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DIVERSE FACES, DIVERSE VOTES: THE EFFECT OF POLITICIAN ETHNICITY AND RACE ON VOTER DECISION-MAKING IN COLOMBIA

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DIVERSE FACES, DIVERSE VOTES: THE EFFECT OF POLITICIAN ETHNICITY AND RACE ON VOTER DECISION-MAKING IN COLOMBIA

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

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DEDICATION

To Las Nadies and Los Nadies
The Nobodies.
All those who fight to be heard.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Until dignity becomes customary."

Francia Márquez Mina

Before expressing my gratitude, I would like to leave this sentence presented above for those who read this dissertation. This phrase, repeated over and over again by the Colombian activist Francia Márquez Mina, is a call to be dignified, but not a dignity that focuses on bowing our heads in any situation. It is a dignity that represents who we are and not letting ourselves be dazzled by power and the desire to stand out; moments that are often given in academia where for the sake of "standing out" we do research that only become pieces of words that fill our ego, but that in the end do not support the populations we research. Whenever a professor or a second reviewer asked me about the purpose of this or that research, I would think not about a purpose but the purpose for whom.

Therefore, dignity in academic research must be tied to empathy for those we research. That is to say, being worthy in academia must be related to integrity insofar as there is respect for what is researched; a rule and a praxis that serves to improve the conditions of the people who can benefit from that knowledge. It also means staying true to our values, remaining noble and, above all, never forgetting where we come from.

First, I would like to thank life and the vital force of the universe, whatever you want to call it—God, spirit, celestial or cosmic power, etc.—for allowing me to reach this great moment in my academic career. This researcher, from a village cloistered in the Colombian Andes with only 9,000 inhabitants, had big dreams and never thought he could have a doctorate, especially from a university located in the United States. The road to get here has not been easy; there have been ups and downs where my health has been compromised, as well as malicious comments

from people who have tried to trample me with their stereotypes, but what they didn't count on is that I am a sassy Colombian.

A doctorate requires an inhuman effort and a lot of tenacity, but above all, it requires that ancestral embrace, as Francia says, in which one also embraces oneself but feels that squeeze from all those who have contributed to reach this moment.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the influence of race on voter decisions in Colombia, drawing on Social Identity Theory, SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 2004), to explore the role of in-group biases in electoral behavior. Previous research has demonstrated that race can affect voters' choices, particularly when candidates are perceived as representatives of the same racial or ethnic group (Matson & Fine, 2006; Mcdermott, 1998). Additionally, media coverage during elections significantly shapes voters' perceptions of candidates, especially those from ethnic, racial, sexual, or gender minorities (Caliendo & McIlwain, 2006; McIlwain, 2011; Meeks, 2013; Ward, 2017). Studies have also identified differences in how national and regional media cover such candidates (Clayto et al., 2023) and the type of frames they use to identify them by using Framing as a theoretical lens (Entman, 1993).

This dissertation employed two analyses to explore these two elements: (1) a content analysis of media coverage during the 2022 Colombian congressional election, focusing on whether regional media provided more and distinct coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates as compared to national media, and (2) an experiment examining whether the race or ethnicity of candidates influenced voters' decisions and attitudes, reflecting in-group biases (Stets & Burk, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 2004). The content analysis included six media outlets (three regional and three national; $N = 412$ articles), and the experiment involved 569 participants. While the methods were independent, together they provided a broader understanding of how race is reflected in the news media and influences political decisions.

The results indicated that regional media provided significantly more coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates than their national counterparts during the 2022 congressional elections. This coverage often included racial descriptors and references to the candidate's ethnic/racial

background, as well as associations with social activism and gendered language. This disparity in media coverage points to the possibility that regional outlets may prioritize issues relevant to marginalized communities while national outlets may be more focused on mainstream political narratives in the Colombian context.

The experiment, which sought to explore the impact of candidate race and ethnicity on voters' decisions, found little to no influence of these factors on participants' choices. These findings suggest that race and ethnicity alone have a limited impact on voter behavior in Colombia. Other factors, such as political ideology, candidate qualifications, or campaign strategies, may play a significant role in conjunction with race/ethnicity.

This study offers an initial exploration of the impact of race on political decisions in Colombia, but it also highlights the complexity of this issue. Although media coverage can influence how candidates are perceived, it does not necessarily translate into voter behavior. Further research is needed to investigate how race, in combination with other demographic factors, such as socioeconomic status, gender, or political affiliation, may influence voters' decisions.

Keywords: Social Identity Theory, Framing, Colombian elections, Afro-Colombian candidates, race and ethnicity, voting decision

Chapter 1- Race/Ethnicity, Media, and Afro-Colombian Electoral Participation

Colombia, a country located in the southern part of the American continent, has been transformed throughout its socio-political history, beginning with liberation from the Spanish crown (Earle, 2017), as well as with the creation and founding of the republic, in which some groups participated in the political construction of the country (Patiño, 2013; Sampson, 2014; Wabgou, 2012). However, this process of political construction has been linked to concepts such as racism, whitening, and segregation (Maya Restrepo, 2009; van Dijk, 2019), which have been connected to determining political participation in this country.

With a population estimated at 48,258,494 million, of which 4.46 million, or 9.7%, corresponds to Afro-Colombians (DANE, 2018), Colombia is considered a multicultural country in terms of ethnicity and race (Herrán Pinzón, 2009). Likewise, the 1991 Constitution, in articles seven and 72, and laws such as 70 of 1993, have established legal grounds for the recognition of Colombia as multicultural (Camargo González, 2011). Nevertheless, Colombia continues to be submerged in a racialized process in which minorities of all kinds, especially Afro-Colombians, have been subjected to the ideas of whiteness and racism that attempt not only to erase Afro-Colombian culture but also to make Afro-Colombians adapt to the guiding model of whitening, which is rooted in colonial times (Castillo & Abril, 2007).

The political participation of Afro-Colombian communities during electoral processes in Colombia has been challenging due to a lack of implementation of a fairer process regarding their participation (Agudelo, 2005; Erazo Gómez, 2012). A clear example includes the local elections in 2023, where mayors, governors, members of municipal councils, and departmental assemblies were elected. In these elections, according to Registraduria Nacional del Estado Civil (2023), 132,553 candidates registered to participate in this democratic process, though only a

total of 1,006 (0.76%) of the candidates identified as members of one of the groups that are part of Afro-Colombian communities (MOE, 2023). This low number of candidates participating in a democratic process exemplifies that although there are laws that secure the rights of participation for these groups, there is still a very marked gap in their participation as compared to other ethnic and racial groups (Escandón Vega, 2011; Wade, 1993; 2011; 2013).

The lack of Afro-Colombian participation and persistence of stereotypes of them are partly caused by the news media. In terms of media coverage, the mass media have used the concept of whitening to reproduce racial and ethical power dynamics in part to support their owners, who are associated with racial and economic elites (Ayala Osorio, 2006; Martín-Barbero & Rey, 1999), and who have also had connections with political power in the country (Herrán, 2006). To better understand how these racial and power dynamics persist today, I incorporated framing theory (Entman, 1993) as a guiding axis of analysis to understand how the Colombian media used different frames when referring to Afro-Colombian candidates. For this portion of the dissertation, I conducted a content analysis, guided by Krippendorff's (2018) protocols, of six outlets in Colombia (three national newspapers and three regional newspapers) to better understand how the media in Colombia cover the political participation of Afro-Colombians[1] as well as what descriptors they use when referring to their candidacies.

Another aspect that was an integral part of the development of this dissertation was the analysis of how a candidate's race influences voters' perceptions. Through the development of an experiment guided by Martin and Sell (1979) and McDermott's (2002) protocols, I sought to understand if the race and ethnicity of a candidate—white, Mestizo ("hybrid" between Indigenous and white), or Afro-Colombian—had any impact on voters. To aid in this

[1] This refers to when the media cover different Afro-Colombian candidates running for office.

investigation, I pulled on theories such as Social Identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 2004) to understand how concepts such as co-racial and cross-racial voting may affect voters when evaluating candidates from different backgrounds.

Although the content analysis and the experiment were developed independently and were not directly connected in terms of their hypotheses or research design, both sought to explore complementary dimensions of the same overarching phenomenon: the influence of race on electoral decisions. The content analysis, focused on how Afro-Colombian candidates are framed in the media, provided a broader social and media context that shapes the political landscape in which these elections unfold. Meanwhile, the experiment examined how race and ethnicity directly impact individual voter behavior. While no explicit theoretical or methodological link was established between these two components, their integration allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between media representation and voters' racial/ethnic perceptions in shaping electoral choices. By bringing these two analyses together, creating what Neuendorf (2019) calls a "logical link," I was able to explore not only how media frames racial identities but also how some of these frames may influence the perceptions and decisions of voters in the context of Colombian elections, in this case, Congressional.

Whiteness, Colorism, and Voters' Decision

Racism was brought to America as a form of promulging racial domination that comes from the concepts of Eurocentrism and *pureza de sangre*, or pure blood (e.g., Castillo & Abril, 2007; Maya Restrepo, 2009; van Dijk, 2019). The pure blood concept was developed in the European continent during the end of the 15th century, which looked to diminish the Muslim and Jewish communities located in the Andalusia territory as part of the campaign established and enforced by the Cristiani-Castellan monarchy. As Grosfoguel (2013) described, there were two

types of genocide perpetuated against those communities: physical (killing them) or cultural (forced to convert to Catholicism). This similar process was used to evangelize and force the indigenous tribes, spread across the American continent, and Black communities brought as enslaved people as a "form of 'spiritualicide'[2] and 'epistemicide' at the same time" (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 43).

The Catholic Church, as a religious institution and in agreement with the Spanish crown, implemented across the territories the concept of pureza de sangre, with the only goal of separating the original Spanish (e.g., those coming from the European territory-born and raised) from the new ones born in America, enslaved people brought from Africa, or descendants from the original settlers (indigenous tribes). The Catholic Church used the Spanish Inquisition to enforce the pure blood concept (Martínez Millán, 2009) by issuing official orders from the hand of the official inquisitor, who sought to annihilate the infestation of those who were excluded from the European lineage in the new colonies.

In this process, the Church and the administrative powers of the new kingdom established what was known as the *cédula de gracias al sacar*, more known as a "certificate of whiteness" (Wade, 1993, p. 9), in which the Catholic institution decreed the purity or not of the individuals who inhabited the territory, thus creating an epistemological-cultural problem in which the characteristics of certain cultures began to be denied because they were not entirely equal to the European, in this case, the Spanish.

This fallacy about race, where predominantly white identity was considered superior, affected how other identities were subverted to this homogenizing imagination, which denied the diversity of different cultures, races, etc. (Triana & Gutiérrez, 2017). The heterogeneity of the

[2] Grosfoguel explains that the process of "killing" their spirituality by forcing them to convert or adopt Catholicism as the primary religion in the new continent can be considered a form of spiritual homicide.

original peoples and those who were brought as enslaved people was transformed into a homogenizing concept in which only two distinct groups (e.g., indigenous and Black) were recognized, which was detrimental to the ethnical and cultural plurality of these peoples, or as Grosfoguel (2013) calls it the "modern racial domination" (p. 46). In addition, the religious connotation of whether those distinctive groups have a soul or not was one of the principles used by the church to impose white racial dominance and the spread of the gospel through evangelization, which in some form evoked the idea of white superiority. As Grosfoguel (2013) explains, "the debate on whether they had souls or not, or whether it was justified to enslave them or not, was already a racist debate" (p. 46).

