism, this practice has positioned the media landscape as rewarding sensationalistic practices that in turn set the base for populist discourse to benefit from it (Nadler 2019). The second characteristic that exemplifies how media has shifted into favoring populist communication has to do with the nature of social media platforms and their impact in the way news are distributed and circulated (Nadler, 2019). Eco chambers are a distinct feature of how social media can help create environments where certain ideas or ways of thinking are more welcomed to be shared among users (Engesser et al., 2017; as cited in Nadler, 2019). Populist movements can utilize this feature to their advantage in creating a space where they can nourish and foster a sentiment of the unison people against the corrupted and powerful people in a society (Engesser et al., 2017; as

cited in Nadler, 2019). In the case of this study, HCH has a strong presence in social media and it becomes debatable as to how exactly they might be using it, if at all, to create these echo chambers in order to cultivate certain ideals in its audience.

The third and final framework centers around the idea of the media being a populist actor itself (Nadler, 2019). Scholarship on media populism looks into how media outlets, which are not necessarily openly part of a specific populist movement might play a major role in fostering these ideals within their audience (Kramer, 2014; Manucci 2017; Mazzoleni, 2008; as cited in Nadler, 2019).

“Media populism takes place when news personalities present themselves as mouthpieces for the people by engaging in outrageous and polemical styles to appear more authentic than politicians constrained by polite mannerism” (Kramer, 2014; as cited in Nadler, 2019).

Scholars maintain that while media populism can fall on unprofessional styles of journalism, they can also play an important role in bringing to light demands, injustices and discriminations that otherwise would remain unknown or ignored by the establishment (Arato & Cohen, 2017). Populists intentionally try to resemble the way of speaking, mannerisms and the look of ordinary folks in order for them to be able to back up their claim of not only standing for the people, but that they *are* part of the people group as well (Moffit, 2016; as cited in Arato & Cohen, 2017). Hameleers & Vliegenthart (2020) consider that in the populist discourse, “the ordinary people and their will should be the main focus of politics” (p. 20). As the goal of this research is to analyse the ways in which a populist discourse might be used in HCH, it is important to note that populism can be considered a communication style, a strategy as well as a discourse (Moffit, 2016; Barr, 2009; Laclau, 2009; as cited in Hameleers & Vliegenthart, 2020). In other words, populism can take up many forms and shapes and is not restrained to be utilized in just one way through the media. This is important because as stated in the opening quote presented in this study, it is argued by HCH that a lot of the communication efforts of the channel goes to giving this, otherwise marginalized group, a voice. According to the report by Latinobarometro in 2018, 75% of Hondurans trust the church (Latinobarometro, 2018). Considering this, it would not be surprising that the discourse in HCH could implement might be influenced by religious undertones as an attempt to meet the religious beliefs of most Hondurans, arguably as an effort to sympathize with audiences.

## Populist Religion

Maldonado attributes the success of HCH largely to God and his faith. On an interview with Hondudiario, he goes on to say, “I never thought that HCH would have seven radio frequencies in different parts of the country, everything is because God blesses me” (Perdomo, 2017, para. 18). Not only does Maldonado point to religion as the source of blessings and success, but he also indicates that this is the main driver of HCH and quite literally states that “HCH will be whatever God wants it to be, because He is the one that reigns over my life” (Perdomo, 2017, para. 19). This study is interested in how Maldonado’s beliefs might or might not be present in the journalistic practices and content present in HCH and if so, could it be that it is instrumentalized to appeal to the larger “people” group? Peterson (2019) proposes that religion and media should not be seen as separate entities, but actually, considering that humans have always used their contexts to create meaning, they should be understood as interwoven. Making sense of religion has posed a challenge for media studies and, to an extent, scholars have claimed that the importance and influence of religion has been downplayed by media and cultural studies (Hoover, 2011; Morgan, 2013; as cited in Peterson, 2019). In other words, the scale of influence and the significant role religion can have when linked to media has, arguably, not been unpacked and analysed wholly. The reality is that digital technologies have provided spaces where cultural identities are shaped, created and explored, as well as where meaning making takes place. Religion is no different in this case (Peterson, 2020).

How does religion become instrumentalized as a part of populist efforts? Kessler & Ruland (2006) argue that “populist religion enables people to participate in modernization processes and offers protection from drawbacks, both successful and otherwise” (p. 12). They also state that populist religion has the power of meeting various needs within the people, as well as portraying a message of hope for progress that people living in poverty, as is the situation of Hondurans, can be strongly attracted to (Kessler & Ruland, 2006). It is important to note that, just as mentioned in the discussion above, populism is a thin ideology, which allows for it to “take the color of its surroundings” (Arato & Cohen, 2017, p. 290) and this includes the religious aspect as well and therefore varies depending on the context. To an extent, it becomes easy to decode populist religious practices as an opportunistic attempt to “hijack” religion and through it define the “people” and the “corrupted elite” components of populist ideologies (Arato & Cohen, 2017). In other words, it can be said that populism uses religion to denote identity, while churches might use religion to denote a set of beliefs.

Morieson (2017) speaks about this concept of hijacking religion on his paper *Are Contemporary Populist Movements Hijacking Religion?* where he shortly reviews the book *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion* (Marzouki et al., 2016) and focuses on how the book engages in

the “important and puzzling connection between religion and populism” (Morrieson, 2017, p. 89). The book goes on to unpack how religion has usually been understood as a set of private beliefs, while dismissing as illegitimate the political aspects of populism and how it creates and identity and sense of belonging. As presented and reviewed in this discussion chapter on populist religion, there is clearly an ongoing interest and tension in the role religion plays in populist discourse, from media scholars. There are different understandings and arguments that support the idea that religion is somehow intertwined with media studies. According to Kessler & Ruland (2006), the greatest increase in Pentecostal/charismatic, a protestant Christian movement, has taken place in Latin America and Africa. The figures for Latin America state that the Pentecostal/charismatic movement multiplied from 4.4% in 1970 to 27.1% in 1995. Charismatic Christianity can be defined as “encompassing all Christian groups that emphasize spiritual experience and the activities of the Holy Spirit.” (Poewe 1994 as cited in Kessler & Ruland, 2006, p. 78).

The charismatic Christian movement is important for this study because it focuses and pushes for face-to-face interaction and personal relationships, between leaders and the people, which hints to populists’ ideals. Building on the idea of a charismatic religion, populism can therefore “react to modern society by combining the modern notion of citizens right and personal relations governed by morality and shared ethics” (Kessler & Ruland, 2006, p.85). All of these can be characteristic given to the pure people who have fallen into challenges as a consequence of the corrupted elite group. A sense of community and belonging is a powerful characteristic of charismatic Christianity. These creates an illusion of inclusion and therefore are deemed attractive to people of different socioeconomic backgrounds (Kessler & Ruland, 2006). Charismatic religion acknowledges individuals as independent, empowered persons and at the same time acknowledges the need of individuals to be oriented and to find meaning in life. “It offers an individual access to God as well as a community, which if seen from a populist lenses are equivalent to civil rights and shared values” (Kessler & Ruland, 2006, p. 93). The way Maldonado speaks about religion’s role in his decision making and success with HCH denotes the charismatic values presented above. These provide a firm outline of how religion can be intertwined with the media, and how these two are no strangers to be used as means to propagate populist ideals.

### **Socially Inclusive Communication & Othering**

Communication and media research have brought forward noteworthy “evidence of the impact of mediated portrayals of poverty” (Awad, 2014, p. 1067). Studies have shown that when it comes to poverty news in mainstream news media, this topic is pushed to the side (Entman, 1995; Gans, 1980; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Iyengar, 1990; Kendall, 2005; as cited in Awad, 2014) as

other news topics take center stage. It is interesting to understand, then, how HCH might be challenging this given that the majority of its audience is arguably low-income families since this is the reality of the Honduran context. As stated in the finding of the study by Mudde & Kaltwasser (2012), the majority of studies done in Latin America, regarding populism, focus on its inclusive manner. If this is true as well for Honduras, then to an extent it becomes essential to understanding the concept of social inclusion and how its presence might be characterized in the media scope. Before diving into the discussion of this concept, it should be taken into consideration the concept of social exclusion first as some see the former as defined in relation to the latter (Rawal, 2008). Collins (2003) refers to social exclusion as a “group of people who are kept from participating in the benefits of having a membership of society” (p. 22) as a result of a combinations of challenges such as poverty & poor educational opportunities (Collins, 2003). Low-income families in Honduras can identify with both of these barriers. Social inclusion can be considered as a pillar of social justice, and a just society is one that grants an equal chance of participation to all of the members of a community (Farrington & Farrington, 2005). The promise of social inclusion focuses on the idea of an equal chance for all individuals in a society. This means an equal shot at achieving their goals, participating by speaking up and being heard (Collins, 2003).

Opposing social inclusion is the concept of othering, which can be understood as a process of “differentiation and demarcation” (Lister, 2004; as cited in Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010, p. 695), where differences between group traits are taken for weaknesses, therefore drawing a separation line between two groups: us and them. Ultimately, this results in the distancing of these two groups separated by Othering (Fine, 1994; Lister, 2004; Schwalbe et al., 2000; as cited in Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). The group of people placed as the other, is usually placed in that position depending on how power is distributed in a country, nation or government (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). The “us” in this situation are usually viewed as individuals who own emotions, rationality, are capable and have had experiences with knowledge and will. On the other hand, the “them”, who are also the Others, are perceived as “objects who lacking complexity, motivation, rationality and capabilities” (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010, p. 695) and are deemed as the embodiment of the undesirable. How, then, is it even possible to combat such a predominant conservative narrative in the media?

Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin (2010) point out to the creation of three counter-narratives that can challenge the ‘blaming the victim’ approach (Wright, 1993; as cited in Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010) and help minimize the othering of impoverished people. These counter-narrative are the structural/contextual, the agency/resistance, and voice and action. All of them possess strengths and weaknesses which are assessed by Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin (2010). The focus of these counter narratives is to offer a means of intentionally challenging the conservative narrative and the

traditional representation of poverty in communication. The conservative narrative focuses on the “psychological, moral, intellectual, behavioral or cultural characteristics of the individuals in question” (Abramovitz, 1996; Katz, 1995; Wilson, 1987; as cited in Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010, p.697) whom in this study are the people in poverty. According to this narrative, people living in poverty are described as possessing negative characteristics, weaknesses, low -self-esteem and low academic achievement (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010).

The efforts to challenge the conservative narrative can be understood as ways of rejecting othering and, therefore, encouraging social inclusiveness in communication. The structure/context counter-narrative emphasizes “the structural aspects of poverty and the discovery of the option that people in poverty do not differ in their values from middle-class people” (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010, p. 699). In other words, people in poverty are not to blame on their individual flaws for their own challenges and struggles with poverty. Through the lenses of this counter narrative it is possible to identify the ways in which HCH might be including the structural constraints which have in turn placed this group of people in poverty. The agency/resistance counter-narrative refers to poor people as having an active role in their lives, and through that being able to resist poverty (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). Finally, the voice and action counter-narrative, builds up on the first two. It states that structural boundaries create poverty, and that people living in poverty have the capacity to rise up and challenge the structural restraints (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). The inclusion of a range of voices is essential in this resistance because it highlights the reality of people in poverty having different opinions and perspectives and can in turn generate actions against inequalities. The concept of othering and the three counter-narratives proposed by Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin (2010) offer a valuable and relevant framework to analyse if and how the promise of social inclusiveness is present, if at all, in the HCH content.

Frequently, the discussions on social inclusivity appears in conversations of normal, expected social participation applied to various things that people tend to be excluded from like: labor market, economy, society, culture, citizenship (Rawal, 2008). In one way or another, it could be that the audience of HCH can grasp a sense of being included in certain aspects of social life they would otherwise feel excluded. However, this is yet to be unpacked in this research paper. As it was mentioned at the beginning of this section, one of the most common barriers that keeps people from experiencing the benefits of social life is poverty. Studies highlight the complexities of the communication of poverty in media and journalism. Some of the dominant concepts in the public discourse have been centered around Othering towards people who live in poverty and the social distancing caused by it (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). In the complexities of poverty communication, it is also important to take into consideration the fact that it “rarely ever challenges

the existing power structures" (Devereux, Haynes, & Power, 2012, p. 513; as cited in Awad, 2014 ). Essentially, through the discussion on socially inclusive communication, othering, and counter-narratives it becomes possible to identify the presence of these concepts in the *HCH Morning Show*. On the one hand, the manifestation of othering practices and a tension between "them versus us" on news coverage results in a type of communication that cannot be understood as inclusive. On the other hand, the presence of a visible challenging of power structures through the counter-narratives suggested by Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin (2010), allows for this study to have a concise guideline of the possible characteristics of inclusive communication.