Another discourse that impacted the racist debate was that some scientists considered indigenous and Black people as "animals" instead of humans (Chisango et al., 2023). This discourse granted more power to this form of biological racism because it denied indigenous and Black people the conditions of being treated as equal. In the speciesism perspective of many humans, animals are considered species without a complex evolution like humans, which leaves them lower on the biological scale. Therefore, by making this biological link to certain minorities, they are being deprived of the right to participate in the biological-cultural processes because their races are part of the model that jeopardizes or is detrimental to the white race[3].

Likewise, according to physical characteristics, some phenotypic variables were created to classify the individuals in the new continent: Whites (those born and raised in Europe), Indigenous people (original settlers), Blacks (born and raised enslaved people brought into America from Africa and their descendants), Zambo (a mix between indigenous and Black), Mestizo ("hybrid" between indigenous and white), and Mulato ("hybrid" between Black and

[3] Understanding race as Caucasian-European coming from the old continent.

white) (Whitten Jr, 1999). The Mulato concept originated in the analogy of a mule, a hybrid result of mixing a horse with a donkey—which again likens these individuals to animals, not humans. Also, during colonial times, people with Indigenous and Black backgrounds were considered dangerous. Whitten Jr (1999) deconstructs this colonial conception: "the danger results from the absence of genetic mediation of the white, and consequently, from the mixture of savagery and barbarism that results from the conjunction of ethnic antipodes" (p. 52). As such, Indigenous and Black people were characterized as dangerous to their core, to their genetics, reinforcing a cruel biological distinction.

These *sociedad de castas* or social strata fueled different systems, such as the value of race and the person's dignity, among others, during the New Granada Kindom. Being Indigenous or Black was detrimental to the purity promulged from the Iberic peninsula, which poisoned the new society established in the new territory. As Wade (1993) mentioned, being rich was inadequate or not good enough during colonial times to participate in some public spheres; there was also a requirement of exhibiting *pureza de sangre* to participate in spaces or institutions like churches and universities or being able to administrate any piece of land under the king's name.

Under this cultural hegemony and economic dominance, the Spanish position of the *pureza of sangre* was built under their in-group concept as a reflection of what represented Whites-European as their identity, which implied that those who were not suitable under this identity were part of the othering or the out-group suggesting that Indigenous and Africans were considered lesser than the White culture (Suárez Pinzón, 2005). Hence, this differentiation created this paradigm: the savagery of the Indigenous people and enslaved Black people and the civilization of the Spaniards brought from the European continent and anchored in their system of purity (Suárez Pinzón, 2005).

The Black, the different or the marginalized, did not fit within the concept of the Whites in-group because their genotypical characteristics did not suit the concept of 'purity'-whiter the better. The identity of these minority groups during the times of Spanish colonization marked the implementation of policies that demanded the subjugation of these peoples through the change of names, the adoption of a monotheistic religion, disassociation with their mother tongue, and particularly using concepts such as enslaved person, cargo, among others that helped the subjugation and then denial of black populations to any right that could equate them with white Europeans or their descendants (Suárez Pinzón, 2005). A nameless enslaved person was a subject subjected to the naturalizing adjectives in colonial times related to their skin color; that is, an enslaved person enjoyed only the established racial denomination, which stripped them of any reference to their origin.

However, once this group, Blacks, began to mix with Whites, which gave rise to the concept of Mestizo, there was a concern for the *pureza de sangre*, which was of vital importance to a section of the Spanish population and their children born in the new kingdom (Criollos) who saw this mixture of races as a detriment to the whiteness and purity with which the subjectivizing discourse had been established in the new kingdom (e.g., Suárez Pinzón, 2005; Wade, 1993, 2011). Concepts such as "bad race" appeared in social discussions once someone revealed their origin and if this was in any way a consequence of this racial mixture. Caste and strata were thus the rule of measurement during much of colonial life, where Whites were located at the top of the racial pyramid, which contributed to the development of the model of racial whitening that inspired the demonization of Blacks.

Leal (2010) explains, "The Spaniards, because of their birth or lineage, were considered more virtuous and had a privileged place…only Whites could use the 'don' or mister [titles],

bear arms, hold public office, and enter the university" (p. 396). In comparison with the people coming from Africa or their descendants who were enslaved, they did not have the same rights and privileges as the Whites, such as having certain prohibitions such as not being able to walk at night in the population centers (Leal, 2010).

Even though there were some racial categories to determine where people belonged, in the Latin American context during colonial times and still today, those differences in classifying who is Black, Indigenous, or who is not are very ambiguous. However, in countries like the United States, South Africa, and some European countries, "there is more general agreement between claims and ascriptions" (Wade, 1993, p. 4). Therefore, when trying to understand the processes of segregation in the different colonies in the American continent during the XVI, XVII, and XVIII centuries, it is necessary to comprehend that in the regions dominated by the Spaniards, the concepts of race were a little more obtuse, due to the same mixture that had been taking place over the centuries. However, in the United States, it was clear that racialized ethnicities such as Indigenous tribes and Black people were cataloged from a more straightforward vision; that is to say, if a child was born to a Black and White couple, the child would end up as being perceived as solely part of the Black race (Leal, 2010).

On the other hand, the Mestizos in Latin America, through the use of the cedula, were able to access certain rights—although limited compared to those possessed by the Whites. Thus, during part of the eighteenth century, many of the Mestizos were able to gain access to portions of land, which changed in a certain way how these groups in the racial hierarchy were perceived. However, Blacks were still perceived as before: slaves coming from other lands and brought to form part of the circle of production of the dominant classes, who continued to use them for heavy labor in the fields (Alvarez Morales, 1997).

This is why it could be said that although there was an advance in how certain groups could mobilize regarding rights, the same hierarchy left little room for people at the bottom of the racial pyramid to access the same benefits. The need to brand Black people as bad, evil, and perverse increased the need to preserve the whitening in the mixed upper spheres, who wished, in some way, to eliminate those possible vestiges that could remain in the generational form of the first stages of this racial mixture (Suárez Pinzón, 2005). The further away from the bottom of the pyramid, the easier it would be to gain access to the recognition granted by the elites and the representative members of the political and ecclesiastical order. *Negritudes*, or Black communities, were isolated and subjected to the economic order that only sought to obtain some benefit from them, not for them (see Alvarez Morales, 1997; Leal, 2010). The established social disparity left many members of these communities outside the limits of social mobilization.

It can be inferred, then, that the concept of the other during colonial times, especially in the new kingdom of Granada, was fixed to the stereotypical discourse validated by that "form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place,’ already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" (Bhabha, 2001, p. 389); the identification and categorization process was rooted in the non-inclusive vision of othering physical characteristics that were not aligned with European whiteness. That which was considered different was demonized and connoted from the subjectivity of 'impurity,' which served to exercise power from the social and economic spheres, thus limiting the participation of these groups and generating a collective conscience based on color. In turn, in colonial times, the other was represented by the conquering Spanish vision of distinguishing the colonizing agent from the colonized (Bhabha, 2001).

However, the wars of independence led by Criollos or Creoles and Mestizos, which also involved the participation of other racialized ethnic groups, including Afro-descendants (Echeverri, 2018), brought about a significant change in the political and administrative model of the new territories, which went from a colonial-monarchical model to a representative republican system. This model, as mentioned by Leal (2010), "implied a great rupture in the way political power was legitimized" (p. 398). That is, the subject went from being the vassal of a monarchic power to becoming a subject of rights from the point of view of the concept of the citizen.

This title of citizen, taken from the French Revolution, denotes a broad meaning about the subject in general, who are part of the civic body of the republic. This model, based on the vision of the bourgeois revolution and subjected to the thought of political philosophers such as Rousseau, is centered on affirming every individual is free and equal in rights (e.g., Brubaker, 1989; Leal, 2010; Sabato, 2001); therefore, the colonial model of castes was not in tune with the definition of citizen. Likewise, although there was a shift in the way the other was rethought, models of whiteness continued to be part of state-building policies that, in some way, limited access to those who could participate in the entitlements that came with citizenship or, for those who did not have definitive inclusion, were considered "potential citizens" (Leal, 2010, p. 399). Thus, although, in theory, all individuals had the same rights, the caste system remained in place when it came to keeping or maintaining Whites' privileges over non-Whites. Race, as a concept, remains a regulating entity for many in Colombia. Even so, Black communities, while participating in these emancipatory processes, continued to be enslaved and segmented from the spaces to which the elites were entitled (see Echeverri, 2018; Leal, 2010). These communities had settled in territories in several areas of the new republic or the Gran Colombia[4], especially in

[4] Made up of the territories currently occupied by Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama.

areas near the coast of the Atlantic Ocean called palenques[5], and continued to be part of the same segregationist model inherited from colonial times.

It was not until July 21, 1821, that slavery was abolished in Gran Colombia (Barragan, 2021). This first process was known as *Ley de Partos* or the law of childbirth. This law sought to "abolish slavery without compromising public tranquility or violating the rights of the owners" (Mosquera, 1829, p. 3)—the right being protected was that of the slaveholder. However, this law received certain negative reactions because it went against the economic dynamics of the new republic by not guaranteeing the right of the slaveholder to keep his "legal property" (Mosquera, 1829, p. 4), and there was no compensation for such a loss. Slaveholders also defended the status quo in which the society had been cemented in which Black people, although citizens, in practice, were seen as nothing more than tools for forced labor.

Hence, those who still wanted to exploit these communities argued that the newly free men could corrupt the communities where they arrived, because "not being repressed by any kind of authority, they gave themselves up to all kinds of violence" (Mosquera, 1829, p. 7).

Constitutions and Political Participation in Colombia: From La Gran Colombia to the Republic of Colombia

Colombia's history as a nation was established after the independence revolution in 1819. The country reconstructed what was left behind after the Spaniards abandoned the colonies, leaving power to the Criollos. Even though Blacks and Indigenous people fought during the independence wars, their nonrecognition as full citizens limited their participation in the new government. A clear example of this nonrecognition was the politician, writer, journalist, and teacher Juan José Nieto Gil, who served as president of Colombia between January 25 and July

[5] Small villages consisting of people of African descent.

18, 1861 (Radio Nacional de Colombia, 2022). Nieto Gil was native of Sirbaco, a small town located in the Northwest of Colombia, and was the first Afro-Colombian president in the history of the country. Despite his historic role, Nieto Gil was erased from the history books because of his skin color and the regent idea inherited from the conquerors of *pureza de sangre*. Some of his pictures were sent to France to be colorized, removing any indication of his Afro characteristics (Radio Nacional de Colombia, 2022). Thus, while an Afro-Colombian was able to achieve the highest office in the country, it was considered a stain on Colombia's history.

The thesis of *pureza de sangre* was embedded into the new national identity and transmuted into this continued discourse of seeing some individuals above others. Even intellectuals that played a relevant role in the independence revolution, such as Francisco José de Caldas and José Ignacio de Pombo, emphasized the thesis of a difference between individuals based on their geographical location in the territory, in which those located in the cold areas or above sea level had a sort of race superiority compared to those coming from areas near the coast, plains, and rainforest by associating them with savages' characteristics (Camargo González, 2011).

Therefore, this idea of phenotypical characteristics that differentiate Whites from Blacks was used to ponder the new state-nation hierarchies regarding the construction of the new republic, or as Camargo González (2011, p. 54) explains, "the phenotypical characteristics, which in turn determine the moral, intellectual, and spiritual characteristics of individuals, would have a great weight in the national project and imaginary." The debate that arose from this juxtaposition of White versus non-White was to the detriment of the mixture the country inherited after centuries of Spanish dominance. Colombia, as a new state dominated by the Criollos, emulated the Anglo-Saxon process brought into their territory by those educated under

European influences and in the enlightening of the nineteenth-century illustration (Wade, 1993). Ideas from naturists and biologists such as Linneo and Buffon, in which taxonomy and classification are the keys to understanding evolution, were used to explain the differences between Black and Indigenous people and Whites in terms of origin (Camargo González, 2011).

As well, as expressed by Viveros Vioya (2015), these divisions between Black and White strengthen the concept of whitening, especially in cultures like Colombia, which is " the attempt to escape from what is a lack in order to ensure for oneself a better form of social existence in a context that values what is white as a synonym for progress, civilization, and beauty" (p.497). Therefore, this process of whitening in Colombia occurred from two processes historically: "through mestizaje (miscegenation) in an intergenerational process, and second, through integration into nonblack social networks" (Viveros Vigoya, 2015, p. 497). As such, for those who embrace whitening, it is seen as aspirational, as moving to a more esteemed status.

Hence, revolution only privileged a significant group and limited the rights of others when representation and participation were debated. People in power skewed the collective idea of being diverse by inculcating a whitening demagoguery that criticized everything that did not represent Anglo-Saxon progress (see Camargo González, 2011; Wade, 1993). The 1811 Tunja[6] Province Constitution was proclaimed during the revolution and included the following: "Every man is equal under the law…no man, no corporation or association of men has any title to any particular advantage or exclusive privileges other than those enjoyed by the community" (Sistema Unico de Formacion Normativa, n.d., para 1). This constitution, according to the Colombian Constitutional Court[7], was the first constitution to talk about Indigenous people and Afro-Colombian rights by incorporating elements in which everyone was seen as equal and none,

[6] This name comes from the town where this constitution was proclaimed and signed.
[7] This court is equivalent to the Supreme Court in the United States.

no matter their origin or status, was above or entitled to take advantages over others (Corte Constitucional de Colombia, 2021).

However, even though there were some limitations for ethnic minorities during the first years of the new republic, the Constitution of 1886, in its Article 22, established that the Colombian territory was free of any slaves. Also, it stipulated that whoever stepped on the territory as a slave would be free immediately (article 22). Although slavery was not legally supported, seeing the other as equal was not fully developed because it disrupted the general consensus of pureza de sangre.

It should be clarified that before the Constitution of 1886, the Law of May 21 of 1851 decreed that starting from January 1, 1852:

> All slaves existing in the territory of the Republic shall be free. Consequently, from that date, they will enjoy the same rights and have the same obligations that the Constitution and the laws guarantee and impose on the other Grenadians. (Sistema Unico de Formacion Normativa, n.d., para 1).

Although this law guaranteed the freedom of these minority groups, former slaves and their descendants were left out of the discussions on citizenship laws. Their identification as special subjects and differentiated from the rest of the population was not recognized, and, therefore, the territories they inhabited were not considered within the regulations of special territorial division, making these places and settlements beyond the law's grasp and leaving marginalized individuals without rights (Mosquera Mosquera, 2001).

The Afro-Colombians' limitations led them to be in a legal and political limbo for over 70 years (Mosquera Mosquera, 2001). In addition to this political limbo, during Pedro Nel Ignacio Tomás de Villanueva Ospina Vásquez's presidency (1922-1926), a new immigration Law 114-

1922 was assigned. This law looked to promote the immigration of individuals and families who were able, in some way, to improve the social conditions of the territory, or as the law established (Law 114, 1922, art. 1):

> Because of their personal and racial conditions, they cannot or should not be the subject of precautions concerning the social and economic order of the country…and that come to work the land, establish new industries or improve existing ones, introduce and teach the sciences and the arts, and in general, are an element of civilization and progress.

This law, unlike many others enacted, attempted to harm the ethnic diversity of the country because it sought to promote the migration to Colombia of individuals who could somehow improve not only the social conditions of the country but also ethnic and racial, to which it invited only European migrants who were considered as civilized (Camargo González, 2011).

Likewise, Law 112 reflected the pureza de sangre, which continued to lurk within the rhetoric of government institutions and be part of the social and ethnic dynamics long after the country's liberation from its conquerors (e.g., Camargo González, 2011; Suárez Pinzón, 2005; van Dijk, 2019; Wade, 1993). Therefore, and as mentioned by Camargo González (2011), this law is "a clearly and explicitly eugenic project;" that sought to attack, in a certain way, the “genetic degeneration” that existed after years of racial mixing (p. 55). This project of racial improvement was consolidated by the country's political, cultural, and social elites, who, to some extent, intended to have a country free of any ethnicity that could contribute to racial degeneration (van Dijk, 2019). The Afro-Colombian people, being associated with disqualifying adjectives for having a slave heritage, were not taken into account within this ethnic improvement. On the contrary, Afro-Colombians were seen as people who should be replaced to achieve racial improvement.

However, this type of approach went against the dynamics created after the Second World War, in which the countries participating in the creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, included in its regulations the recognition of racism as an element limiting the consolidation of peace (van Dijk, 2019). Therefore, this racialized discourse in a highly heterogeneous country was politically against the global guidelines (Camargo González, 2011). It illustrated the symptomatology created since the pureza de sangre, which still continued to generate an exclusion of Black people in the social, cultural, and political dynamics of the country by being considered a race with less value compared to Whites (e.g., Camargo González, 2011; Suárez Pinzón, 2005; van Dijk, 2019; Wade, 1993).

Hence, the Colombian leftish leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala strongly criticized the use of whitening as a policy against racial minorities in a country with a mixed history, such as Colombia (Green, 2000). His movement, called Gaitanismo, which started in 1947 when Gaitán was called the sole leader of the Liberal political party, questioned in some way the pigmentocracy system established since colonial times, which was being influenced not only by the monoculture of the country by only recognizing Whites as the main cultural, social, and political actors of the country, but also by being based on a monolingual educational system where Spanish predominated over the different ancestral languages (Viveros Vigoya, 2015).

His criticism also extended to the various elitist dynamics of the country, such as the proclaimed laws that sought to bring more European cultures into the country to stop racial mixing with groups such as the Mestizos and the Blacks. This social discourse galvanized a large number of Afro-Colombians, who saw in Gaitán Ayala a way for recognition within the state policies and thus achieving an effective change in the dynamics of the whitening policy that

dominated at that time (Viveros Vigoya, 2015). Nevertheless, the assassination of Gaitán in 1948 marked a historic event in the Colombian political construction. The formation of the National Front, in which the two major political parties, Liberal and Conservative, went back and forth holding power every four years, respectively, marked an era of bureaucratic power aimed at representing the Criollos elite classes, who saw in the minorities the degradation of the race (e.g., Green 2000; Viveros Vigoya, 2015; van Dijk, 2019; Wade, 1993).

Hence, during Laureano Gómez's presidency (1950-1953), this dogmatic discourse of race improvement took a stronger path when the president, in one of his speeches, assured that in some nations with a high number of Black citizens, chaos is part of their democracy; however, in countries where Black people disappeared, stability is achieved (van Dijk, 2019). This type of discourse radicalized the racial context of the new republic, in addition to consolidating a project of national order that sought the whitening of the country at all costs.

It was not until 1991, during the Constituent Assembly, that the modification of the 1886 Constitution was requested. In this new Constitution, the country was recognized as multiethnic and multicultural, allowing a political and ethical change by recognizing that the country is diverse and that minorities also needed to be recognized within the legal framework (see Asher, 2004; Leal, 2008). In article seven, the 1991 Constitution states, "The State recognizes and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian Nation." This article gives the power to recognize these communities, such as the Black communities to be acknowledged by the state, as well as admitting that the social and cultural dynamism of the country is framed in the plurality of races that make up the territory.

Further, Article 72 of the Constitution also establishes that "the cultural heritage of the Nation is under the protection of the State" (article 72); thus, this 1991 Constitution brought

advancement by leaving aside the homogenizing discourse (Herrán Pinzón, 2009) that reinforced *the* pureza de sangre as the only exemplary element for a country in search of that 'civilization' that came only from the Aryan European races. The State, obliged to protect the cultural heritage and recognize diversity, moved forward regarding rights and a path to full citizenship beyond Criollos and non-Mestizos (see Asher 2004; Leal, 2008).

Although the Constitution gives significant value to the country's multiculturalism, it lacks principles regarding recognizing lands occupied by Afro-Colombians (Ministerio de Cultura, 2014). Since colonial times, the recognition of the territories occupied by these Black communities were not incorporated into public policies until the adoption of Law 70 of 1993, which allowed a more concrete definition of the ethnic identity of the Afro communities and establishes territorial rights (Ministerio de Cultura, 2014). This law marks a milestone in the multicultural recognition of the country, especially the Black and Afro communities, but the lack of enforcement of the law some time after its proclamation influenced the political participation of these communities (Camargo González, 2011).

Political Quota Law: A New Form of Colonialism

Article 66 of Law 70 of 1993 established the incorporation of a special district for the Black communities, which granted them two seats in the House of Representatives (Hernàndez Cassiani, 2024). However, in decision 484 of 1996, the Constitutional Court determined that this special district was unconstitutional and, therefore, revoked Article 66 of Law 70. This decision of the Colombian Constitutional Court is based on the fact that, according to the plaintiff of Article 66, this form favors models of colonialism and segregation by limiting the participation of those minority groups within the special constituency; that is, the voters of that zone would be

at the mercy of the decisions made by a political majority agglutinated within a space with a demarcated territorial reference (Corte Constitucional, Sentencia C-484/96, 1996).

Likewise, the Court, in its decision, invoked a case in the United States concerning "gerrymandering," where the governor of the state of Massachusetts, Elbridge Gerry (Corte Constitucional, Sentencia C-484/96, 1996), created a special circumscription in the city of Boston, which ensured his definitive triumph. These elements that the Court recognized as limiting and at the same time empowering majorities, is what determined that this article in question was unconstitutional because it would leave ethnic minorities, in this case, Blacks, at the mercy of decisions that could come from majority political groups, which on many occasions, would not represent in any way the people who live within this special constituency.

It was not until 2001, when the Congress of the Republic, employing Law 649, modified article 176 of the Political Constitution, in which a special circumscription for Afro-Colombian was established (Hernàndez Cassiani, 2024). Additionally, candidates aspiring to these two seats in the House of Representatives "must be members of the respective community and previously endorsed by an organization registered before the Directorate of Black Communities Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior" (Law 649, 2001). Unlike the law initially proposed in Article 66 of Law 70 of 1993, this new law limits the political participation of Black communities because only those members of a legally established Afro-Colombian organization may be candidates.

In 2011, the Colombian Congress of the Republic, in its role as the legislative center of the country, proposed Law 1475. This law, known as the law of political parties and movements in Colombia, allowed from its execution the implementation of the rules that would be governed by the political parties and movements, as well as by the entities in charge of the administration of the electoral system such as the National Electoral Council or Consejo Nacional Electoral and

the National Registry of Civil Status, Registraduria Nacional del Estado Civil (Law 1475, 2011). This law stipulated that "Political Parties and Movements with legal status may register candidates and lists for all popularly elected positions and corporations, except for the election of congressmen for the special constituencies of ethnic minorities" (Law 1475, 2011, art. 28).