#### **2.4 De-westernization of Research**

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, a significant concept in this research is de-westernization. De-westernizing is understood as "inclusion of subaltern perspectives typically ignored in Western academia that question fundamental premises of the scientific enterprise underpinning mainstream communication research" (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014, p. 365). In this research, through the unpacking and analysis of the HCH case, I would like to challenge and question the previously discussed literature on sensationalism and populism. One could argue that that the existing theory on the mentioned concepts can not necessarily be applied or functions the same in the specific context of Honduras as it does in western countries. Characteristics of sensationalism found in western contexts, as discussed in the previous section, may or may not be the same than the one's found in this research, however, to bring clarity into this discussion and to be able to arrive at a conclusion this study is necessary.

Waisbord & Mellado (2014) propose four dimensions to elaborate in the idea of de-westernizing: "the subject of study, the body of evidence, analytical frameworks, and academic cultures" (p. 363). For the purpose of this study, the theoretical focus will be on two dimensions: the subject of study and the body of evidence. The former refers importance in the peculiarity of the local reality as the primary source for a research and focuses on the need to direct attention to issues that might not be present in Western research (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014). In this case it is the previously discussed peculiarities of the Honduran context historically and geographically. Waisbord & Mellado (2014) also move forward by stating that "examples of the absent issues in western scholarship can be study of communication processes shaped by politics, economic, social and cultural factors" (p. 364). This dimension refers to reconsidering and expanding communication research into analysing unconventional geographical regions that otherwise would remain understudied (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014). This dimension refers to the act of reconsidering and expanding communication studies by analysing issues that are understudied or absent in conventional geographical boundaries.

The dimension of body of evidence highlights the need to take into account cases from outside the Western hemisphere to produce stronger and richer conclusions as well and expand the corpus of texts available (Downing, 1996, Thussu, 2009; as cited in Waisbord & Mellado, 2014). This dimension also underlines the importance of drawing evidence that can allow researchers to produce a more nuanced understanding about communication and that can be probed by considering evidence from the rest of the world. This is why de-westernization plays such a significant role in this study. These two dimensions highlight the importance of research done beyond the western world (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014).

Regarding theory on social inclusiveness, this section specifically mentions the significance of poverty as a barrier to achieve inclusiveness. How then, does this barrier translate to the context of the poorest country in Latin America? It can be argued that what is understood by “poverty” in Honduras and reality this entails, might be significantly different than what it means in any western country. Therefore, the literature on social inclusiveness may be challenged as to how this concept is addressed in the Honduran context where the majority of the population’s daily life since birth is constrained by the social barrier of poverty and are therefore arguably excluded from an active role in society.

## 2.5 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis can be understood, according to Fran Tonkiss (1998), as a social and cultural research that is specifically focused on the “production of meaning-making through talk and texts” (p. 246). Tonkiss (1998) highlights the possibility of gaining in depth insight and data by probing the social context mediated by language in which the scientific research takes place. In discourse analysis, language is not seen as simply a neutral, impersonal communication resource, but rather a means in which an individual’s understanding of the social world is continuously being shaped (Tonkiss, 1998). To carry out this type of analysis, the researcher usually uses a common set of tools that facilitates the understanding of how discourses disseminate and shape our perception of the social world. (Tonkiss, 1998). When it comes to discourse in social context, there are distinct characteristic involved. Language is distinct social practice that orders and forms the way an individual interacts and relates to a social context Tonkiss (1998). There is a difference between the two central themes in this type of discourse; interpretative context and rhetorical organization. For the present study, the former is significant since it is concerned with the social setting where the discourse is set and developed. When focused on the social context in which discourses take place, the researcher is concerned with small-case context particular interactions, not just the larger scale issues.

When executing discourse analysis, Tonkiss (1998) recommends three key stages: selecting and processing the data; sorting, coding and analysing the data; and presenting the results. This study is especially interested in how the news content in HCH, use language to construct their interpretation of the social context (Tonkiss, 1998) in Honduras. Specifically, notions of populist discourse and their claim that the channel is socially inclusive. In order to fully grasp the possible tension between these two opposing models, discourse analysis will be the tool with which this research will attempt to dissect the degree to which the two models might be present, and if and how they have played a role in the success of HCH. Tonkiss (1998), also recommends four key features that can assist in analysing and interpreting the data collected for the discourse analysis. These four key features are keywords and themes, looking for variation in the text, emphasis and detail, and attending to silences" (Tonkiss, 1998).

The first feature, keywords and themes, consists of coding and analysing the data in order to organize it into key categories and themes. The analysis then becomes a process comparing, contrasting, and matching the different themes and ideas that emerge from the data (Tonkiss, 1998). The second feature, variation in the text, focuses on discovering differences within a narrative or perspective present in the text (Tonkiss, 1998). This could potentially point an effort to reconcile conflicting ideas, contradictions or uncertainty. The emphasis and detail feature look into intricate ways in which the meanings within the text are put together, therefore, examining twists and turns through which the data is shaped (Tonkiss, 1998). The fourth and final key feature is attending to silence. This refers to the practice in which the researcher "pays close attention to silences and gaps, to make conjectures about alternative perspectives which are excluded or countered" (Tonkiss, 1998, p.258).

### 3. Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter, the research design will be presented and explained. Based on the previously discussed theories which describe practices and ways in which media products might engage with populist discourse, dominated by sensationalist practices, as well as what constitutes as othering of minority groups, in the case of this study, poor people, and socially inclusive communication. The following research question will help dive deeper into the analysis: In a time of distrust in the news media, how could HCH rise to become the most popular TV news program in Honduras? In order to unpack this, three sub questions have been formulated as well: (1) To what extent has HCH relied on media populism? (2) To what extent is HCH inclusive in its communication efforts with and about people in poverty? (3) What does the combination of these two elements imply in the HCH formula? In this section, I will firstly explain and justify the research object and the approach as well as introduce the *HCH Morning Show*. Following this, the central concepts of a thematic analysis will be explained since this will be the starting point of the analysis of this study. After this, the characteristics of discourse analysis, the central methodological tool, will be discussed as well as the principles of doing discourse analysis as informed by Fran Tonkiss (1998). Finally, I will describe how the analysis will be conducted in order to arrive at the results.

#### Introduction to the HCH Morning Show

This research project offers an analysis of how discourse is used to portray or present certain ideas to the public. As the name of the channel being studied so clearly states, *Hable Como Habla* (Talk How You Speak), language takes center stage and is an important element of the content. This study is relevant since HCH has risen to become a prominent news channel in such a short time, competing with other news corporations that have dominated the journalistic scene in Honduras for decades. HCH has presented itself as the voice of the people in a unique context where distrust in the press as well as institutional corruption is predominant. It has done so, according to its founder Eduardo Maldonado, by providing a medium for the people to speak up and cover news that usually wouldn't get airtime. By exploring the formula implemented by HCH to make such great claims, it is possible to unpack what resources and practices are implemented that have differentiated themselves from the rest. With this, a meaningful contribution can be made to the existing scholarship on populism in media (Nadler, 2019; Krumer, 2014), populist religion (Peterson, 2019) and how socially inclusive communication (Farrington & Farrington, 2005) increases when Othering decreases through the creation of counter-narratives (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010) in one of the poorest countries in Latin America. Since there have been studies of populist religion and media in "secular" western countries (Arato & Cohen, 2017) where populist religion has been successful at

drawing people in, it is worth further analysing how this sort of inclusive communication develops in such a religious country as Honduras.

To carry on this analysis, the *HCH Morning Show* program was selected because according to its view counts on Facebook, where it is transmitted live and subsequently uploaded, it's the program with the highest viewership. The first hour of the 11 most viewed episodes will be studied. The reasoning behind this selection lies in that during the first 60 minutes Maldonado, Mejía and Lanza, the news anchors and journalists of the show, set the pace of the agenda for the day as far as news content goes. In other words, the most relevant topic of news according to HCH are covered during this hour, as well as other important elements such as Eduardo Maldonado's daily monologue over a religious reflection based on the bible, which is followed by a brief motivational message regarding the political and societal climate in Honduras. Accordingly, all three news anchors proceed to the reading of the headlines of the day from the most prominent Honduran newspapers. Next, opinion and commentary from the news anchors is presented over relevant news. Furthermore, the news anchors engage in direct communication with the audience by phone calls and text messages where daily complaints are addressed and, sometimes, resolved live on the show. Finally, a live update is given from all regions of the country where HCH field reporters are present and, on the spot, ready to: answer questions from the news anchors, interview people on the street, as well as provide a summary of relevant events that might have taken place in each region. It is important to note that the sample for this study was selected from the entirety of episodes to up to March 2020 when the COVID-19 global pandemic had just presented its first cases in Honduras. Therefore, some of the content revolves around this global issue.

Besides the explanation above, it is critical to note that during the *HCH Morning Show* Eduardo Maldonado, who, as the initial quote on this study shows, defends firmly his stance of HCH being an inclusive channel, takes on the central role of the show. I believe that the *HCH Morning Show* offers a clear view of the core elements and discursive strategies of the channel which has the potential of being highlighted in an environment where discourse takes center stage and, therefore, the discourse can be greatly appreciated and analysed. Further examining the themes present on the *HCH Morning Show* and how certain topics, actors and situations are portrayed can bring light into the journalistic practices and strategies applied by HCH. Along the same lines, since most of the literature on populism, sensationalism and socially inclusive discourse has focused on Western countries, this case of Honduran origin has the potential of exposing innovative results on the phenomenon, that can simultaneously be perceived as a starting point to address and challenge the reality of journalism in Honduras and eventually, Central America. Moreover, the shift from professional journalistic routines to sensational ones is not a trend occurring exclusively in Honduras

but is present in many other regions that are dominated by the commercialization of news, this study can, therefore, be relevant to those contexts as well. The di-Westernization of scholarship available offers a great opportunity for research to be enriched by this study as well as setting a starting point for further research on the region. Given that the goal of this study is to unpack how populist and social inclusive discourse might be present in the text, the *HCH Morning Show* promises to be the adequate unit of analysis to gather relevant data

### **3.1 Units of Analysis and Sampling**

In order to answer the research question, the unit of analysis selected from the entirety of the HCH programming is the 11 most watched episodes of the *HCH Morning Show* broadcasted daily on its official Facebook page as well as the local channel. In order to meet the requirements of data collection stated in the *Methodological Guidelines* (2019), 11 hours of visual content were analysed. Bearing in mind that this study deals with populist discourse and socially inclusivity present in the *HCH Morning Show*, the purposive sample selected for this study is that of the 11 *HCH Morning Show* programs with the most views uploaded to Facebook up until March 2020. This guarantees that the sample for this study is relevant given that the aim of this study is to dive into what makes this news show so popular and successful. HCH uploads its daily content and streams live through Facebook where they have more than 2 million followers. By taking the sample for this study from Facebook, this provides firm ground to analyse the content that is being viewed the most by HCH's audience, through its most relevant social profile and therefore most appropriate platform for the goals of this study which deals understandings the practices that appeal with the masses and therefore amount for the high number of viewership. After selecting the 11 video uploads from the *HCH Morning Show* with the most views, a transcript from each video was produced. With the assistance of the software program Atlas.ti, a coding scheme was created from the themes that emerge on the text. This was helpful in reducing the data by making patterns clearer and visualized in a coding tree. This supports the findings of relationships between different elements and categories, and also help interpret them systematically. This scheme assists as a starting point to conduct a thorough discourse analysis. These transcripts were analysed through discourse analysis with the methodological tools suggested by Frans Tonkiss (1998) as explained before.

The segments from the *HCH Morning Show* that were analysed include: (1) coverage of events that took place the night prior, (2) an analysis and commentary of the newspaper cover page of the day, (3) a short religious reflection and encouragement for the audience, (4) real time interaction with the complaints of the audience in local neighborhoods regarding public services or security, the latter done through WhatsApp, and (5) cut through opinion based interactions regarding

current events. I believe these 5 elements are quite distinct in its nature and produce vast content that can be rich in discourse as it includes opinions and commentary from the channels principal anchors including Eduardo Maldonado whom, as the initial quote in this study states, holds HCH as a means for the service of the public. Below is the list of episodes by date and view count.

Table 1 shows the list of episodes that were analysed for this study. The first column shows the name of the video, the second column the date of the news show and the last column presents the amount of views each video has. The name of the videos, on the first column, will be used later in the chapter of analysis of the results of this study.

Table 1 – HCH Morning Show most viewed episodes on Facebook

Video	Date	Views
Video 1 (V1)	February 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	87,000
Video 2 (V2)	March 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	224,000
Video 3 (V3)	March 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	173,000
Video 4 (V4)	March 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	161,000
Video 5 (V5)	March 23 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	180,000
Video 6 (V6)	March 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	118,000
Video 7 (V7)	March 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	176,000
Video 8 (V8)	March 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	212,000
Video 9 (V9)	March 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	141,000
Video 10 (V10)	March 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	198,000
Video 11 (V11)	March 31 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	215,600
Total: 11 videos		Total: 1,885,600

In order to transform this audiovisual content into data that could be analyzed through the Atlas.ti software, the audio has been transcribed into textual data which consists of the transcripts with timestamps of everything that was said by the news anchors and news reporters throughout the 11 episodes of the *HCH Morning Show*. The expectation was for this sample to generate insightful data and, therefore, supplement the analysis of the research findings. Essentially, this sample is ideal to grasp if and how populist discourse, sensationalist practices and social inclusivity discourse might present.

## Method of Analysis

To analyse the data gathered as effectively and richly as possible, a qualitative approach was chosen as the methodological resource. Qualitative research focuses on how human beings give meaning to their social world. According to Brennen (2017), qualitative research is “interdisciplinary, interpretive, political and theoretical in nature” (p.10). Moreover, it deals with the use of language to understand concepts and ideas based on individuals’ experiences and, by doing so, attempts to create sense of the broader concept of human relationships (Brennen, 2017). Qualitative research has as its main objective that of building meaningful relations to be interpreted. In order to analyse the transcripts of the *HCH Morning Show*, thematic was needed as the starting point in conjunction with a discourse analysis. Thematic analysis is characterized by data reduction through themes present in the text and by following a “systematic and flexible approach that makes the qualitative data clearer” (Schreier, 2013; as cited in Rots, 2018, p.30). The strength of this approach lies in the nature of identifying emerging themes in the content that can later be more specifically analysed through discourse analysis. The data reduction as a result of the thematic analysis helped identify better the prominent key themes which later were analysed by the suggested discourse analysis by Fran Tonkiss (1998).

Discourse analysis deals with the particular way of using specific type language to discuss a topic. Dumetrica & Pridmore (n.d., p. 5) state that “Discourse analysis offers one of the most comprehensive approaches to meaning-making, enabling researchers to truly capture a text’s multiple context and to connect understanding to the larger structural conditions facilitating it.” Discourse analysis can help reveal how talk and texts are ordered to produce specific meanings and effects. In the case of HCH, this study was interested in how these texts may or may not be filled with undertones of populist discourse and sensationalist practices versus a social inclusive discourse. Complimentary to both, thematic and discourse analysis, visual analysis was also done in order to be examine how television news about poverty often times relies on “frequent images that convey information by drawing on the audience’s pre-stored assumptions about poverty” (Entman, 1995, p. 142; as cited in Awad, 2014). Specifically, the visual analysis focuses on the primary actors on screen, if there are visual indicators of poverty, morbid images and the on-screen text that accompanies the visual footage. Finally, as stated earlier, discourse analysis will be the central methodological tool to draw relevant and insightful results on this study. There are many approaches to doing discourse analysis, for the present study the method suggested by Fran Tonkiss will be executed.

In short, the goal of this research is to analyse the potential populist discourse HCH has been criticized of using while also unpacking the discourse on social inclusiveness the channel claims to have while analysing the possible combination between these two arguments at what that means for

the HCH formula. The content itself was examined through a thematic analysis that uses elements of discourse analysis and visual analysis in order to find out how news is covered in the *HCH Morning Show* and how they might engage in the previously mentioned practices. Hereby, the case of *HCH Morning Show* was systematically analysed in light of the theoretical discussions covered regarding the concept of Othering, sensationalist practices, populism and socially inclusive counter-narratives.

### **Discourse Analysis According to Fran Tonkiss**

As a tool to do the discourse analysis in this research I will address the key stages of the research process according to Fran Tonkiss (1998), which were used to analyse the texts for this research. The key stages suggested by Tonkiss (1998) are: the use of key words and themes, look for variation in the text, emphasis and detail, and attending to silence in the data. This study is especially interested in how HCH use language to construct their accounts of the social world in its news content. Specifically, special focus was given to the notions of populist discourse and on the channels claim that they are socially inclusive and how they might portray this on screen. In order to fully grasp the possible tension between these two opposing models, discourse analysis is the tool with which this research attempted to dissect up to what degree may the two models be present in the news coverage done by HCH on their Morning News Show. The following are the key features of the discourse analysis method according to Fran Tonkiss (1998) and that were used to analyse the data collected.

### *Using Key Words and Themes*

One of the primary approaches to analyse the data is to organize them into key themes, while I am aware that these might change as the research develops, these will be the starting point. A deductive approach, based on the previously discussed theory, allowed for predefined themes to be established by the researcher. These themes are the following:

Table 2 – Predefined themes based on theory

Theme	Operationalization
1. Populist discourse in media	Appeal to the pure people, two homogenous and antagonists groups (Nadler, 2019) critique on corrupt elites, representing the people (Aarato & Cohen, 2017), pits the people against the elite, bring to light injustices, propagate personal relationships governed by morality hostility towards institutions (Kessler & Ruland, 2006), emotional-personal & plan-spoken discourse, turn away from journalistic

	professionalism, direct mouthpieces (Nadler, 2019) general will of the people (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012)
2. Sensationalist content	Emphasis on gimmickry commentary and opinion, speculation over facts (Cushion & Lewis, 2009); Polemical style (Nadler, 2019); violates social decency, designed to shock by lurid detail, opinion versus fact, situational versus timeless issues, overly dramatic, fast-paced (Grabe et al., 2010); News related to crime, accidents/disasters, sex, violence, conflict, public fears; Pictorial or graphic representation; gory visuals, background music, speed-up motion (Wang, 2012)
3. Social inclusive communication	Challenging conservative narrative; challenge “blaming the victim”; structural/contextual, agency/resistance, voice and action counter-narrative; focus on individual agency; inclusion of range of voices of people in poverty; contests passivity and dependence; resisting and undermining Othering; structural poverty; (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010)
4. Populist religious discourse	Friend/enemy identity; revival of religious values; higher power, ward off evil others, talk of existential crisis (Arato & Cohen, 2017); focused on belonging (Morrieson, 2017); Charismatic Christianity, orientation for everyday decisions; belonging to a community, individuals as independent, (Kessler & Ruland, 2006) connecting humans and spiritual force, promise of betterment, making meaning of religion (Peterson, 2019)

#### *Looking for Variation in the Text*

While looking for patterns of variation within the text, “differences may surface and point out to the work that is being done to reconcile conflicting ideas, cope with contradiction, uncertainty or to counter alternatives” (Tonkiss, 1998, p. 255). By giving attention to this specifically, it becomes possible to identify inconsistencies or hesitations that would disrupt an otherwise smooth discourse (Tonkiss, 1998). For this study, the researcher was concerned with studying how the text might engage with populist discourse by highlighting the three core concepts usually included in populist discourse as explained by Mudde & Kaltwasser (2012) these are: the corrupted elite, the pure people and the will of the pure people. Moreover, special focus was given to how this might clash with the idea of othering, as explained in the discussion above, by Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin (2010). To fully

grasp and identify instances where this is present the researcher attempted to unpack the associations, relationships, if any, and interactions established between the different actors in the text. For instance, while the news anchors might refer to their audience as victims of the corruption in Honduras when talking about how robbery becomes a need for the poor population, the same news anchor might refer to the same group of people as lazy for not looking for a proper job. These variations and associations between actors and groups, as well as the exclusion of others are aspects of the text to be taken into consideration.

#### *Emphasis and Detail*

Attention to emphasis and detail was significant for this research as it is concerned with the intricate ways in which language and meanings are put together. The primary goal with this is to look for patterns of emphasis, in this case, in populist discourse, sensationalist practices and social inclusive discourse. It was especially interesting to look out for how certain themes or topics may be recurrent in different ways through the *HCH Morning Show* content.

#### *Attending to Silence*

This strategy of analysis requires for the researcher to “read through the meanings that are being created, how the text is organized and pay close attention to how things are being said” (Tonkiss, 1998, p. 258). By looking to the silence within the content it becomes possible to identify alternative accounts that are being omitted. These silences or gaps help the researcher to point out the places where the text is silent and challenge the interpretations of such moments (Tonkiss, 1998). Following the emergence of key themes and words in the text, these will be put against the discussion on populism, sensationalist practices and inclusive communication to analyse how some elements of these theories might or might be not. This helps draw conclusions of the themes and topics that the *HCH Morning Show* tends to avoid or keep silent.

#### *Analysis of Visual elements*

Considering that HCH as a news channel, has been branded as a news source which engages in sensationalist practices, to promote a populist agenda, by some, it appears important to do a visual analysis of what elements are present visually and audibly on screen. There’s a vast audiovisual component that can be considered, however, for this research the focus was (1) who are the primary actors that appear on screen. This could be citizens, political leaders, authorities and news anchors. Analysing why some actors are present and how they are characterized in a personalized or depersonalized way would be central to this element. (2) Visual indicators of poverty of the news

being covered. This could include showing the façade of the house where the person being interviewed lives, way in which people are dressed, stating where the person is from, (3) Number of morbid images of murder cases and accidents.

### **3.2 Data Processing**

After the content is viewed, and transcribed in full, the data was coded using the software Atlas.ti to help identify the emerging themes, relationships, and commonalities in the text. After the data had been set into themed categories it was analysed through Tonkiss (1998) suggestions of analysing discourse. This data was later organized into the suggested categories by Tonkiss. For the visual analysis, screenshots were made when images from outside the studio are shown, someone is being interviewed, and violence and crime are being covered. This way of analysing the involved actors, the text on screen and the information presented to the audience through sensationalist practices was identified. Keeping the data organized is crucial for making sense of the results. Based on this analysis the central argument was developed and presented with the goal to answer the research question and present valuable insight as to the existing tension between the criticism on HCH news content being branded as channel saturated with populist discourse and sensationalist practices, and their claims of its primary goal being to create a sense of social inclusion for the poor population in Honduras.

In order explicitly examine how HCH has risen to become the most popular TV channel in Honduras, as well as the extent to which they have relied on populist media to do so while also claiming to be a socially inclusive channel, the concepts gathered on the theoretical discussions in this study were utilized as “lenses” through which the data was approached and analyses through. By comparing the data with the existing theory, a rich and insightful analysis of similarities and variances will emerge. The theories that will be used as the viewing “lenses” for the data drawn in this study are populism in media (Nadler, 2019), populist religion (Peterson, 2019) and how socially inclusive communication (Farrington & Farrington, 2005) challenges othering through counter-narratives (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). The goal of the data processing and analysis is to bring meaning to a complex process filled with nuances and social meanings. I intended to challenge the taken-for-granted meaning and approach that may be made about HCH and its content in the specificity of the peculiar context of the poorest country in Latin America.

## 4. Results

This chapter discusses the results of the analysis of the 11 hours of full transcript content of the *HCH Morning Show* and most relevant findings. These findings are structured in a way in which they present firstly the key themes present in the text as a result of a thematic and discourse analysis, as suggested by Tonkiss (1998). On each of the key themes, the emphasis and detail were be discussed, as well as variations and silences in the text. After this is examined in its entirety, the results drawn from the visual analysis will be presented. Finally, I discuss how the counter narratives suggested by Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin (2010) might or might not be present in the text. Nevertheless, prior to presenting the results, a short description of the *HCH Morning Show* segments and its routines will be explained in order to familiarize the reader with how the news show is structured.