Although the law establishes that these groups, movements, or political parties must participate in these elections in which these two representatives are elected by the special constituency of Afro-Colombians- or as a quota law, El Consejo de Estado, in its pronouncement, affirmed that these groups can participate in the ordinary elections, without any problem, by registering their candidates (Consejo de Estado, n.d.). Therefore, El Consejo de Estado makes it clear that if they register for the ordinary elections, the same candidates cannot be registered for these special elections (Consejo de Estado, n.d.).

However, as a Colombian saying goes, “when you create a law, you create a way to evade it, too.” Many politicians have used these quotas or special constituencies to maintain the power of certain groups within the House of Representatives. One of the most talked-about cases in recent years is that of the representative elected in the 2022 elections as part of the special Afro-Colombian circumscription, Miguel Polo Polo. According to the plaintiff, Polo Polo could not be elected due to his registration in the Colombian census as part of the indigenous community Isla Gallinazo, located in the department of Sucre (“Consejo de Estado admite”, 2022). His election would be ineffective since he was registered as a member of an indigenous community and not as part of an Afro-Colombian group. The Council of State countered and allowed Polo Polo to maintain their office because the Council does not believe Representative Polo Polo committed any wrongdoing by not being registered as part of a minority group of African descent initially since the seat is only lost if this person registers in two *parties* or

movements at the same time, whereas Representative Polo Polo represents two ethnic minorities (Consejo de Estado, 2023).

This type of case shows that although the laws are meant to protect the representation of these minorities, there are limitations in defining who should be considered as quality representation. The law does not clarify what elements make a person part of a community such that they can adequately represent that community and their needs. In turn, there is a lingering type of colonialism at play where parties and candidates self-proclaim themselves as members of these groups without there being a real connection in participatory matters within the community from the beginning. Wade (2013) argues that while the laws, in this specific case Law 70 of 1993, helped to cement the foundations of a multicultural Colombia, the notion of negritude[8] was not well defined, as the law's definition of Black communities "conformed to the neo-liberal agenda of the state" (p. 28).

Wade (2013) continues to explain that the State somehow limited the application of these laws to areas of the Colombian Pacific, where there were certain economic interests related to the development plans put in place, such as extensive and harmful mining, which in some way contributed to the ambiguity of these definitions, so that people like Polo Polo, among other politicians, took some benefit from these inconsistencies between the laws and how Afro communities are represented, discussed, and evaluated (see Wade, 1993; 2011; 2013).

These inconsistencies that help the election of these politicians have prompted Afro-Colombian communities to see a lack of representation by those elected to represent them. Many associations strongly criticized the candidates registered in the 2022 elections, such as Polo Polo and Lina Martínez, who, in the opinion of these communities, are not in favor of the minorities

[8] This term refers to the process and the political framework that defined the participation of the Colombian Black communities.

they should support, but on the contrary, are in favor of large political parties (i.e., Miguel Polo Polo Polo has been accused of favoring some decision taken by the political party founded by the former president Alvaro Uribe called Democratic Center) and political bosses in the case of Martínez, whose father was being convicted of parapolitics, the 2006 scandal that involved Colombian politicians with paramilitary groups ("Miguel Polo Polo en disputa", 2022).

Thus, this type of quota (allocation of seats to special constituencies) can be seen as a model of political colonialism, in the way that groups and movements with large interests see in these special elections an end to achieve certain political goals, which in many cases translate into the approval of laws favoring certain economic groups, participation in special councils in the House of Representatives, and playing a role in the consolidation of the opposition or the governing parties, respectively. Also, this type of colonialism prevails in the little or almost null existence of an identity vote (Escandón Vega, 2011), that is, as in the case of Polo Polo, the voters who elected this representative, a significant majority, are not part of these communities. Still, their vote comes from the interference of large political parties such as the Democratic Center ("Miguel Polo Polo en disputa", 2022), which are not constituted as members or Afro parties, but their political and economic power allows the election of these candidates because of their great influence in regions of the Colombian territory.

Hence, the political fragmentation (Escandón Vega, 2011) in these special circumscriptions generates different movements and parties unaligned with the discourse favoring minorities. They are only looking to access one of the two seats available in the House of Representatives, making politicians like Polo Polo and Martínez take advantage of other candidates who represent the Afro-Colombian community.

Colombian Media and Afro-Colombians' Political Coverage

Before beginning this section, in which I will discuss the role of the media in Colombia and its role in the media coverage of Afro-Colombian people, I would like to clarify that this part is a theoretical preamble to the content analysis that I performed on news coverage during the elections for the Senate and Chamber of Representatives in Colombia in 2022. Also, this portion will contain the history of the development of the media in Colombia, framing processes and their relation to the concept of otherness, etc.

The emergence of mediated communication technologies in Colombia dates back to the mid-nineteenth century when the telegraph was introduced during the presidency of Manuel Murrillo Toro (Ospina, 2018). These processes allowed the achievement of "immediacy" in communication and introduced the country to the information transmission system of modern states (Ospina, 2018). The project of connecting the country, using the telegraph, from South to North, East to West enabled economic development in the country, in addition to establishing a system of national unity where the citizens would be informed of the nation's events.

The television was introduced in 1954 during the military dictatorship of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, whose objective was to use the TV as an "armament" for the diffusion of positive propaganda of the Colombian armed forces, as well as the consolidation of his political project (La television en Colombia, n.d.). Pinilla's self-serving efforts were not uncommon as the media in Colombia have historically been used as a means for or doctrinal instruments of state policies headed by powerful families who have owned various media overtime (Martín-Barbero & Rey, 1999).

Though the media in Colombia have been managed by the big families with political and economic influence in the country, some media outlets have attempted, over the years, to use

information democratically, that is, to create the generalized perception of not being biased. Likewise, the implementation of the 1991 Constitution, through its Article 20, which establishes " the freedom to express and disseminate their thoughts and opinions, to inform and receive truthful and impartial information, and to establish mass media ", has expanded the right of the Colombian people to freedom of expression and to be heard, and there is also the right for the formation of mass media companies that allow the production of content necessary for the updating of information related to the facts and events that happen in the country.

Although the constitution seeks to protect the free flow of "impartial information," media production, as noted above, has been associated with commercial consortiums linked to economically powerful families in Colombia for decades. Luis Carlos Sarmiento Angulo and his organization own outlets such as *El Tiempo* newspaper, CityTV, and Portafolio, among others; Carlos Ardilla Lulle is the owner of RCN (radio and TV); and the Santo Domingo-Valorem business group are owners of *El Espectador* newspaper and Caracol TV, among others. These three groups alone own and have control of 57% of the media outlets in Colombia (Las Dos Orillas, 2015).

Further, some of the most powerful political families also own media. Some of the most powerful political families of the country, the López, Santos, Lleras, Galán, Samper, Gaviria, and Barco families, who have held and traded power in Colombia over the last century and into the beginning of the new century, have been members of the media (Herrán, 2006). The Santos and Samper families also owned media groups in the country, either as possessors or shareholders of large media outlets, including the newspaper *El Tiempo* and magazines such as *Semana;* they also had members who have served as president and vice president throughout the history of the Republic (Herrán, 2006).

Given these ties, Colombian media is often more likely to reflect the realities that correspond to the interests of large economic conglomerates, not those of the everyday citizen (Martín-Barbero & Rey, 1999). This intertwined system "accustomed the country to the fact that the political information published was covered with a sectarian, dogmatic ideological mantle, not very appropriate for generating a political culture" (Ayala Osorio, 2006, p. 3). In fact, Colombian political history, permeating into the centers of information production, has generated processes of politicization in which racial minorities have been attacked (Villa-Gómez et al., 2020).

This historic and contemporary relationship between powerful families and media in Colombia threatens the watchdog role of the media. In accordance with normative theories on journalism in a democracy, there is a need to have a media free of all political and economic interests since this facilitates "the process of formation of public opinion within a democracy, which in turn gives sovereignty to the governed against their ruler" (Peña Orozco et al., 2021, p. 149). It is important to note that not all media in Colombia is beholden to powerful political families, but some of the most dominant outlets are, and such ownership can affect news content and democratic discourse.

The Process of Framing, News, and Candidates

Robert Entman (1993) defines framing as the process of selecting "some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (p. 52). Therefore, and to summarize the author's words, the framing theory refers to the process of characterizing the news made by the media (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007) in which some elements of reality become more salient than others, which has an impact on how the audience forms its opinion (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015).

In Entman's (1993) words, when talking about frames, it is necessary to understand that their purpose is to highlight some part of the information provided in the communication process, making that portion of the information more “top of mind” or accessible for audiences’ evaluation of the situation. Audiences’ evaluation of the framed situation is also processed through their belief system, which has been previously organized through frames (Entman, 1993). If the framing process increases the salience of certain information, it will help to enhance “the probability that receivers will perceive the information, discern meaning and thus process it, and store it in memory" (Entman, 1993, p. 53). This process of emphasizing or de-emphasizing portions of the information creates schematic influences or, to some extent, the opinions that audiences may create around the events. When framed information is emphasized several times, it can become cemented in the minds of audiences and be used in the future as a rule or measure to create opinions about events related to that initial event (Entman, 1993; Graber, 1988).

Conveniently, framing in the media is also associated with priming because some authors assert that framing can encapsulate in its definition how information is presented and what information is presented (Sonnett, 2019). Priming is the effect or process by which subjects' evaluations of events, ideas, or occurrences (e.g., Brewer et al., 2003; Domke et al., 1998; Weaver, 2007) come from the mental activation of constructs previously emphasized (Schacter & Buckner, 1998) by the media. In this sense, the news content suggests to audiences what issues should be used to evaluate "the performance of leaders and rulers" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11). Therefore, it can be said that priming employs the association that the brain makes when exposed to a media message that activates certain previously emphasized thoughts, which shape our perceptions and attitudes of the event (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

At various times, these frames do not have the desired impact since schemas that are already ingrained within the subjects can be used as evaluative elements of the frames. Chong and Druckman (2007) explain this process as a "frame in thought." According to the researchers, this mental evaluation process is constructed from various perspectives that impact the subjects' evaluations of the event. That is, framing in thought begins with evaluating the individual attitudes of subjects about the event in question. According to their explanation of the psychology behind framing, the authors state that people place individual emphases on certain or various considerations of the subject matter. An example is when "a voter's attitude toward a candidate may depend on whether the voter favors the candidate on dimensions that are of varying importance" (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 105). Therefore, frames can significantly impact the audience's opinions when they frames resonate with their beliefs or when cultural resonance is present (Nelson & Oxley, 1999). As Lecheler & de Vreese (2012) explores, "belief importance is the most characteristic mediator of framing effects on how citizens make sense of political issues" (p. 187); therefore, these beliefs may act as intermediary agents, as audiences may give more weight to those beliefs that are closer to their own (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012).

In media ownership, one form or way powerful families could affect media content is through their editorial framing. The media construct frames or elements in which certain information is more salient than others. Making some elements more salient than others conditions people's belief system since these words, phrases, or claims become repetitive, making certain elements more visible and accessible than others (Entman, 1993).

Media, Framing, and Otherness. Media owners and powerful families in Colombia are either White or Mestizo, or they endorse White-Dominant culture in the country (Las dos Orillas, 2023). In the political context, the frames that dominant media create around marginalized

candidates cast them as the other, as different. Steeped in a history of colonialism, that otherness is an essential part and an associative element of the description of those who do not have political, economic, or racial power.