### 4.1 HCH Morning Show Segments

The regular schedule of the first hour of the show contains 5 major segments. Firstly, the *HCH Morning Show* begins with a monologue by Eduardo Maldonado where he usually presents a religious reflection based on bible verses to the audience, which is followed by a brief motivational message linked to current events the country might be facing. Subsequently, all three news anchors proceed to the reading of the headlines from the most prominent Honduran newspapers of that day. Thirdly, the most relevant breaking news are presented while providing opinion and commentary on them. Following this, the news anchors engage in direct communication with the audience by phone calls and text messages where daily complaints are addressed and, sometimes, resolved live on the show. Finally, a live update is given from all regions of the country where HCH field reporters are present and ready to answer questions from the news anchors, interview people on the street, as well as provide a summary of relevant events that might have taken place in each region.

### 4.2 Key Themes in the HCH Morning Show

Below the key themes found in the data are presented. These themes are the call for change, voice of and for the people, HCH style of news coverage, tensions and religion. Each theme was analysed through discourse analysis, with a coding process as the starting point. Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the presence of each theme in the text. Table 1 highlights the coding scheme used to arrive at the key themes for the study. The coding schemes presents the 5 key themes along with the codes used in the software Atlas.ti to separate the data, and a description of each code.

Figure 1 – Key themes present in the *HCH Morning Show*

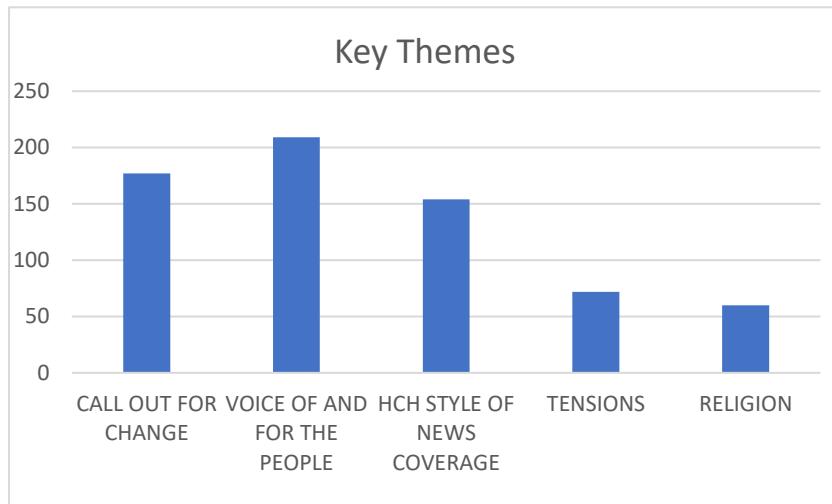


Table 1 – Coding scheme

Selective code	Codes	Description
THE CALL OUT FOR CHANGE	Criticizing Behavior	Negative comments directly to the ordinary people.
	Criticizing Government	Negative comments directed to the government, state, or government representatives.
	Institutions, Call Out	Call out of actions from official institutions or private companies.
	Reflection, Call Out	Call out for action from the people.
	Transparency	Demanding transparency in government procedures.
	Conflict Solution	Providing solutions to societal issues.
VOICE OF AND FOR PEOPLE	Working Class	Reference to the working class or low-income class in Honduras.
	Peoples Voice & Complaints	Instances where the working class uses their voice to complain and demand things.
	Comayaguela	References to Comayaguela as a part of the capital city.
	Social Media	Reference to social media usage and personal access to HCH through it.
	Audience recognition	Calling audiences by their name, acknowledging them.
	Representing the people	HCH as mouthpieces for the people.
	Belonging to the people	Statements and comments denoting HCH as being one with the people. Belonging to them.
	Relatable	Efforts in making HCH seem relatable to the ordinary citizen.
HCH STYLE OF NEWS COVERAGE	Sensationalist	Images, comments, phrases that denote sensationalists practices.
	Hondureñismos	Phrases and words proper to casual Honduran Spanish.

	Direct Access to HCH	Comments referring to the easy access people have to HCH via phone or social media.
	Influence	Reference to positive influence HCH has over societal issues.
	Them versus us	Direct references to a powerful class who is against a lower class.
	Reference to the Powerful	References to wealthy, powerful people in Honduras.
TENSIONS	Political	Political commentary and opinions. Positive or negative.
	Voices	Official voices who voice their opinions through HCH
	Othering	The othering of the poor and low-income families from either HCH or authorities.
	Helping others	Recurring statements of the importance of helping others.
RELIGION	Criticism	Negative comments directed towards the church.
	Good behavior	Referencing to the rewards of being a good person or Christian.
	Call to action	Calling for action surrounding Christian beliefs.
	Family/Christian values	Mention of family values being the same as Christian values.

### The Role of Religion

In general, religion is very predominant and spread across the different segments of the news show. From the initial prayer and religious reflection all the way to the police reports and interviewing of audience, the religious connotations and expressions tend to be the norm in the language implemented by HCH. Including a religious reflection at the beginning of each show represents a major stance for HCH. The way in which this theme is present represents the gravitational point of all news and conversations which always circle back to religion. The news anchors, predominantly Eduardo Maldonado, refer to recurring themes within religion such as God being the supreme power from where all good things flow, exhorting people to be obedient to God and religious leaders, connect family values to Christian values, and how individuals depend on God to meet their needs and overcome their challenges. When speaking about the Christian religion and values, news anchors refer to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit as the complete authority. All traits of a charismatic religion (Kessler & Ruland, 2006). Maldonado states in numerous occasions through the data that “here we work based on the vision He [God] wants, not what we want” (February 11, 2020, V1). Besides attributing his success to his religious devotion, Maldonado also projects this in a way of instructing the audience how to benefit from a close devotion to religion. He goes on to say things such as:

“Don’t leave your home without blessing the life of your children, of your family, of your husband, of your wife, and remember that we have to be eternally grateful to the Father because we depend on Him.” (February 11, 2020, V1)

(Kessler & Ruland, 2006) refer to this idea of an almighty power as the “legitimated worldview and moral outlook of charismatic teachings which give orientation for everyday decisions and general conduct of life” (p. 92). This is something that HCH engages in on its daily programming as they offer direction and guidelines as to what is the correct way to behave so as for individuals to follow. Besides professing his faith, Maldonado also directly addresses the audience, in what seems like an effort to direct them in the correct behavior and focus on the important things in life. Like the quote above suggests, he also highlights that individuals depend on God in all aspects of life and this is something to recognize and be thankful for. This idea of owing everything to God surfaces repeatedly throughout the data to an extent where it seems that there is no real agency for individuals as everything is decided by a higher power and as believers this just needs to be accepted. On another instance, Maldonado expresses that everything could be taken away, that there could be a lack of anything, but that it does not matter as long as the presence of God and the Holy Spirit is with each person (March 16, 2020, V2).

On other instances the news anchors urge people to pray and even show the television audience the proper words and phrases to do so. When referring to the reason behind the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, Maldonado attributes it to God by saying that “This is a message to the conscience of everyone that inhabits this earth. Who’s the owner? He’s the owner of your life, of our life, of the gold and silver. He’s the boss, the creator of you and me.” (March 18, 2020, V3). When engaging in this public stance of God being the source of all that is good and even having a purpose behind setbacks and daily challenges of the people, this points to the notion of populist religion. Populist religion can offer protection from the disadvantages and advantages in life by meeting a range of different needs (Kessler & Ruland, 2006). Around this same idea, the *HCH Morning Show* news anchors also suggest that by practicing a religion trials and challenges will come, but that it’s important to still believe that a superior being is watching over and will provide what is necessary to survive. “Blessings to the people that even though they have their stomach empty, they still have faith that God will send what’s needed. And that is how it is going to be.” (March 24, 2020, V6).

It is important to note that the religious theme is also present at the moments where audience members call the HCH studios and appear live on the show, as well when the reporters interview individuals on the street or on the scene of a news stories. As stated earlier, religion is very predominant in Honduras and this can be appreciated in the way the people interact with HCH.

Usually the people always greet the news anchors with a “God bless you” and continuously make reference to believing and trusting that God will help their situation. For instance, an elderly woman part of the risk group, was asked on camera why she was on the street in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, to which she responded, “I’m old, but God is with me” (March 19, 2020, V4). On another interview a lady was asked how she had been providing food for her family to which she replied, “By the will of God” (March 19, 2020, V4). This makes direct reference to the belief in a higher power that can take care of her regardless of the current situation. It becomes clear that religion is a key theme that the people have in common with HCH. The reaction of this elderly women goes hand in hand with the repetitive nature of the statements about faith that Maldonado and the other news anchors engage with unceasingly on the *HCH Morning Show*. Arato & Cohen (2017) have stated that “populists use religion as a mobilization strategy and not a real indicator of adherence to faith and religious values” (p. 290). Nevertheless, the case of HCH seems to not follow this concept fully.

Contrary to how “secular” European democracies might invoke religion as a key support to the idea of identity (Arato & Cohen, 2017), in the case of this study, it seems HCH speaks more about faith and belief than religion simply being a characteristic of national identity and belonging. An example of this is that while some populist movements in Europe are not genuinely Christian, but actually just rejectors of other religions (Morrieson, 2017), Maldonado does not keep the religious discussion on a superficial level on the show, and this is achieved by the immense amount of time dedicated to this conversation. Perhaps this also has to do with the fact that Honduras is predominantly Catholic country so there is no real discussion about belonging, but the strength of each persons’ faith.

Finally, the religious values are portrayed in a way in which they are presented as equal to family values of love, respect, obedience and trust. In other words, having Christian values is the starting point to have decent family values. As God is positioned as the ultimate authority, the blessings, good things in life, will flow from him to the degree in which individuals are obedient to Him. This is a very abstract concept as Maldonado does not go much into what being obedient might mean. Nevertheless, he says that “You have to be obedient for the good of your family” (March 16, 2020, V2). Maldonado makes little to no distinction between family values and religious doctrines which concludes in him stating that the good things in life, like blessings, come from following a set of Christian values which are very similar to family values. As stated before, religion and faith play a large role as a theme that is present throughout the entirety of the HCH content. While the data shows Maldonado and Mejía speaking upon what some of these values are, this is mostly left for the audience to be interpreted, since this is information that good Christians should know, according to Maldonado (March 25, 2020, V7). The analysis of the religious components of the *HCH Morning Show* have helped highlight how HCH has acknowledged the need for “individuals to be embedded in a

social network that provides orientation and meaning to life" (Kessler & Ruland, 2006, p. 93) and has found the way to meet this need through charismatic religion and direct contact with the people.

Attending to variations in the text, as Fran Tonkiss (1998) suggests, has brought to light the awareness that HCH might not be as straightforward as it seems when it comes to religion. There are some visible set of oppositions which to an extent disrupt the inclusive discourse of HCH. These disruptions come in between what would be an otherwise smooth discussion and as a part of the discourse analysis a set of frequent oppositions are present in the text. Maldonado constantly calls for people to not be lazy, to make use of their agency as individuals to bring positive change and action into their contexts. However, this idea is interrupted by the constant affirmation that everything in life is reigned over by a superior sovereign being, which in this case is God. Consequently, there exists a disruption between the call to action of people and the idea that at the end of the day they should also accept what happens as God's will. This is problematic because it leaves people with no direction or practical way of using their agency toward bettering themselves. While populist religion is clearly present in the content of HCH, it seems that at times is not congruent with general will of the people.

It's quite interesting to also note that Maldonado offers harsh critique towards the catholic and the evangelical church in Honduras. He states multiple times that both entities should do more to help their congregation. It seems as if he says so as to diminish its authority, authority he also claims for it to have in other occasions. On one hand, the *HCH Morning Show* is saturated with religious themes and Maldonado speaks about faith in a higher being, on the other hand, he calls out and criticizes the main organizations which promote said beliefs. Additionally, the sensationalists practices in which HCH engages, could be seen as potentially opposing the ideal of decency and truthfulness Maldonado claims to support.

### **The Voice of and for the People**

The *HCH Morning Show* promotes audience participation, and therefore their voices being heard, in more than just one way. On every transmission of the show there is always at least one instance in which a citizen pertaining to the working class is interviewed either via telephone or interviewed by a reporter. The news anchor of the show constantly makes references to the working class, or the struggling class, as well as creating the space for the voice of people in different regions of the country to be heard. Often it seems apparent that the content of the news show is addressed to the majority of Hondurans, whom also live in poverty, and focuses on struggles and societal issues that this group of people face. In other words, there are two major focuses on this key theme, the consistent apparent reference to the working class and their struggles, and HCH positioning itself as the representative of the people, understanding them and working as the medium in which the

people can trust for societal issues to be addressed and consequently solved. For example, it was interesting to find that whenever Maldonado refers to the capital city of Honduras, where the show is filmed, he says “Tegucigalpa and Comayaguela”. This clarification is relevant to this study because even though both cities conform the Central District of Honduras, Comayaguela is rarely mentioned when speaking about the capital city. Comayaguela is known historically for being the unsafe side of town since it was first inhabited by natives who would later become the labor force of the Central District (El Heraldo, 2018). Both cities are divided by a river, which more than just being a geographical division also serves as a socio-economical division. This is why the choice of words in mentioning Comayaguela frequently denotes an awareness of the news anchors of whom the content of the program is being directed to and including that as a reference. While Comayaguela is often neglected, HCH makes sure it is always mentioned when referring to the capital city of the country. In acknowledging this, they also acknowledge the working class living there.

Often in the transcripts it is referred to the people who have the least and live with what they make day by day. Given the crisis of COVID-19, this was an ongoing topic of discussion where the news anchors gave center stage to those in need. The precarious conditions are highlighted notably by the text in different ways. For instance, Maldonado states that “there’s people at home that work day by day and with what they make, which is not a lot, they survive” (March 23, 2020, V5). On another instance he mentions the following:

“The people that survive daily, the ones that have loans in Banrural and Atlantida Bank... the ones who sell meat on the street, the ones who sell chicken, the one who have a store with 5 employees, the ones that work on beauty salons and small restaurants, mechanic shops and painting houses... those are the ones that we need to help out.” (February 11, 2020, V1)

In this statement he mentions labors that are frequently done by the working class of Honduras as well as mentioning two of the banks in the country that work closely with small businesses. While reinforcing the targeted audience of HCH, this statements also emphasizes in the “pure people” that Mudde & Kaltwasser (2012) refer to in their definition of populism.

The voice of the people is present in various instances throughout the text in the form of live phone calls between the HCH news anchors and the audience, as well as text messages and live interviews on video. It is visible that the live complaints segment is especially important to the content of the text. There are two instances which illustrate how important the voice of the people is to the show. During the first day of lockdown in Honduras surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the *HCH Morning Show* does a national coverage of different regions in the country, one of them being

the north of the country, Cortés. Many laborers are seen standing outside of a mass production factory unsure of whether they should be working given the virus threat. One of the laborers is given the microphone and states that “We want to ask the factory owners that before putting their hand on their pocket, they should place it in their heart. We are workers, we are not immune to this virus. We are the source, the working hand.” (March 16, 2020, V2). After this statement, Maldonado takes upon himself to speak live on television through a phone call with the Director of COPECO, the government entity that gives out the orders for who should be at work and who should stay home during this pandemic. Director Gabriel Rubí answers the phone call to which Maldonado then asks about the specific situation of the factory workers in Cortés. This five-minute phone call concludes in resolving this issue for the factory workers and confirming to them that they can go home. All of this conflict solution happened in the last half an hour of the first hour of the show. This is especially a fascinating case of the influence and power that HCH has over the solution of conflicts. Kramer (2014) refers to instances like this as media populism, “when news personalities present themselves as direct mouthpieces for the people” (p.49; as cited in Nadler, 2019). Moreover, there is a plethora of audience complaints present in the text. One could argue that a large part of the content and airtime of the show translates into audience complaints. From then on, the news anchors follow up on the events and assist in solving them. Besides allowing for the voice of the people to be heard as well as representing them, another important factor is also present: the notion of HCH belonging to the people.

Just as Maldonado is quick to criticize and bring attention to societal issues, the data also shows the *HCH Morning Show* is quick to take action into solving communication issues so to speak. In two specific cases it can be seen that Maldonado streamlines the process of getting the voice of people to be heard by government officials. The first case goes back to the factory workers in Cortés who were unsure if they had to hadn’t to carry out their daily labor. The second case being a group of Hondurans who were not being allowed to go into the country after working for months on different countries, therefore being stranded at the border with Nicaragua. Both cases were solved in live television while Maldonado called and spoke to the representatives of the government to provide help and answers to both scenarios. The simultaneous national coverage of multiple locations is a novelty in Honduras and it allows for these types of situations to take place in HCH. Moreover, it is important to note that both cases involved people pertaining to the working class of Honduras who are not necessarily “only poor but also suffer different forms of cultural discrimination” (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 164) which is a characteristic of inclusive populism.

In general, it is noticeable that all three news anchors consider themselves as part of the general public, rather than the corrupted elite in Honduras. This becomes evident during a discussion

over the importance of staying humble regardless of your social class. Mejia, Lanza and Maldonado begin stating surnames of rich people in Honduras such as Atala, Kaffie, Facussé, Barjúm and Larach. All of which are called “bombastic” surnames by Maldonado and some of them are also part of the powerful *turco-Honduran* families. It is important to note that these are the names of renowned wealthy business owners in Honduras. Or as theory would put them, the corrupted elite (Kramer, 2014; as cited in Nadler, 2019). This tension is later alleviated by Maldonado stating that names such as Mejía, Maldonado and Lanza, all three being the news anchors last names, are ordinary last names (February 11, 2020, V1). By stating this, he is placing themselves as belonging to the ordinary group of people, just like the audience viewing the show.

While paying attention to variation in the data, there were certain instances that seem significant to present in this study. Although the *HCH Morning Show* does a distinct job in bringing forward and practicing the idea of giving the ordinary people a voice, there are certain topics and themes that are hardly present on the text. HCH news anchors do not provide a clear political stance, a clear religious stance, and omit giving personal ideas and comments regarding this. It seems as an effort to appeal to the masses, to try and resonate with as much people as possible. In terms of criticizing the government, Maldonado refrains from mentioning the president and any other important government leader. On an instance Mejía begins criticizing the actions of the government noting that the National party is filled with corrupted people (the president of Honduras is part of this party), to which Maldonado answers in a dismissal way.

Mejía: “It’s confirmed, the National party is in charge of helping the military give away each sack of food. But, how lovely... oh so lovely, they will only give them out to the ones enlisted as National party voters”

Maldonado: “No, no. They will go house by house. We have proposed here in HCH that no dirty politics should be involved in this.”

Mejía “I have emphasized in this because it’s a reality. If the Liberal party was in charge, we would ask the same questions.”

Maldonado “This is not the time for that, Cesia. And whoever does such a thing will receive their conviction from us, the Hondurans, and God.”

(March 25, 2020, V7).

Whereas in other moments, Maldonado does criticize certain actions without mentioning specifics or names. He rather phrases his criticism towards the government or state as a whole. There is a large amount of omission in the text directed towards the government and politics. Additionally, in regard to giving people a voice, it appears that this is the central part of the news program, however, individuals are hardly seen as people with free agency. Often names and complaints are not looked into further detail if these do not promise to be impactful news stories.

### **The Call for Change**

A significant theme that surfaced during this analysis is the repetitive and firm nature of Maldonado, Mejía and Lanza bluntly calling out for a change in the socio-economic context in Honduras. There are three major characteristics of the call out to institutions: firstly, they are always addressed to a specific official institution or the government. For example:

“The call here is to pressure the Congress... they should be gathering today or tomorrow to approve this law and make it effective immediately. What we ask here in HCH is that all actions that are approved should be followed up on to make sure they are fulfilled” (March 31, 2020, V11)

Secondly, asking for transparency is a major focus as well. In an instance, Mejía is speaking about the resources the government has promised to use in the fight against COVID-19. She states the following:

“It’s important to have an informed nation and the more clarity there is, the better it will be. So, they [the government] should inform every detail, don’t hide anything. There should be transparency in the management of resources because there’s a lot of distrust in the Honduran people.” (March 19, 2020, V4)

Thirdly, the call outs are usually followed by specific recommendations as to how to help and be part of the solution. This is illustrated on the following instance where Maldonado expresses what he thinks the solution is for the issue of poor people not having food and resources. He states:

“First of all, there has to be solidarity. The one that has the most has to start giving away to help those who don’t. This is an important call to all sector of the country. It has to start in the big and strong companies.” (March 25, 2020, V7).

The previously stated characteristics are the ones that are mostly present in the theme for call out for change implemented by HCH as an effort to bring attention to societal issues that affect the ordinary people, as well as positioning themselves as the helpers and facilitators of this group of people.

Very often Maldonado, Mejía and Lanza offer strong criticism towards their own audience as well as criticism to the powerful and rich in Honduras surrounding their behavior. This behavior according to Maldonado, is not acceptable. For instance, he urges people with a better economical position to give away food to those in need. He does this by saying:

“Listen, if you’re at home... I’m going to say this. If you have food in your fridge and you let it go bad... I’ve seen when people clean up their fridge. Meat has gone bad, fish, cheese, fruit. So, why didn’t you give it away? That’s a sin, that’s a sin!” (February 11, 2020, V1).

On another moment Maldonado also deems as unacceptable the fact that some people might try to benefit from selling basic products over the fair price by saying “Whoever does that will be damned. They’ll be burned by fire, burned by fire!” (March 16, 2020, V2).

The *HCH Morning Show* also exerts criticism directed toward the state’s officials and government ministries. Even though this criticism is not directed towards the president of Honduras himself, it highlights the lack of attention these entities have towards the working class in the country. Mejía goes as far as calling SINAGER (National System of Risk Management) irresponsible and lazy in the way they carry health safety measures involving the people in poverty. The text shows that transparency and efficiency are among the most prominent recriminations done by Maldonado towards the government. It is repeatedly stated that Hondurans are tired of promises, “it’s not time for promises, it’s time to act”, states Maldonado (March 18, 2020, V3). The analysed text for this study shows Maldonado making call outs for actions, on behalf of the ordinary people, to various entities such as banks, cooperation’s, loaners (March 16, 2020, V2) the police (March 30, 2020, V10) government health officials, the government (March 18, 2020, V3) the medical collegiate (March 19, 2020, V4), security companies, private companies, the military (March 25, 2020, V7) and the Honduran congress (March 31, 2020, V11).

In all 11 episodes analysed there was at least one instance on each where Maldonado calls out the negative behavior of the people. This is especially interesting given that populist discourse is usually addressed benefiting the ordinary people and condemning the corrupted elite. Yet, Maldonado seems to criticize the common people just as harshly as the powerful people in Honduras. Regarding fake news on social media Mejía pointed out to the “bad Hondurans” that are trying to

take advantage of situations to create fake news on social media. Maldonado builds on this by stating that them, the news anchors, went to the university to study how to communicate and inform “regardless of whether or not you like what you hear in the news. You need to hear them. Our duty is to inform, even if it hurts or affects you.” (March 19, 2020, V4). Here Maldonado is addressing the majority of Hondurans that watch this show. After this Maldonado also refers to the people as lazy, negative minded, critical and that only focus on the destructive things in life. This entire argument can be summed up in the following quote:

“There’s negative people that only complain. They look at everything negatively, instead of being thankful and being proactive. Let people do whatever they want but be of help! If you’re not going to help, move out of the way.” (March 31, 2020, V11).

The best illustration of the visible commitment the news show has with helping its audience members is the initiative called “the HCH Solidarity Thermometer”. This new initiative consists of HCH being present at the scene of a solidarity moment happening such as an organization or individuals feeding the poor, giving away food and clothing and simply doing something positive to help the poor people in Honduras. When explaining how this idea was developed Maldonado stated that “This is the thermometer that we’re going to have in Honduras, suggested by HCH, to see who gets involved and who doesn’t. We’re going to mention any company that is helping others”. (March 31, 2020, V11). The use of the word “thermometer” suggests a sort of measuring device as well as a criterium with which how good or bad someone’s involvement might be. It could be argued that this is a case that highlights what Nadler (2019) refers to as the way media have become themselves populist actors. As Maldonado states this is to see which private companies get involved, as to show how the three components of populism are present: the will of the people, in this case, to be helped. The ordinary people, the poor people in need and the powerful group, the private companies who could offer help if they wanted (Nadler, 2019).