A specific case of how the media conditioned and framed information of the *other* is the presidential candidacy of Francia Márquez Mina. Márquez Mina did not represent any political or economic power in the country; her candidacy was born from a premise to stop or push back the epistemological racism that the country faces, which has been mentioned many times (Alzate Zuluaga, 2022). The media's construction of her otherness included three delegitimizing perspectives: one as a political and ethnic minority, another as a woman, and finally as a token to meet the political quota (Alzate Zuluaga, 2022).

Another example that serves to articulate how the framing process sometimes emphasizes certain aspects of a political actor over others to create frames that serve as evaluative elements was the article in the newspaper *El Colombiano,* whose owners are the Gómez Hernández family, who have political ties with the Colombian Conservative party (Osorio Zuluaga, 2024), where they talked about the alleged participation of the former Afro-Colombian senator, representing the Liberal Party, Piedad Cordoba, with the FARC guerrillas. The senator played an important role during the process of dialogues for the liberation of hostages kidnapped by this armed group. However, her role as an intermediary was framed by some in a different way, by assuring that the woman was *part* of this group, thus the media framed her as working outside of Colombian law. Further, according to the newspaper, Senator Cordoba sent "emails with other members of the FARC in which she referred to Piedad Cordoba as alias 'Teodora Bolivar'" (Osorio Zuluaga, 2024, para. 4). It also reported that Cordoba had been chosen by the then Venezuelan president, Hugo Chavez, "to be a candidate for the presidency of Colombia" (Osorio

Zuluaga, 2024, para. 5). This article emphasizes or frames Piedad Cordoba as a member of the leftist guerrillas, as well as a woman with political ties to leftish regimes in the region, instead of explaining further her role as a mediator during the peace process.

Likewise, in an article from 2022, the same newspaper, *El Colombiano* (Arboleda Hoyos, 2022), published a piece emphasizing how the selection of the vice-presidential running mate for the presidential elections in the country was being headed by people representing the Afro-Colombian community. According to Arboleda Hoyos, “Just as four years ago it became fashionable to put a woman as a vice presidential candidate, this time the presidential candidates have mostly opted for Afro-descendants as their vice-presidential candidates” (2022, para. 1). Thus, this article emphasizes that the decision to opt for Afro-Colombian candidates as vice-presidential candidates is part of a "trend" on the part of the political parties contesting the presidential elections. Characterizing candidates as a trend can trivialize them and reinforce the idea that they are merely a token for gaining visibility and votes, and thus not substantively contributing to the formula.

This type of marginalization, where minorities run for office, whether in the Senate, House of Representatives, vice president, or president, is not an issue only for Colombia. For example, the campaigns in the United States of women like Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin, received stereotypic coverage by the media and viewed through the lens of their male counterparts during their elections (see Meeks, 2012; Meeks, 2013; Miller et al., 2010; Uscinski & Goren, 2011). Likewise, Clayton et al. (2023) explain that when it comes to political candidates with a multiracial background, journalists tend to point out or underline "certain aspects of a multiracial politician’s demographic background over others—when there is more than one element to ‘choose’ from—could impact voters’ political attitudes" (p. 113).

According to Clayton et al.'s (2023) analysis, the media emphasized her [Kamala Harris] Black background compared to her Indian background because in the United States, in both political parties, there are positive connotations about Black people compared to the increase of negative relations with people coming from Asia or having a background related to this territory. Thus, the different identity-based frames that the media use can influence in a certain way the attitudes that audiences may have when evaluating a candidate and making a final decision by highlighting the race of those candidates instead of informing on their political capabilities (Clayton et al., 2023).

It is important to understand that the Colombian media have played an important role in producing and reproducing the power and hegemony shaped by the country's cultural industries (see Adorno & Bernstein, 1991; Adorno & Horkheimer, 2019). It is to be understood that the people in power have to maintain the social, racial, and political guidelines of the country to support a whitening view of the system. Therefore, it could be argued, as Hall (2006) mentions when he tries to unravel Gramsci's words, that a hegemonic or dominant European vision has surrounded the political systems of the emerging nations of the West. Therefore, the media propagate this dialectic of power, where people are dominated by those who, from their position of power (dominant), influence the construction of the other.

In line with this, the media agenda of the Colombian media is biased towards underrepresenting people of Afro descendant. In an interview conducted by LatAm Journalism Review with three Afro journalists, political scientists, and social activists (Pagola, 2023), they explained that the media in Colombia only cover the Afro population when there are issues that are classified as complex, which mark themes of violence or disasters (Pagola, 2023). When talking about academic, scientific, or 'complex topics,' the media, in the words of political

scientist Sofía León Oñate, journalists “do not listen to the [Black] communities as expert voices or qualified to talk about certain topics” (Pagola, 2023, para. 5). Thus, Afro-Colombian people, as sources of information, are restricted to issues rooted in the Colombian conflict that bloomed in the country’s rural areas. If the media only sources them on rural issues, it helps reify in the public that the Afro population are bound to rural areas (Pagola, 2023). Rural areas in Colombia, as with rural areas in most countries, are not connected to places of power, and thus rural people are not connected to power.

Not all media, though, are the same. In their research, Tamayo et al. (2010) show that regional media, versus national media, include more coverage of Afro-Colombians. In this research, Tamayo et al. (2010) used a national newspaper such as *El Tiempo*, the highly influential magazine *Semana*, and a large regional newspaper such as *El Colombiano*. According to the results obtained, although the newspaper *El Tiempo* contained more news items than the other two outlets, the newspaper *El Colombiano* contained more information on the Afro community (Tamayo et al., 2010). This same research indicated that in *Semana* magazine and *El Tiempo*, news about the Afro-Colombian community was located in the national section.

In research developed by Bauer (2022), the author analyzes the difference(s) that may exist in the local and national coverage of female candidates during elections in the United States. According to her analysis, local media are impacted by social and geographic influences, which "shape news content within a specific media organization” (Bauer, 2022, p. 5). The author also explains that as an example of coverage, in majority-minority congressional districts, Black reporters "report more frequently on issues affecting racial and ethnic minorities during a congressional campaign" (Bauer, 2022, p. 5).

Likewise, researchers Sjøvaag and Pedersen (2019), in a study conducted to analyze gender representations of women in Norwegian newspapers. They found that local newspapers did a significantly better job of including women in their news coverage than national newspapers. Further, they found that local newspapers serve a normative and community function. These same newspapers are also considered to be "described as the 'glue' in local communities... and the 'backbone' of the media" (Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019, p. 230). Collectively, these studies suggest that more local newspapers provide more coverage of marginalized groups than more national newspapers, perhaps as a way to fulfill their more community-centered approach.

Likewise, and transferring the example of regional media coverage to Colombia, some regional outlets, such as those based in Cartagena, Medellin, or Cali, are located in areas with significant Afro-Colombian populations (Cárdenas et al., 2020). Cartagena, for example, has a sizeable Afro-Colombian community, while Medellin and Cali also host notable populations of Afro-descendants (Wade, 2013). The presence of these communities in these cities is likely to influence regional media coverage content, aligning with the expectation that regional media in such areas would reflect the interests and perspectives of their local Afro-Colombian population. Thus, the following is proposed:

H1: Regional media outlets will provide more coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates than big national outlets.

As was mentioned in the section related to media frames, beyond differences in volume of coverage, it is important to assess what frames Colombian media use to characterize, and perhaps delegitimize, Afro-Colombian candidates. The racialize power dynamics of news and information production from the Colombian media may manifest latent racism typified by the

tone, type of news, and the sources of the information. In other words, the dominant or ruling class plays an important function when it comes to reproducing racism, even inside the media. As van Dijk (1992) postulated, "they [dominant elites] are the ones who control or have access to many types of public discourse…usually also most proficient in persuasively formulating their ethnic opinions" (p. 88).

In other contexts, the media and its editorials tend to exoticize Afro-Colombian people, a vision that connects with a new form of colonialism (Borja Bedoya et al., 2017; Tamayo et al., 2010), where power dynamics continue to subject Black and Afro people to connotations that differentiate them from the rest of society. According to Hill Collins (2022), who is cited by Azhar et al. (2021), Black people experience oppression in simultaneous ways through systems such as race, class, and gender. This means that intersectionality in which race, class, and gender are interconnected in the system of oppression "refers to how the experience of membership in a category varies qualitatively as a function of the other group memberships one holds" (Azhar et al., 2021, p. 284). Therefore, some identities are "inseparable from racial identities" (Azhar et al., 2021, p. 286), such as gender and sexuality. Hence, minorities tend to be sexualized, especially Black women, as a consequence of Western media's discursive gazes (Anderson et al., 2018). One example of this in a non-political context is that Black women in music videos tend to be more sexualized in their clothing than White women (Anderson et al., 2018). Such depictions, and others, play into the Jezebel stereotype of Black women, who are "highly sexualized and valued purely for [their] sexuality" (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 463), often resulting in Black women being objectified, dehumanized, and animalized, which connects back to colonial projections of Afro-Colombians as animalistic and objects of lesser value.

Another way the media others Black people is by pointing out their way of talking, often with a derogatory tone. Specifically, when an Afro-Colombian uses a term that is not considered "proper Spanish," the media tend to point out that concept several times. This linguistic structure of properness comes from attaching to languages some sort of linguistic patterns that must be followed; otherwise, it will create a sort of dissonance to the receiver (McWhorter, 2016). A clear example of this linguistic racism is the criticism some outlets made of the words used by Márquez during her presidential campaign. Márquez included in her discourse the concept of "las nadies y los nadies" or nobodies, which symbolizes, in the context of the Afro struggle, the re-claiming of their culture as a mixture of the new world and their African origin, as well as the ancestral knowledge of the community, in addition to the decolonization through the use of dignity (García, 2023). An article in *Semana* magazine included comments from Colombian politicians criticizing Márquez using words such as "nobodies" (Semana, 2022). The article included tweets written by politicians of the Colombian extreme right, such as former congressman Álvaro Hernán Prada, for the Centro Democrático movement, who expressed, "They don't know how to speak, they were not taught Spanish or language, they even damage the language" (Semana, 2022, para. 9). By highlighting these concepts or words used by the vice president during her campaign, the media emphasizes differentiating her from the rest for not following the grammatical norms established by the Spanish language.

How the media covers Afro-Colombian people can also be seen in the different articles, interviews, etc., that Vice President Marquez has had during her two years in office. According to the words of Sofía León Oñate, who is referenced in the article by LatAm Journalism Review, the media reinforces the stereotypes that exist around Black and Afro people, especially Márquez, emphasizing "the brave black woman who is always angry or who must

respond in a docile manner to certain questions" (Pagola, 2023, para. 14). Thus, this explanation given by León Oñate exemplifies the expectations that the media have on the candidacies of Afro-Colombian people, in this case, Afro women, who are typified from concepts such as being always on the defensive and not having a more docile behavior, for the type of position or function they perform (Pagola, 2023).

An example of how the media in Colombia can minimize or delegitimize the candidacy of an Afro-Colombian can be found in the research developed by Restrepo Garcia and Meeks (2023) on news coverage of Márquez's campaign. According to this research, the media used negative racial descriptors in their coverage and amplified the comments influential people in the country made by comparing the candidate to the fictional character "King Kong" (Restrepo Garcia & Meeks, 2023). Likewise, the media saw her as a political token Petro used to win the country's elections, minimizing her work during the campaign (Restrepo Garcia & Meeks, 2023). To further explore this coverage, the following research questions ask:

RQ1: What frames do the news outlets associate with Afro-Colombian candidates during the Senate and House of Representative campaigns (RQ1a)? How do these frames differ between regional and national news (RQ1b)?