Maldonado states repeatedly that the best way to help others is to give what is leftover or what exceeds the actual basic needs of people. Often times this is directed to the wealthy elite in Honduras, while the poor people are presented as the group to protect and help from the wrongdoings of others. The HCH news anchors also repeatedly demand for a change in the socio-economical context in Honduras. This focus connects to the way in which HCH brings solutions to issues on live television, like the case of the factory workers in Cortés. Nevertheless, these small victories don’t necessarily amount to a real change like it is demanded by HCH. It seems like these conflict solutions are enough for the people to stay loyal and believe in the power of change HCH has.

### The HCH News Style

There is a particular way of covering news stories and engaging with its audience within HCH. Maldonado calls it “the HCH style” which has certain prominent visible characteristics. The first characteristic deals directly with the type of language and wording used throughout the show, especially by Maldonado. However, Mejía and Lanza also engage in this practice. *Hondureñismos* refers to words proper of the Spanish spoken in Honduras (RAE, 2019). These phrases tend to be seen as slang and improper for most professional use. There is an estimate of more than 700 words that are considered *hondureñismos* and regularly used by Hondurans on their day to day informal conversations (Cultura Hondureña, 2012). The use of language in HCH takes center stage considering that the name of the channel directly points to the right of letting people talk the way they do, without pressure of saying something wrong or talking too “informally”. This resonates directly with its audience. There are a vast number of instances in the text where the news anchors use *hondureñismos* to explain, comment or give an opinion about a certain news. This gives the idea of zero boundaries regarding what is acceptable and unacceptable language. For example, when referring to the people that have the need to be active and doing leisure activities during quarantine times, Maldonado refers to them as “*patechucho*” (March 16, 2020, V2) which is used to refer to an individual who is always on the street. On another instance, Maldonado says:

“There’s people that are making *pisto* [money] right now. Let’s stop the *casaca* [lies], there’s people making *billetillo* [money].” (March 23, 2020, V5)

The other news anchors, such as Mejía also engages in this practice. For instance, in the episode from March 24<sup>th</sup> she states:

“We should not go out, we know that, and whoever does not follow the rules will go to the *mamo* [jail]. Whoever is caught should go to the *mamo* [jail] at once” (March 24, 2020, V6)

Many news outlets turn away from the ideals of “journalistic professionalism” (Nadler, 2019, p.6) and instead news companies have re-oriented their ideals in the direction of satisfying the needs of their audience niche taste. The way in which *hondureñismos* are predominantly present in the content of the show emphasizes on the understanding of HCH of who their audience is and who they are directing their content to. The prominent style of is distinguishable in what congresswoman Doris Gutiérrez said about the show on a text message sent to Maldonado and read on air:

"Thank you very much, Mr. Maldonado. Keep supporting those who need it most. That is the great success of HCH. The poor feel that they have a means of communication that does not despise them and that allows them to express their needs and problems. Blessings."

(March 24, 2020, V6)

The *HCH Morning Show* boasts on the unique characteristic and the differentiation factor that they have over other news shows and channels. In the quoted text message above, Gutiérrez highlights exactly the inclusiveness of HCH by saying that it allows for poor people to express their needs and problems. This also implies that there wasn't a medium before, that represented the poor in the way HCH does.

Another characteristic of the content style of the show is that news covered tend to revolve around violence and crime. Mejía repeatedly uses the word "violent" when referring to events that have taken place the night prior to the live show or even during. It seems to be a way to catch the audience's attention and create expectation of what is coming up. The HCH style of news coverage often trumps the substance of the news (Cushion & Lewis, 2009). In other words, this means that HCH tends to put sensationalist practices, such as covering violent crimes, over other newsworthy events simply because they are not as exciting. This emphasizes in the practices that HCH engages on investing time in live phone calls and interviews with the audience, in efforts to support their journalistic style while neglecting the substance quality of the news coverage they are providing. A clear example of this is when the husband of a COVID-19 victim is interviewed live on television through the phone. There is high degree of insensitivity in how the news anchors address the caller. It becomes clear that the priority for Maldonado and Mejía is getting the "scoop" and details of death by COVID-19 that other channels do not have. This focus on attempting to break the news comes at the expense of certain journalistic values, like assessing the significance of the story (Cushion & Lewis, 2009). The story does not lead anywhere as the caller hangs ups abruptly after a ten-minute call, which seems as the repercussion of an overwhelmed individual with whom rapport was not built. This phone call was chosen over the call of the doctor Alba Consuelo who was placed on hold while Maldonado spoke to the husband of the COVID-19 victim.

Additionally, another distinctive characteristic of the HCH style is the direct access that the audience has to news anchors and on the ground reporters with no gatekeepers whatsoever. While the three news anchors Mejía, Maldonado and Lanza greet the audience at the beginning of each show, a personal phone number appears on screen. This is for any individual to be able to contact them at all times, send videos, photos and testimonials of newsworthy events happening around the country. The same is done with the news correspondents on each region of the country. This way, the

audience is informed whom to call on each individual region in the country to complain or inform of an important event. Just as this gives direct access to HCH, this also, to an extent, provides HCH with multiple eyes and ears who are willing to inform them whenever an event takes place which guarantees for HCH to be the first ones to break the news. Social media also plays a prominent role in this notion of direct access since through YouTube and Facebook the audience can comment on real time and usually some of the comments are read on air by Mejía or Lanza.

### **The Tension Between Them and Us**

The last key theme present, is the tension between the wealthy in Honduras, or corrupt elite, and the ordinary people, or poor people of the country. This tension is evident in the discourse implemented in HCH in various ways. As stated before, HCH has chosen to position themselves as belonging to the people and being their representatives. In a series of commentaries, the news anchors continue to affirm their stance while also referring to a barrier between them (the people) and the wealthy elite of Honduras. Some of these comments made reference to the public and private-bilingual educational system in the country. To which Maldonado stated that the public system is “our system”, as to suggest the private system is not since it is mostly used by “them”, the wealthy people (February 11, 2020, V1). In other instances, all three news anchors make distinctions when talking about both groups. When referring to the ordinary people they would talk about news surrounding the opening of street markets, while when referencing to the wealthy they would change the phrasing and refer to supermarkets.

“There is a long line of cars waiting for the gates of Walmart and Pricesmart to open. These people have a bigger capacity of purchase. Let’s go to the markets, what is happening in the markets? This is where *the* Honduran, the ones with less capacity to purchase... they buy depending on what they make daily.” Eduardo Maldonado (March 19, 2020, V4)

Moreover, there are several instances where Maldonado and Mejía urge the middle class, the owners of medium and small business to help out the poor people through donations and the sharing of their wealth. This consequently leads to a differentiation and, therefore, tension between a group of people who have more than what they need and those who don’t have enough. This distinction is carried around and through the entirety of the data. It also becomes clear that the intention of HCH is to side with the people who have the least by giving opinionated comments such as “What is the use of you having large amounts of money. What’s the point? You’re not taking that with you [to heaven].” (March 24, 2020, V6). This sort of commentary is supported by direct criticism to the

prominent business owners and even making reference to the corruption that took place during the 1998 Hurricane Mitch tragedy in Honduras (La Prensa, 2018). Special emphasis is also given to how HCH is trying to keep these groups of people accountable and transparent. Maldonado states that:

“Solidarity comes first. The one who has more has to start giving to help the one who doesn’t. This is an important call out to all sectors of the country. This needs to start especially on the strong and powerful businesses in the country. They too should start showing solidarity, not giving away rubbish or silly things, just giving away what they don’t need. No. The people are asking for food.” (March 25, 2020, V7)

In this quote, the urge to help becomes quite clear. Words such as “them” and “the people” denote that Maldonado is speaking directly to the powerful on behalf of the ordinary people. He also denounces what the will of the people is. It is not silly things that they need, but food. All three of these: the people group, the elite group, and the will of the people, are the key components as stated by Nadler (2019) of understanding the most influential approach to populism. In this visible tension between “them” and “us”, many arguments can be found that are utilized by HCH to deem themselves as a part of the solution and not the problem in Honduran contemporary societal issues. A series of comments pointing out to the social class and status of the elite group of people in Honduras are also recurring during the show. Most of these comments are made in a mocking manner, directed to the wealthy people, by the news anchors. Some of these comments refer to the type of food that “the people” eat in comparison to imported food and good that the rich elite might consume. The vacation destination inside the country for the ordinary people and the international travels for the elite. And even basic commodities such as having toilet paper versus using “any type of paper” for the ordinary people. Finally, Eduardo Maldonado positions himself as a part of “us” and not “them” by making direct reference to his humble beginnings continuously on the show. This highlights the fact that Maldonado claims to understand the struggle of the working class, of the ordinary and poor people in Honduras because he, himself, experienced it first-hand.

#### **4.3 Visual Analysis – What’s in the Frame?**

Very often populist media uses sensationalist journalistic practices to appeal to the masses and engage with its audience. This can be translated to the use of images and video footages that show violence, death and, in general, triggering images that can sensationalize the content. News shows tend to bolster their programs by the use of sensationalist images as well as the text on the screen. In order to uphold that HCH tends to be the first on the scene and the first to break the news,

these images prove to be valuable for the audience to also see the news channel as such. These types of sensationalist footage emphasize and tends to zoom in on all the bad things that happen as a result of crime, violence and poverty. Moreover, as it has been argued in the theoretical discussion in this study, inclusive communication, which is what HCH claims to be, tends to include various different actors. Giving a voice to the people also means giving them screen time and airtime in general. This visual analysis seeks to find and analyse who the primary actors on screen are, the visual indicators of poverty and the presence of morbid images. These three indicators will help unpack any sensationalist practices, social inclusiveness efforts and how these are portrayed on screen. This visual analysis aims to be complementary of the analysis previously completed.

### **Sensationalist Images**

The data showed that out of the 11 hours of footage analysed for this study, that means 11 different episodes of the *HCH Morning Show*, there was a total of 5 instances where dead or wounded bodies were shown. This sums up to almost half of the episodes having fallen into this practice. However, it is important to note that the analysis was done over the first hour of the show, which means that additional imageries could have followed in the remaining time. Figure 1 shows the footage used to report a murder in the city of Comayaguela. In this case, the screen is divided into two live streams, the first focused on the military police and the second on the lifeless body of a man who's covered with a blue plastic. The frame captures the only limb of the body visible outside of the plastic, the dead man's hand. Grabe et al. (2010) states that sensational journalism violate notions of social decency and this could be argued in this case towards HCH. In the voiceover of the news, the news anchor is heard stating that he is unsure of the name of the person or why he was murdered with sustains the idea that sensationalism often trumps substantial information (February 11, 2020, V1). While HCH is the first informing about this news stories, it fails to have factual information to accompany it. Figure 2 is even more revealing as in the image it can be noted blood around the victim. While most of the image has been blurred out, it has been done so in a way that it is still easily identified as a dead man on the street. The juxtaposition of the image of the dead man and Karolina Lanza, one of the HCH news anchors, embodies how unsensitized these images are within the context of the show.



Figure 1 and 2 – Dead man on the street.

Figure 3 and 4 can be easily identified as examples of what Wand (2012) refers to as pictorial and graphic representations of gory visuals which produce sensory stimulation in individuals. This is one of the characteristics of sensationalist news content (Wang, 2012). However, these are recurring images in the sample of the *HCH Morning Show*. The drive behind sensationalist images such as these is usually a profit motive (Grabe et al., 2010.) Considering this, it could be argued that the reason behind the sensationalist practices of HCH is a desire to “attract attention in the name of high viewership ratings” (Berkowita, 1993; Scott & Gobets, 1992; as cited in Grabe et al., 2010, p. 637) which is considered one of the drivers for populist media (Wang, 2012). Figure 3 shows yet another dead man on a street, while figure 4 shows a woman with a painful expression in her face. The latter image is an image of pain and suffering. This type of content has the intention to produce a surprising reaction or to stimulate and also please unrefined tastes (Grabe et al., 2010). Often these tastes are assigned to the ordinary, working class people, to whom HCH tends to focus on when producing its content. Perhaps this is yet another visible example of how professional journalistic practices have been, to an extent, pushed to the side to make space for practices that satisfy the audiences taste (Nadler, 2019).



Figure 3 – Dead man on the street.



Figure 4 – Women after a motorcycle accident

### Visual Indicators of Poverty

Just as Eduardo Maldonado has stated repeatedly that he considers HCH as an inclusive channel, visual indicators of poverty were identified in the text that could refer to how, in fact, HCH could be focusing on the poor as an effort to seem inclusive in their communication practices.

Nevertheless, this focus is not equivalent to being inclusive as it could also result in the Othering of the people in poverty and reinforcement of the conservative narrative (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). Visual indicators of poverty such as the façade of houses, the inside of houses, people on the streets and the clothing people wore, were all considered indicators of poverty for this analysis. Below in Figure 5 and 6, it can be seen how multitudes of people stand in line before entering the biggest public market in Comayaguela. A dirty street along with poorly painted walls visibly reflect the precarious conditions of this market as well as the people who visit it.



Figure 5 and 6 – People standing outside before entering the Belén street market

Often on the ground news correspondents display the outside or inside of a house to show how people in poverty live and how in need they are. On one specific instance, a family was being interviewed regarding the lack of food and resources in their area. The government had not showed up with help and so the family had called HCH to cover their story (March 26, 2020, V8). Figure 8 shows what the inside of the house looks like and also highlights how people in poor neighborhoods live. Moreover, it presents to the viewer that as a matter of fact, HCH is willing to go places where other channels aren't. One of those is being invited into the homes of people. Furthermore, figure 7 does more than showcasing the façade of a building, but actually focuses on individuals. While doing a long shot of an extensive line of people awaiting to be fed by the HCH Solidarity Thermometer initiative, the people stand in line firmly. The way the people are dressed is proper of low-income, humble neighborhood and this is quite visible here.



Figure 7 – People waiting for provision by HCH



Figure 8 – Inside of a house in Honduras

### Actors on Screen

One of the bases of inclusive communication is the visible presence and voice of all types of people. Since, historically, poor people have been neglected from the general media and others have spoken for them (Arato & Cohen, 2017; Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010) the presence of the people on screen shifts the attention to them as active agents with a voice. In this case, this practice diminishes the Othering of poor people and gives them the chance to share their story. In every single one of the 11 episodes analysed in this study there was the presence of a voice or claim made by an ordinary citizen. Whether it was through a phone call or an interview, there was always at least one complaint being addressed. HCH reporters were always very quick to try and get a regular citizen to speak. To an extent this could sometimes feel forced or as if getting a person to speak to the microphone is the sole purpose of covering a story. While HCH is giving the chance to regular people to speak up, at times this might seem as a tool to again, give a specific niche group what they want.



Figure 9 – Woman being interview at the border



Figure 10 – Factory worker representing the people

Both figure 9 and 10 exemplify the core characteristic and pillar of HCH, they provide ordinary citizens a chance to share their story and give a truthful account of the situation they are going through. In the first image, a woman is speaking about how herself and others have been kept without food and shelter at the Nicaraguan border with Honduras (March 18, 2020, V3). The second image is that of a factory worker requesting for the owner to let the go home (March 16, 2020, V2). In both situations this is being spoken directly by the people's voice which adds a level of veracity. The representation of the working class is present as HCH creates the space for them to speak up. In both cases, that of figure 9 and 19, HCH intervened through Maldonado and had both issues resolved by contacting the official entity to assist in both cases. It becomes clear that the inclusion of these actors as representatives of the working class promotes the idea that "everyone can be heard" in the *HCH Morning Show*. Another example of the easiness with which HCH allow for people to use their platform for complaints is that of the case of a family in San Pedro Sula, a city on the northern side of the country. On figure 11 and 12, lower class women and her family are seen standing outside their home demanding for food from the government.



Figure 12 – Woman carrying a baby.



Figure 13 – Older woman being interviewed.

#### 4.4 Final Interpretation of the Findings

According to Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin (2010), counter-narratives are ideas and arguments that challenge the conservative narrative surrounding poor people and their struggles on a text. The latter is usually characterized by “focusing on the psychological, moral, intellectual, behavioral, or cultural characteristic of the individuals in questions” (Abramovitz, 1996; Katz, 1995; Wilson, 1987; as cited in Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010, p. 697) In this case this refers to the poor people in Honduras. As a part of this narrative, this group of individuals tends to be presented as possessing entirely negative characteristic, shortfalls and weaknesses such as a low intellectual accomplishment or a weak will (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). This is where the three counter narratives of Structure/Context, Agency/Resistance and Voice and Action come in. These were, to an extent, present in the analysed data as a sort of way to combat Othering. Some, like the Voice and Action counter-narrative, showed a stronger presence than others.

The structure/context counter narrative is present throughout the entirety of the data. As stated before, the *HCH Morning Show* is very clear on whom or what they assign the responsibility and see as the cause for the limitations that the poor people in Honduras face. This is usually directed to two groups: the wealthy and powerful families of Honduras and the Government. The HCH news anchors on the show repeatedly point to the lack of resources, a corrupted system and the greediness of the corrupted elite as the cause behind the limited structure of opportunities for the poor people. Often, just as Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin (2010) suggest, the emphasis on this counter-narrative relies on the “structural aspects of poverty and the discovery of the option that people in poverty do not differ in their values from middle-class people” (p. 699). This is precisely what HCH preaches with their style of news coverage. They’ve realized and profess that poor people have the same values, challenges and aspirations as the middle class which is why they need for a medium, such as HCH, to be their voice and give attention to an otherwise neglected group of people.

Secondly, the agency/resistance counter narrative presents the people in poverty as having the will, power and skills to be active agents in their lives and resist poverty (Krumer-Nevo &

Benjamin, 2010). While this counter-narrative is somewhat present in the text, religion plays a significant role in how this is developed, and some could say creates a tension within the data. Just as HCH motivates and encourages people to take ownership of their daily struggles and work towards bettering themselves, Maldonado continuously persists in that there is higher power, with a greater will that we all as humans attain to. This is conflicting since this would mean that an individual does not have complete agency over their life and their future. This dichotomy puts two opposing concepts face-to-face and begs the question of how this ideal has been able to survive as a major part of the discourse implemented by HCH.

Finally, the voice and action counter narrative is also present in the text and it is based on the idea that the individuals who have been pushed to the edges of society, as it is with poor people, have a distinct and rich view and understanding concerning poverty and the limitations and challenges they face (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). There are many instances in the text where the microphone is very literally being put on poor people's mouths to be able to voice their opinions, concerns and complaints. The strongest idea and pillar within HCH is being the voice of the people, which is why this practice of interviewing, attending phone calls and being quick to answer and solve issues surround this group of individuals takes significant importance within the text. As mentioned in the analysis before, there was at least one person on each episode, belonging to the poverty group who voiced their opinion on a specific matter. Nevertheless, one could also argue that more than contesting Othering through this counter narrative, the *HCH Morning Show* is using people's voices to only record their thoughts and attitudes towards their daily challenges in general and concerns towards the government, the private sector, political leaders etc. (Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010). However, it is undeniable that the diversity in voices and the presence of the people themselves on camera does bring a sense of resistance to being voiceless.

## 5. Conclusion

The current research was presented with a fascinating case that had not yet been researched and offered great potential for new insights to be learned in the field of populist media and inclusive communication. Previous studies on both fields noticed interesting patterns in the use of populist religion as an instrument of inclusion in Latin-America, and exclusion in western countries (Nadler 2019) as well as the use of sensationalist practices as a means for populist media to appeal to the masses (Grabe et al., 2010). Overall, sensationalist practices as a means to convey a populist message are considered problematic since it deviates from the substance of professional journalistic practices in order to engage with news practices apparently designed to attract attention and viewership (Grabe et al., 2010). Honduras is a country where the people have a conflicting relationship with the media which has been branded as untrustworthy as a result of corruption and power structures (Rockwell & Janus, 2003). For decades the news broadcasting scene had been dominating by a few of powerful news corporations that offered little room for the common man to voice their struggles and concerns. Considering this, the case of the Honduran news show, the *HCH Morning Show* part of the *HCH Televisión Digital* channel, is quite intriguing given the context and circumstances where it was birthed and, subsequently rose to fame as being, arguably, the number one channel in audience (Honduario, 2017). Nevertheless, HCH has faced strong criticism from other media sources who brands them as a sensationalist and populist channel with no regards for the common good (Estrada, 2016). On the other hand, HCH calls itself the voice of the people and carry this theme and purpose all through their content and communication efforts.

The goal of this study was to find out in more detail how HCH could be engaging with poverty communication in such a way that it could lead to a tension between their claims of being a socially inclusive channel, while engaging in populist and sensationalist practices with the goal of attracting the masses and therefore, rising to become the most popular TV news program. Specifically, through analysing the discourse utilized by the news anchors in the *HCH Morning Show*, which is transmitted daily on weekdays and weekends, an answer could be found to the main research question of this study: How could HCH rise to become the most popular TV news program in Honduras? As well as the sub questions: (1) To what extent have they relied on media populism? (2) to what extent is HCH inclusive in its communication efforts regarding people in poverty? (3) What does the combination of these two elements imply in the HCH formula? In order to formulate a clear answer to these interrogations, the main findings of this research study are presented and discussed below.

Through the analysis of the eleven hours of content from the *HCH Morning Show*, it was found that the promise of inclusion of the poor people is not a simplistic one, but rather has many layers which are relevant and based on the specific socio-cultural context in Honduras. Essentially, the

promise of inclusion for the people in poverty is met in this news program through the notion of there not being any institutional gatekeepers that can prevent the people from speaking up and making their struggles known. HCH, and especially, its founder and main journalist of the *HCH Morning Show*, Eduardo Maldonado, approaches the audience as pure people (Arato & Cohen, 2017) whom are underserving victims of the failing system and whose challenges, and struggles are a result of the corrupted elite that governs the country. As a result of a closer look into the discourse of this news show, as well as through the four pointers that Tonkiss (1998) points out, the analysis was done through examining the central themes present in the text and the relationships and patterns amongst them. There were 5 key themes that emerged from the text: the call out for change, the voice of and for the people, the HCH style of news coverage, tensions, and religion.

The call out for change was an ever-present theme that encapsulated the efforts of HCH to bring attention to pressing societal issues that the pure people struggled with daily. Every so often Maldonado, Mejia or Lanza would make specific public calls to official government entities as well as private companies to play their part in helping others. These requests are usually made after a member of the audience has made a call to present a complaint about a specific issue. The second theme, the voice of and for the people, is where a big part of the identity of HCH as a channel lies. There is a clear and strong influence that HCH can exert on government officials and this was visible as small issues, involving the people, were solved live on air as Maldonado made contact with the state authorities who could fix the issue. Here, HCH also positioned themselves as the representatives of the people as they urged them to call the *HCH Morning Show* for their complaint to be noticed. Almost implying that if these things were left to the government nothing would happen. Thirdly the HCH Style of coverage became very clear after this analysis. Maldonado is center figure, portrayed as an opinion leader and as representation of someone who came from poverty and became successful. Sensationalists practices are predominant in the journalistic routines, as well as the constant talk over a tension between the rich and the poor. It was fascinating to come upon the extensive use of *hondureñismos* as the norm within the channel's discourse, arguably, as a way to connect with their audience and seem more authentic.

Fourthly, the data revealed some tensions among the topics and the language utilized to discuss them. At times it became difficult to figure out or pinpoint HCH's stance on important topics. It can be argued that this might be the way the appeal to the larger audience as to not side with any dominant political or social idea. While the HCH news anchors were prone to give their opinion in various manners, the use of language changed depending on the issue they were speaking about. Politically, they assigned blame to the government or the congress as a whole, or at times to smaller players. However, the bigger actors such as the leaders of the government like the president, vice president,

mayor or even the president of congress were hardly mentioned. Moreover, there were conflicting ideas behind the initiative and call out to help others made by HCH. Recurring statements were made on behalf of the poor people in Honduras asking for help and supplies. However, at times these comments were deviated as to criticize and put the wealthy people against the poor people. Often Maldonado would state that business owners should give away their product for free, as they have more than they can consume, otherwise they were branded as sinful people. This statement introduces the final key theme found in the text which is perhaps a fascinating discovery I did not anticipate finding.