Another variable that must be considered in constructing the identity and visibility of Afro-Colombian people in the Colombian media is the outlets' ideological slant. In research conducted for the Reuters Institute by Víctor García-Perdomo (2022), a professor at the University of La Sabana, the Colombian media being historically associated with political and economic elites, direct their coverage to benefit those in power. A clear example is the magazine *Semana*, which was acquired by the multimillionaire Jaime Gilinski[9]; after the

[9] This family also owns the regional newspapers El Pais from Cali and El Heraldo of Barranquilla.

purchase from Gilinski, this media outlet has become more right leaning towards his own political ideology. The same is the case of RCN, which has had certain relations with the right-wing powers in the country, affecting its coverage when it comes to covering the leftist government of Gustavo Petro and maintaining a close relationship with former right-wing president Alvaro Uribe Velez and his political party Centro Democrático (García-Perdomo, 2022). Newspapers such as *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador* have maintained their center position in name but not necessarily in coverage, as they often turn to the right, depending on who is in power. This polarization of the media has meant that, according to García-Perdomo (2022), "trust in the news that each person consumes has dropped six percentage points (from 45% to 39%)" (para. 14). Although the influences of the media have dropped in Colombia like in the United States, people still continue to use the media because they are still considered credible sources of information. Based on the influence of the Colombian media and its position, I ask the following questions

RQ2: How and to what extent does an outlet's coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates vary based on the ideology/party affiliation of the outlet's owner?

Social Identity Theory and its Impact on Candidates and Voters' Self-Identity

This section illustrates the theoretical content that is the central axis for the development of the second part of my dissertation, in which I developed an experiment to determine if group identity and self-identity impact the decisions of voters in Colombia. The construction of identity through participation in groups is important to understand in order to form an idea of how it impacts self-identity. The following section will delve into the intersection of these two concepts.

Human beings, as individuals, seek out groups to maintain relationships that strengthen the interpersonal needs of the subjects. These needs are based on the psychological perceptions of the individual to determine who is equal to me and who differs. It is here where the theory of social identity or SIT arises. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979, 2004), the theory seeks to understand in what sense the group affects the well-being of the individual and the behavior that can be adhered to the personality of the subject entering into the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 2004).

Likewise, Tajfel and Turner (1979, 2004) explain how this participation in the group, or, as they call it, membership, has repercussions on the self-esteem of the participants. Self-esteem is affected based on the extent to which the individual positively sees their associated group once they make comparisons with others (see Abrams, 2015; Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Hogg, 2016). In this process of differentiation, subjects identify the group to which they belong (in-group) and the groups to which they do not belong (out-groups) (i.e., Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Hogg, 2016; Hogg & Mullin, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 2004). Therefore, those group members who maintain a favorable definition of membership in the in-group will be able to develop positive self-esteem, according to Hogg (2016).

In the origins of this theory, Tajfel and Turner (1979, 2004) tried to explain how groups seek to identify the differences that exist in relation to other groups to determine what makes them different from others. In this process of self-categorization, the idea was put forward that the theory sought to understand intergroup relations (see Hogg, 2016; Turner, 1979, 2004), in which the subjects or members of a group tried to identify the characteristics that made them positively better than others to have an evaluative axis that would make them maintain, intrinsically, the positive affirmation of themselves.

Likewise, SIT theory enters into the sense of self-categorization (Hogg, 2016; Turner, 1979, 2004), which is demarcated from those attributions groups may have about themselves, i.e., it refers to the characteristics or traits that recognize one group from another. These traits are called prototypes by Hogg, which "represent attributes that maximize the group's entitativity-the extent to which a group appears to be a distinct and clearly defined entity" (2016, p. 8). Hogg (2016) also explains that these prototypes are characteristic of one group when compared or put in the context of another; that is, if we look at the prototypes of another group, these elements or traits that define them are considered stereotypes since they accentuate the differences between the out-groups.

As Hogg (2016) mentioned, "When you categorise yourself, you view yourself in terms of the defining attributes of the in-group (self-stereotyping), and since prototypes also describe and prescribe group-appropriate ways to think, feel, and behave, you think, feel, and behave group prototypically" (p. 9). Therefore, this categorization process is understood by Hogg (2016) as the group's point of view. It could be inferred that self-esteem is based on the collective gaze, which implies definitions of "looks like me" and "is just like me;" this type of dynamic helps motivate group identification in a positive way, which is called the self-esteem hypothesis (Hogg, 2016; Hogg & Mullin, 1999; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004). According to this hypothesis, group self-esteem is associated with members' identification with the group, so low self-esteem can generate low identification (Hogg, 2016).

However, these self-categorization dynamics are associated with the process of representation as opposed to motivation (Hogg, 2016). In these representational processes, identity uncertainty, or as Hogg calls it (2016), uncertainty-identity theory, can be generated. According to Hogg (2016), it is in the identity process where we find those uncertainties that are

associated with how people feel and behave, as well as their perceptions of themselves and the other. It is here where social categorization enters as a process of helping reduce this uncertainty because it assists in establishing the behavioral parameters (Hogg, 2016) necessary to interact and behave with others. Likewise, these prototypes are consensual among the members, which helps the "self-concept to be validated" (Hogg, 2016, p. 10).

Colombian Voters: Self-Identity and Race

According to the census developed in 2018 by the National Administrative Department of Statistics, DANE, Colombia has a total population of 48,258,494, of which 4,671,160 correspond to the Afro-Colombian population or approximately 9.7% (DANE, 2018). Likewise, the predominant ethnic and racial populations in the country are Mestizos and White[10], with 87.6% of the total population (Así es Colombia, 2022). The 2018 census showed that the Colombian population does not identify itself within any specific group; although the majority consists of Mestizos and Whites, they do not see a difference between them (DANE, 2018). Therefore, this type of indexing somehow influences how individuals see themselves and others regarding identification (Viveros Vigoya, 2015). Of those 48,258,494 Colombians, only 39,002,239[11] were able to vote in the presidential elections held in 2022 because they are 18 or older, according to Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil's report (Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil, 2022).

In the Latin American political system, voter identity impacts evaluating candidates running for office (see Gutierrez et al., 2019; Moreau et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2023). Processes of self-identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 2004) and co-racial identity determine how voters end up choosing one candidate over another. For example, Gutierrez et al. (2019) discuss how Latino voters in the U.S. mobilized during the presidential election when a

[10] This group includes people of Spanish, German, Italian, French, English, Dutch, Arab, Jewish, and Asian descent.
[11] The minimum age to vote in any election in Colombia is 18 years old.

candidate like Donald Trump attacked the Latino community. However, in a country like Colombia, where voter identity is defined through elements coming from the culture of colonial times, where concepts such as mestizaje and *pureza de sangre* have impacted how people self-identify, it can influence decisions when it comes to voting for presidential and regional elections. These elements from colonization create a scaffolding in which society is divided between those dominated by the dominant (Borja Bedoya et al., 2017). In this way, Borja Bedoya et al. (2017) establish that to understand participation in a democracy, there is a need to identify "the perspective of the instituted" (p. 255), that is, to understand how society and the state have created policies that enable access to decision-making for a few, and limit the participation of others. In this sense, it is clear that to analyze how voters make decisions according to the candidate of their preference, it is proper to closely examine what is instituted in the country regarding racial dynamics.

Candidates Self-Identity. Looking at what is instituted in Colombian politics, as well as co-racial voting, requires examining voters, but it also requires some understanding of candidates and how candidate self-presentations may affect voters' identification process. Thus, in this subsection, I will discuss how the identity of candidates can affect voters' perceptions and, therefore, their decision-making when evaluating them.

When talking about candidates and political participation, it is necessary to illustrate how the concept of *pureza de sangre* has a significant impact on how people in Colombia see the other when talking about race and ethnic representation (see Asher 2004; Hernàndez Cassiani, 2024; Herrán Pinzón, 2009; Leal, 2008; Mosquera Mosquera, 2001). As has been discussed since the history of the conquest and later the development of the republic after the liberation of the Spanish kingdom, the participation of ethnic, sexual, and racial minorities in the Colombian

territory has been a topic of discussion throughout the years (i.e., Wade, 2013). Politically, race, skin color, and *pureza de sangre* have played an important role in making decisions about candidacies for elected office.

In this framework, where a candidate needs to stand out, in addition to their own evaluation within the position that they think their electorate may have of them (Mummendey et al., 1999), the dynamic of the positive judgment of themselves and others in the in-group in relation to the out-group is when SIT comes into play (Tajfel & Turner,1979). In the case of politics, SIT has been used to evaluate the identities of voters and candidates that arise from concepts such as patriotism, national identity, and multiculturalism, among others (Huddy, 2001). In political scenarios where candidates must appeal to specific groups, their identification with that group may be a vocal part of their campaign. For example, Colombian presidents have incorporated European values by assigning positive qualifiers to this group and disqualifying people of African or Black origin by associating them with negative connotations. These dynamics of looking positively at one group compared to another are the elements that form persistent stereotypes (see Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

These forms of self-classification (Stets & Burke, 2000) in which the members of the groups, in this case, Colombian politicians who do not wish to have any connotation or relationship with people of African origin or descent, tend to privilege themselves as members of those groups that are not Mestizos by nature. This in-group bias helps with the construction and positive evaluation of the concept of whitening, where trying or being part of these White political groups reinforces whiteness at the top of the race hierarchy. As stated by Stets and Burke (2000), this self-classification process helps with the formation of identity. When identity is framed and dominated by the concept of *pureza de sangre*, politicians must somehow whiten

the discourse to reach the masses, who still see this non-miscegenation as the only way to preserve a single type of race and their supposedly superior practices.

Likewise, Tajfel and Turner (2004) mentioned that two concepts or dimensions can affect, in some way, how individuals relate to the group to which they belong, which are social mobility and social change. In the words of Tajfel and Turner (2004), "they refer instead to individual's belief systems about the nature and structure of the relations between social groups in the society" (p. 278). Thus, these two terms help to understand more simply the different relationships in which groups are structured when individuals participate.

Taking the concept of social mobility as a central axis could explain the dynamics in which Colombian politicians create their associations with the groups to which they belong. According to Tajfel and Turner (2004), social mobility can be understood as "the society in which individuals live is flexible and permeable...if they are not satisfied, for whatever reason, with the conditions imposed on their lives...they may move individually to another group that suits them better" (p. 278). For example, Hirschman (1970), as cited in Tajfel and Turner (2004), explained that in the United States, the capitalistic system of being successful values material accumulation. If someone is of a low monetary wealth and seek to move up the scale of values, they leave behind the group to which they originally belonged and move to one that is more characteristic of their aspired economic condition.

This concept can help to understand the system in which politicians, in certain cases, detach themselves from groups with which they are generally associated and join others that serve to "mobilize" them on the scale of social acceptance. By accepting the concept of whitening as an element that captures voters through discourse or cultural representation, these politicians are, in a certain way, satisfying their needs. That is to say, using whitening discourse

or identity as a mobilizing agent allows politicians to establish themselves in the group that best suits their political ambitions. This example explains how some Colombian politicians, who belong to ethnic minorities, when they climb the political ladder, cease to represent themselves as ethnic minorities and end up adopting characteristics that relate to those who consider themselves as non-Mestizos. Thus, these individuals are accepting their new identity based on the new group to which they belong or seek to belong.

The comments made by the House of Representatives member Miguel Polo Polo can serve as an example of social mobilization. According to Polo Polo, Black people should not "walk around in rags or with stinking hair. That is a stereotype that the left created and that, from my seat, we will be in charge of destroying" (Miguel Polo Polo dice, 2022, para 3). In his description of Afro communities, he said:

> If you are Black, you are automatically good and oppressed, and if you are White, then you are bad and oppressor. Skin color determines NOTHING. Just as there are good Whites, like Jhoana Bahamón[12], there are also bad Blacks, like the swindler of Francia[13]" (Miguel Polo Polo dice, 2022, para 7).

Polo Polo's words underlie his form of self-representation as a politician and as a subject, who also sees himself as part of the non-Mestizo communities, by abandoning the notion that race matters, he is detaching himself from a minority group because, in this case, those minorities groups or Afro-Colombians emphasize the idea that race matters. In this example, the representative no longer represents those who are part of the Afro communities in Colombia.

[12] Bahamón is a famous advocate, White actress in Colombia whose work with inmates has been recognized by the international community.
[13] Francia Márquez Mina is the Colombian vice president for 2022-2026.

Instead, he represents those who have erased that characteristic cultural vestige and have internalized the white culture from all angles, such as social, cultural, and linguistic.

This practice of identifying more with White people and not with Mestizos or Afro-Colombians is called Endorracism. According to Professor Manuel Pérez, who is cited by Pardo in his article (2022), "Enderrocism is a practice that originated in slavery, when Black domestic servants, who had privileges, discriminated against Black slaves" (para 16). Thus, as mentioned by Tajfel and Turner (2004), this mobilization that allows privileges to some over others, in the case of Black people, makes them privileged to be in a group, even if that group is against where they come from.

More broadly, this process in which one racial group (the in-group) is favored over others (the out-group) is called ethnocentrism (i.e., Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Ethnocentrism plays an important role as it precepts the evaluation of one group over another using the standards of the group of belonging, and those attitudes create a feeling of superiority over others inside the in-group (Hogg, 2016). When the evaluation is from the point of view of the in-group, this can generate hostile elements towards other groups, as in the case of Polo Polo and other politicians who see in those they represent, Afro-Colombians, not their closest allies, but rather the reflection of what the system of races and *pureza de sangre* has marked as different since colonial times (Wade, 1993, 2011).

Another example of favoring one group over another was the words of the assemblyman for the department of Antioquia, Rodrigo Mesa, who, in one of his speeches, referred in a derogatory manner to the inhabitants of the department of Choco, which is one of the places with the largest Afro-Colombian population. According to the words of the assemblyman, "The money that one puts into Choco is like putting perfume on human feces" (El Espectador, 2012,

para.1). This comment is part of the whitening that many politicians have in their speeches, perpetuating endo-colonialist ideas in which people, in this case, groups, by not possessing the same characteristics as others, are denied as members of society (Londoño, 2013).

On the other hand, some candidates do not refer to themselves as members of non-Mestizo or White groups, nor do they endorse whitening discourse to enable their ascension. Rather, these individuals embrace their minority identity, whether ethnic, cultural, or racial. One example is Francia Márquez Mina, a presidential candidate and then vice-presidential mate of Gustavo Petro, who won the presidency in 2022. Examples of these comments in which the vice president exalted race during her campaign can be seen in posts on her Instagram account: "Those from below, those from the roots, the excluded, the expropriated, the historically violated are giving birth to dignity for this country. They are making Colombia a better place for everyone" (Márquez Mina, 2021). These words symbolize Márquez Mina's intrinsic relationship with her race and those she represents.

Márquez continued to champion her minority identity in the face of racist attacks from a large sector of the country's civil and political society. For example, Colombian singer Marbelle compared Márquez to the fictional character King Kong ("King Kong," así llamó, 2022). These comments translate into the prevailing characterization of society as being represented only by those who are part of the racially dominant groups (Leal, 2010). Although Márquez received this type of comments during the entire duration of the campaign, Márquez served as an example to talk about systemic racism in Colombia, allowing this racial group, Afro-Colombians, considered a minority in the country, to demonstrate that there must be policies that demand change in the country related to the rooted racism.

Instead of changing and adapting to the predominant racial system, Márquez internalizes the conditions characteristic of the group to which she belongs. This form of persistent identification helps to maintain the homeostasis of the group and thus inspire the participation of these ethnic minorities associated within the concept of Afro-Colombians (Raizales[14], Blacks, Afro-descendants, and Palenqueros[15]) to see in her the person who will represent them, which helps with the self-esteem of the group and its cohesiveness. As such, Márquez and others like her can serve as key opinion leaders within their group, helping to rebuff the dominant culture's demoralizing views of their group's place in society. Thus, Márquez won't visualize the idea of changing into another group because "it is extremely difficult for an individual to conceive of the possibility of 'betraying' his or her own group by moving to the opposing group" (Tajfel and Turner, 2004, p.278). While some politicians will betray their group to attain greater status, like Polo Polo, others who embrace their identity would not and, like Márquez, may employ their race as a central campaign message.

Existing literature discusses or examines how Colombian politicians celebrate their race in their political speeches (see García, 2023; López et al., 2023; Márquez, 2016; Ramírez Botero, 2022). A clear example of this is the analysis made by Cunin (2003), in research conducted on the 2002 Senate and House of Representatives elections, includes the words of some of the candidates present at a forum to explain Afro policies in recent years. According to one of the speakers, Afro-Colombian people are "united as a concept, to fight like Cimarrones, for Afro-ancestral dignity" (Cunin, 2003, p. 85). These words underlie how Colombian ancestral peoples recognize race as central to their identity (Cunin, 2003).

[14] They are the Afro-Colombians located on the island of San Andres and Providencia.
[15] Afro-Colombians located in the town of San Basilio de Palenque, which was considered the first Black city in Colombia.

Group Consciousness vs. Group Attitudes

The construction of the Colombian voter's identity is rooted in the principles of modernization, which have been implemented throughout the country's history and linked to Eurocentrism and masculinity (Viveros Vigoya, 2013). For Viveros Vigoya (2013), this phenomenon is embedded in:

> The state production of individuals who embody the capitalist "sanctity" of the modern human being -visible in their white skin color-, with the purpose of "saving" or, better, safeguarding the nation from that heterogeneity -cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, religious or political (p.77).

Therefore, because the idea of whiteness as a guiding process in the judgment of others did not disappear from the collective imagination, many Mestizos internalized the concept of being White as synonymous with being good or modern (i.e., Viveros Vigoya, 2013; Wade, 1993), privileging the in-group over the out-group by determining that those outside these conditions were bad or unfit. Hence, Viveros Vigoya (2013) expresses, "the creation of homogeneous national identities, which give continuity to their political control and symbolic dominance…the image of whiteness as a synonym of modernity has never disappeared" (p. 80). This racial hierarchy can affect how voters perceive candidates; thus, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H2: A candidate's race influences voters' evaluations of them.

If these components are aligned with the theory of self-identification proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), the self-esteem of those who see themselves as Mestizos-also increases to the extent that they are identified not as a racial mixture, but on the contrary, as those who come from the dynamics of the "honorary White" (Viveros Vigoya, 2013, p. 80). Therefore, Blacks,

'illiterate' Mestizos, and Indigenous people have no place of privilege in the racial dynamics of the country as they are considered outcast (Viveros Vigoya, 2013).

When a voter perceives that a candidate belongs to his or her racial or ethnic group(s), the candidate's race or ethnicity is perceived as a salient element and a psychological cue affecting final decision-making (Dickson & Scheve, 2006). This psychological pattern in which one or some identities are more salient than others (Bornschier et al., 2021), determines the voter's political identity, i.e., if we take race as an example, which is marked in countries like Colombia (Wade 1993; 2011; 2013), voters perceiving themselves as members of a respective racial group, this salient element can be seen as a positive perception of their in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which they are more likely to incorporate it into their worldviews and how they vote. In the construction of the voter's identity, when it is permeated by concepts such as whitening, if a voter values *pureza de sangre*, then they are more likely to see a White or Mestizo candidate as part of their in-group, and those favor them in an election. Belonging to this accepted social group, which possesses positive characteristics throughout society, accentuates these characteristics. Thus, this process enhances or "lead[s] the in-group to be judged positively and the out-group to be judged negatively" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225).

When talking about the ethnicity of the voter and how it influences the voting decision, it can be inferred that on many occasions, this variable can affect how these voters see the candidate that can represent them. Therefore, this co-ethnicity, in which people see the candidate representing their own ethnicity (Barreto, 2010; Barreto & Nuño, 2011; Uhlaner & Le, 2017) in a salient way (Arora & Stout, 2019; Benjamin, 2017), can positively affect their decision (Barreto & Nuño, 2011). Likewise, studies have shown that when ethnicity and race are not salient in a political campaign (Benjamin, 2017), the candidate's co-ethnicity in relation to the voter does

not justify his or her voting decision (Barreto, 2010). Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H3: People who consider themselves Mestizo are more likely to vote for a **(H3a)** Mestizo or **(H3b)** White candidate than an **(H3c)** Afro-Colombian candidate.

H4: People who consider themselves White are more likely to vote for a **(H4a)** Mestizo or **(H4b)** White candidate than an **(H4c)** Afro-Colombian candidate.

H5: People who identify as Afro-Colombian are more likely to vote for an Afro-Colombian candidate than a **(H5a)** Mestizo or **(H5b)** White candidate.

When it comes to the minorities' identity, in this case, Afro-Colombian people, often they engage in activities to maintain and safeguard their groups and their identity (Moreau et al., 2016). As a result of this, their social identity plays an important role when talking about political participation. Group identity, in this case, ethnic identity, is multidimensional because of how it intersects with other factors such as gender, race, and sexuality; and thus, some dimensions that are more central to one's ethnic identity can be more salient than others (Moreau et al., 2016). In some cases, those more salient dimensions that constitute or are more sharable to many individuals help in the construction of the feeling of belonging and loyalty an individual may have about the group to which he/she belongs (Gutierrez et al., 2019).

Thus, when there is a tendency to favor the in-group over the out-group in terms of candidacy and political representation, the general sense is that these people are not only equal or share certain equal or similar characteristics but that there is a general idea that they will be able to do a better job in terms of representation. Smith et al. (2023) expose these racial attitudes as a racial group consciousness under the umbrella of linked fate and positive social change, in which members of the Afro communities, when they are at a disadvantage, look for some political

representation in those who promote the benefits of the social group they belong to. According to Simien (2005), linked fate is related to the state or attitudes that individuals may experience when they identify with a group to which they feel a sense of proximity (Dawson, 1995; Gay & Tate, 1998), in which beliefs are intertwined with the group experiences and participation in society (Moreau et al., 2019).

A varied body of research and scholarship has analyzed the impact of linked fate on voter decision-making and the political participation of certain groups (see Gay et al., 2016; Macias Mejia, 2019; Townsend-Bell & Restrepo Sanín, 2024). An example is the doctoral thesis developed by Macias Mejia (2019), which attempts to determine whether there is a clear difference between Latinos who are considered millennials and those who are not. According to the research results, the "traditional measure of linked fate functions the same for all millennials and non-millennials, propelling all racial and ethnic groups to participate in politics" (Macias Mejia, 2019, p. 15). Thus, there is a connection between the concept of Latino migrants as a linked fate element, which is a mobilizing agent for these minorities but it does not apply to all migrant groups, as the researcher did not find support in their study for Asian migrants (Macias Mejia, 2019).