The fifth theme that emerged from the text was religion. Simply put, religion is present on the *HCH Morning Show* from start to finish. This is probably one of the significant defining factors of the channel as no other channel had engaged so directly and bluntly with the catholic religion as HCH has. Considering that the majority of the Honduran population trust in the catholic church, this might have been the way in which HCH was able to minimize the distrust on journalism in the country. The people might resolve in that a news channel that vows themselves to the Christian teachings and beliefs, must be a trustworthy channel. Maldonado is likely the biggest sponsor of this discourse as he leads the morning monologue were, he reads off the bible and then reflects upon it on live television. As theory points out, these practices resemble the characteristic of charismatic populist religion (Kessler & Ruland, 2006). While there are other examples of news channel that engage with conservative views that derive from religion such as Fox News in the United States of America, according to de-Westernization theory, these practices might differ in the Honduran context. And based on the findings of this study, the case of HCH proves that rich insight can be gathered on contexts foreign to Western scholarship. The scholarship on populist religion points out, on western countries this tends to be use very superficially as a characteristic of their identity. The way HCH engages with religion is not the same. They engage in an intentional, cut-through approach that presents deeper spiritual teachings as a means to be inclusive of the majority of the population that trusts in religion.

Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin (2010) suggested three counter narratives that help attest for communication efforts in the media to alleviate the othering of a specific group of people, like the people in poverty in a society. The presence of these counter-narratives in the text were applied as an indicator of social inclusiveness communication. While all were present in one way or another in the text, they sometimes fell in dichotomies that opposed the idea behind the creation of these. The structure/context counter narrative was recurring throughout the entirety of the show, however at time it was overly used as a blame the elite approach and could seem as a way to excuse and take all responsibility off the poor people of their situation, which seems problematic. The agency/resistance

counter narrative was used by Maldonado by portraying people as skilled and being active agents that should not be differentiated from middle or upper class. Nevertheless, this idea of individual agency was minimized by the religious discourse which contained the idea of a higher power with a higher will that controls and dictates the fate of people. The third counter narrative, of voice and action, states that people in the fringes of society, such as the working class in Honduras, have insightful knowledge regarding poverty. The *HCH Morning Show* exemplified this counter narrative by providing direct access for their audience to contact on the ground news correspondents as well as the studio news anchors on their personal cellphone. Through this novel practice, HCH is able to guarantee the people is being heard as well as leaning on their insight and knowledge for the creation of news stories.

In conclusion, and based on the findings of this study, it becomes evident that the distinct formula used by HCH is what has brought them to become such a popular TV news channel in Honduras. The *HCH Morning Show* does show the creation of counter-narratives that minimize the idea of Othering towards the people that live in poverty in Honduras. However, there is an evident string of populist ideals and sensationalist practices in the HCH content that oppose these counter-narratives. While making efforts to include everyone and focusing on the masses, the counter-narratives seemed to be overpowered by religion and superficial news coverage at times. There is a clear distinction in the text between the pure people, the corrupted elite and the general will of the public which are all the key characteristic of populist media (Arato & Cohen, 2017). Through religion, sensationalist practices and the promise of inclusion, HCH fosters an ongoing tension between these ideals and practices. As oppose to being a channel that nurtures lasting change, HCH focuses more on putting out small fires through call outs and solving small issues that keep the general public satisfied enough. Nevertheless, the formula used by HCH has definitely proven success and I dare to say that the religious discourse that appeals to the general audience, as well as the eradication of gatekeepers is what has made the *HCH Morning Show* such a success.

## 5. Limitations and Recommendations

Considering these findings, it can be said that the present study has proven to give relevant contributions to theories on populist media, Othering and inclusive communication. Nevertheless, there appears to be some limitations pertaining the current research that should be taken into account. First and foremost, the current research has focused primarily on transcripts produced from audiovisual material of the first hour of the eleven most watched episode of the *HCH Morning Show* on Facebook. The conclusions were based predominantly on textual transcripts, that, while these involved some visual analysis, did not entirely cover all of the visual aspects of the show. Therefore, this analysis could be supplemented with a more thorough visual analysis. Moreover, the *HCH Morning Show* is just one program out of the vast catalogue of live programming the HCH channel has on air throughout the day. This study could also be complemented by the analysis of other programs that are a part of *HCH Televisión Digital* and compare these to other news shows in Honduras.

Furthermore, this research could benefit greatly from a cross-region comparison with other news shows that have been branded as sensationalists or populists. Rich insight could be gained by doing a comparative analysis amongst HCH and other news channels in Honduras, or even Latin America. Also, the present study only analysed the text from the content point of view. Naturally, different results could be drawn from a production-oriented research through interviews to the production staff of HCH, gain better understanding of the formula that has proved to be so successful. Moreover, it is important to note that this study did not first-hand came into contact with the reception of the show by the audience. Future research could focus on audience reflection on social media comments, like on YouTube or Facebook for instance, where people react in real time to the connect being put out by HCH. Also, a comparative perspective between through interviews over how the working class and the corrupted elite decode and make meaning from the content of HCH would be beneficial for future studies. Lastly, the present study seems to be the first of its nature to look into populist media and social inclusion in Honduras, as most of the literature on these concepts originates from Western scholarship, for future research it is recommended to examine other Honduran or Central American news programs to elaborate and deepen the understanding of this theory on this specific context.

## 6. Literature and References

Amnesty International (2009, Dec. 3) Independent investigation needed into Honduras human rights abuses. Amnesty International. [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

Arato, A., & Cohen, J. (2017). Civil society, populism and religion. *Constellations*, 24, 283–295. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12312>

Associated Press (2009, June 30). Journalists Briefly Detained By Troops in Honduras. ABC News. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=7962595>.

Awad, I. (2014). Journalism, Poverty, and the Marketing of Misery: News From Chile's "Largest Ghetto." *Journal of Communication*, 64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12124>

Boyd, C., Andrés, S., Aires, B., & Boyd-Barrett, O. (2010). Latin American 24/7 News Battle for Honduras. 9. Retrieved from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228946336\\_Latin\\_American\\_247\\_News\\_Battle\\_for\\_Honduras](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228946336_Latin_American_247_News_Battle_for_Honduras)

Bucheli, M. (2008). Multinational corporations, totalitarian regimes and economic nationalism: United Fruit Company in Central America, 1899–1975. *Business History*, 50(4), 433–454. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076790802106315>

Brennen, B. (2017). *Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies*. 2nd edition. New York and London: Routledge.

Collins, H. (2003). Discrimination, Equality and Social Inclusion. *The Modern Law Review*, 66, 16–43. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2230.6601002>

Cultura Hondureña (May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012). Hondureñismos. *Nacer en Honduras*. Retrieved from: <https://hacerenhonduras.com/2012/05/hondureñismos.html>

Cushion, S., & Lewis, J. (2009). Towards a 'Foxification' of 24-hour news channels in Britain?: An analysis of market-driven and publicly funded news coverage. *Journalism*, 10(2), 131–153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884908100598>

Department of Media and Communication (2019). Methodological Guidelines Thesis Research. Retrieved from <https://canvas.eur.nl>, course materials.

Dumitricia & Pridmore (n.d.) Discourse Analysis, Week 6 readings. Retrieved from <https://canvas.eur.nl>, course materials.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2018), *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/PUB.2018/17-P), Santiago, 2018

El Heraldo (July 12, 2018) Comayaguela, más de cuatro siglos de historia. Diario el Heraldo. <https://www.elheraldo.hn/tegucigalpa/1240279-466/comayag%C3%BCCela-m%C3%A1s-de-cuatro-siglos-de-historia>

Estrada, Oscar (August 10, 2016). El Pulso: HCH abusa hasta al límite del morbo. Radiohouse.

<https://www.radiohouse.hn/el-pulso-hch-abusa-hasta-el-limite-del-morbo/>

Farrington, J., & Farrington, C. (2005). Rural accessibility, social inclusion and social justice: Towards conceptualisation. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 13, 1–12.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2004.10.002>

Forero, Juan (2009, July 9). In Honduras, One-Sided News of Crisis. Washington Post.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp -  
dyn/content/article/2009/07/09/AR2009070902820.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/09/AR2009070902820.html)

Franklin, B. (2014). The Future of Journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 15(5), 481–499.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.930254>

Grabe, M. E., Zhou, S., & Barnett, B. (2001). Explicating Sensationalism in Television News: Content and the Bells and Whistles of Form. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 45(4), 635–655. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4504\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4504_6)

Hameleers, M., & Vliegenthart, R. (2020). The Rise of a Populist Zeitgeist? A Content Analysis of Populist Media Coverage in Newspapers Published between 1990 and 2017. *Journalism Studies*, 21(1), 19–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2019.1620114>

Hondudiario (2017, August 26). En 7 años, Nunca Imaginé Que HCH se Posicionaría en el “Primer Lugar”: Eduardo Maldonado. Hondudiario,  
<https://hondudiario.com/2017/08/26/nunca-imagine-que-hch-se-posicionara-en-el-primer-lugar-en-tan-poco-tiempo-eduardo-maldonado/>. Accessed 02.20.04

Kessler, C., & Rüland, J. (2006). Responses to Rapid Social Change: Populist Religion in the Philippines. *Pacific Affairs*, 79, 73–96. <https://doi.org/10.5509/200679173>

Krumer-Nevo, M., & Benjamin, O. (2010). Critical poverty knowledge: Contesting othering and social distancing. *Current Sociology*, 58, 693–714. doi:10.1177/0011392110372729.

Lewis, J., & Cushion, S. (2009). THE THIRST TO BE FIRST. *Journalism Practice*, 3(3), 304–318.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512780902798737>

Montenegro, Marilyn (September 27, 2015). “Jamás me avergüenzo de donde vengo. De joven vendí achinería”. La Prensa. <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/884585-410/jam%C3%A1s-me-averg%C3%BCenzo-de-donde-vengo-de-joven-vend%C3%AD-achiner%C3%ADa>

Morrieson, N. (2017). Are contemporary populist movements hijacking religion? *Journal of Religious and Political Practice*, 3(1–2), 88–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2017.1292171>

Mudde, C., & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2013). Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America. *Government and Opposition*, 48(2), 147–174. Cambridge Core. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2012.11>

Nadler, A. (2019). Populist communication and media environments. *Sociology Compass*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12718>

Peterson, K. (2020). Pushing boundaries and blurring categories in digital media and religion research. *Sociology Compass*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12769>

Ramírez, K. (2015, June 15). Estudio de la UNAH coloca a “HCH” como el canal con mayor reproducción de la violencia [Website Article]. <https://presencia.unah.edu.hn/noticias/estudio-de-la-unah-coloca-a-hch-como-el-canal-con-mayor-reproduccion-de-la-violencia>

Rawal, N. (2008). Social Inclusion and Exclusion: A Review. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v2i0.1362>

Real Academia Española. Diccionario de la lengua española. Online version 23.3. <https://dle.rae.es> (May 29).

Rivera, Carlos (October 25, 2018). Huracán Mitch: la tragedia más grande del siglo XX en Honduras. La Prensa. <https://www.laprensa.hn/huracanmitch/1227695-410/huracan-mitch-honduras-tragedia-fotos-videos-20-anos-muertos-lluvias-damnificados>

Rockwell, R., & Janus, N. (2003). Honduras and the Media Oligarchy. In *Media Power in Central America* (pp. 13–29). University of Illinois Press; JSTOR. [www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt2ttd20.6](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt2ttd20.6)

Rots, I. (2018). Guilty and in debts: Who is paying the bill? A qualitative content analysis of the portrayal of poverty in the documentary series ‘Schuldig’ [Erasmus University Rotterdam]. <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/46566>

Tannenbaum, P. H., & Lynch, M. D. (1960). Sensationalism: the concept and its measurement. *Journalism Quarterly*, 37(2), 381-392

Tonkiss, Fran (2004) *Analysing discourse*. In: Seale, Clive, (ed.) *Researching Society and Culture*. Sage, London, UK, pp. 245-260. ISBN 9780761941972

Wang, T.-L. (2012). Presentation and impact of market-driven journalism on sensationalism in global TV news. *International Communication Gazette*, 74(8), 711–727. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048512459143>

Waisbord, S. and Mellado, C. (2014). *De-westernizing Communication Studies: A Reassessment*. *Communication Theory*, 24: 361-372. doi:10.1111/comt.12044

World Bank (October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019). The World Bank in Honduras Overview. *The World Bank*. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/honduras/overview#1>