On the other hand, Gay et al. (2016) analyzed whether there is a correlation between linked fate and the political decisions made by African-American communities. According to the analysis, there is an association between highly linked fate and Black nationalism (Gay et al., 2016). This cohesion among members may lead to the development of coalitions among people of color, which means greater political participation (Gay et al., 2016).

Another dimension of linked fate examines how it affects candidates and their performances. For example, in the cases of Francia Márquez Mina and U.S. House of

Representatives member Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, both women have encountered, during their years in politics, different threats from fellow politicians in a spiral of institutional violence (Townsend-Bell & Restrepo Sanín, 2024). Although these threats are motivated by a discourse that questions their voice and authority, what Márquez and Ocasio-Cortez share as part of their linked fate is their willingness "to put themselves on the front line" (Townsend-Bell & Restrepo Sanín, 2024, p. 238), a kind of sort of fate to recognize themselves as part of marginalized communities.

Therefore, when individuals feel that they belong in some way to the group, they are, somehow, more called to participate in collective actions that can generate social actions of change for them (Gay & Tate, 1998; Gutierrez et al., 2019; Moreau et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2023). A clear example of this is when Afro-Colombian communities band together because they recognize and value their identity and collective acts to better the welfare of their community (González, 2011). However, minorities encounter different challenges while working towards political participation, especially regarding their intersectionality between gender, race, and class and how these identities aim to their belonging to a group (see Azhar et al., 2021; Hill Collins, 2022). Also, whatever group they belong to aims to help their political consciousness (Reedy, 2015). In contrast, dominant group members conform to the norms developed by the group members to sustain group cohesion (Chung et al., 2011).

In this socialization process, the social identity approach also plays a key role in developing someone's political identity (Abrams et al., 2015). In the essence of social identity, group behavior happens when people act using a shared common identity (social), in this case, the sense of being part of a minority or part of this Afro-Colombian group that has been marginalized from the political discussion. If we position Márquez's identity, the attribute that

makes her unique, Blackness, as the key factor to identify with, then it reaffirms the processes of identity construction in which there is a premise of "she is like me" (Dawson, 1995; Gay & Tate, 1998).

However, in an analysis developed by Arora and Stout (2019), in which they analyze the implications of linked fate and the mobilization of certain racial groups, in the specific case of Asian Americans in favor of Black Lives Matter, the authors determined that this racial group did not mobilize in favor of BLM when the speech came from a person of their own ethnicity, because of their own low levels of group identity, but mobilized more in favor of the social movement when the supportive speech came from a White person as a result of they have "been intrinsically linked with whites as they have often appealed to whiteness" (Arora & Stout, 2019, p.3). It could be inferred that this same example applies to Colombia in the sense that many of the Mestizo people have considered themselves similar to White people. Therefore, the following is proposed:

H6 The more an individual identifies as Mestizo, the more likely they are to evaluate candidates in the following order (from most positive to least positive): **H6a)** White, **H6b)** Mestizo, then **H6c)** Afro-Colombian.

H7 The more an individual identifies as Afro-Colombia, the more likely they are to evaluate candidates in the following order (from most positive to least positive): **H7a)** Afro-Colombian, **H7b)** Mestizo, then **H7c)** White.

H8 The more an individual identifies as White, the more likely they are to evaluate candidates in the following order (from most positive to least positive): **H8a)** White, **H8b)** Mestizo, then **H8c)** Afro-Colombian.

Relationship between non-verbal communication, social identity theory, and candidate evaluation

As explained above, there is a relationship based on what social identity theory explains in how candidates, in popular elections, may be perceived by voters according to the identity they [candidates] may have with the group of voters to which they appeal (see Barreto, 2010; Barreto & Nuño, 2011). However, in certain political campaigns, there are elements that, although salient, are part of the content of nonverbal communication.

In the field and study of communication, there is a type of [non-verbal] language that is structured from nonlanguage behavior (Duncan Jr, 1969). These structures that are part of this non-language or communication are the tone of voice and its quality, accents, behavioral movements, personal space, facial expression (Duncan Jr, 1969), as well as non-associative elements to the body such as pictures, names, and places of origin (see Etaugh et al., 1999; Manusov, 2016; Naylor, 2007), which can trigger a signal to receivers and affect their attitudes and opinions, and impression formation they might have of the other (Etaugh et al., 1999).

Likewise, nonverbal communication can be tied to and give meaning to verbal communicative acts. For example, Burgoon et al. (2021) explained that in the interactions, the "body, face, voice, appearance, touch, distancing, timing, and physical surroundings all have a part in creating messages, with or without anything being said" (p.6). Moreover, in the connection between in-group and out-group, specific nonverbal cues can, in some way, "lead us to place people [usually at an unconscious level] in a group" (Manusov, 2016, p. 13). A clear example of this can be elements such as skin color, hair type, and accent, among others, which can "trigger categorization of another into an ethnic category" (Manusov, 2016, p. 13). Manusov (2016) also explains that these nonverbal cues act as an element that allows individuals to

associate the other(s) within a specific group because the cues signal such affiliation. Thus, these "nonverbal cues are serving their impression-formation function" (Manusov, 2016, p.13) and influence how individuals perceive and make sense of another individual.

Regarding candidate evaluation and political communication, these non-verbal cues can be used for elections where low-information conditions appear (Dumitrescu, 2016). In this case of this dissertation, where the candidates in the experiment are hypothetical and participants are provided an image and a paragraph on each candidate, it mimics a low-information decision-making process. Some research in political communication has found that the media focuses more attention on the coverage of the non-verbal actions of political candidates than on their candidacies (see Bucy & Grabe, 2007; Burgoon et al., 2021; Dumitrescu, 2016; Manusov & Harvey, 2011). In their research on the 2008 Democratic candidacies for president, Manusov and Harvey (2011) explained that two key moments concerning nonverbal cues affected how Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama were perceived. In Clinton's case, her "tearing up" during at a campaign rally and the fist bump shared between Michelle and Barack Obama, set the tone of the campaign and influenced how the news media framed their candidacies.

When it comes to static images, Naylor (2007) looked at the static images provided in insurance company advertisements. People pay close attention to the photos of the insurance agents, which allows them to make a mental impression prior to the appointment they may have face-to-face with them (Naylor, 2007). If this analysis is transferred to the point of view of political communication, it can be said that "voters use these accessible nonverbal signals as *heuristics*, or cognitive shortcuts" (Boussalis & Coan, 2020, p.78), which help with the formation of the prototype or stereotype (see Hogg, 2016 to understand the concepts and their application in the formation of the in-group and out-group concept), as the case may be.

Another example of these non-verbal cues was the research conducted by McDermott (1998), who states that in elections where there is little or very limited information about the candidates, voters, based on aspects such as gender and race, can use these non-verbal cues as shortcuts to make a final decision whether to vote for that candidate.

On the other hand, research conducted by Barisione and Iyengar (2016) concerning the 2016 Italian general elections showed that the use of non-verbal cues such as race and gender of the candidates serve as shortcut activations to determine whether there is a positive or negative evaluation of the candidates when voters partly consider them as part of the out-groups related to gender and race. Likewise, studies conducted by Dixon (2007), in which the researcher analyzed whether there is a close relationship between crime and race, found that the activation of specific non-verbal cues in pictures that show a "perpetrator" and an "officer" tended to signal African-Americans as the perpetrators of crimes in contrast to White individuals as officers. In this case, race is associated with criminality, i.e., that people, through shortcuts, can activate stereotypes. Collectively, then, this research demonstrates that non-verbal communication can influence opinions because it taps into social identity markers for individuals.

Chapter 2 - Design and Methodology

Background on the 2022 Election and Associated Offices

To understand a little about the Colombian political context, it is helpful to review some electoral mechanics. Colombia is divided into 32 departments, and each department is entitled to two House of Representative members "and one more for each 365,000 inhabitants or fraction thereof greater than 182,500 over the first 365,000" (article 176, para 1). This formula still uses the 1985 Colombian census to determine the number of seats per department. The following examples explain the number of seats assigned: the department of Arauca in 1985 had a population of 70,085. Following this mathematical logic, Arauca would only have a maximum of two representatives because its population is less than 365,000. On the contrary, Caldas had a population of 838,094 in 1985, which yields five seats in the House of Representatives.

Likewise, the Constitution establishes in Article 176 that there will be five special seats, two for Afro-descendant communities, two representing Colombians abroad (only Colombians residing outside the country may vote for this special constituency), one for indigenous groups, and one for the running mate (vice president formula) of the second highest presidential vote.

According to Colombian electoral laws, an individual can only vote for the representatives to the chamber representing that department in that territory's municipalities and cities. In the 2022 elections, 188 representatives were elected to the House of Representatives. It should be clarified that in the elections of the Senate of the Republic, this election is national in nature—unlike in the U.S., where it is based on voters within each state. Therefore, the senator has no territorial link or attachment with a particular department. A total of 108 senators were elected in 2022: 100 national circumscription, two special circumscriptions (special Transitory

Peace Circumscriptions[16]), five for FARC[17] as part of the peace agreement, and one for the second-highest presidential vote.

Study One: Content Analysis

Before starting the section on the methodology in my dissertation, I want to clarify something meaningful for the design of the dissertation. This dissertation comprises two methods, a content analysis and an experiment. Although the two were not explicitly designed to affect each other, both methodological approaches are aimed at answering a broader research question regarding the electoral behavior of voters in Colombia, explicitly concerning Afro-Colombian candidates. Developed in parallel, both studies address the phenomenon of how race influences politics, discourse about candidates, and how voters make decisions in electoral contexts where racial categories are relevant.

Content Analysis as a Method

A quantitative content analysis was used as the methodology for the section on analyzing news related to Afro-Colombian politicians. Krippendorff (2018) defines content analysis as a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from text (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use" (p.18). In other words, content analysis serves as a technique to quantify and analyze the occurrence of those words, their meaning associated with the text, and the relationship they form while producing themes or concepts (see Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2019. As an analytic method, it facilitates analyzing and interpreting the data through classificatory systematization or coding (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This means that content analysis seeks to measure how the selected variables occur within the analyzed text. Unlike

[16] Territories that suffered from the Colombian conflict, in addition to institutional neglect during those years.
[17] The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia was one of the irregular armed groups in the country. On September 26, 2016, they signed a peace agreement with the government of Juan Manuel Santos, ending more than 50 years of conflict.

experiments, there is no need to manipulate the variables, and the results are generalized through "some type of probability sampling of the units of data collection" (Neuendorf, 2019, p. 4).

This method seeks to understand how often the studied phenomenon occurs when used quantitatively (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). As a quantitative method, content analysis follows the precepts of the scientific method by including attention to "the standards of objectivity/intersubjectivity, reliability, validity, and generalizability" (Neuendorf & Kumar, 2015, p. 1). Therefore, when talking about reliability in content analysis, as in any quantitative method that seeks to produce the same results several times, this method, in terms of reliability, seeks that the codes measured in the analysis process obtain the same results through the use of different coders applying the dame codebook (see Neuendorf, 2019; Neuendorf & Kumar, 2015).

Content Analysis in Political Communication and News Media Content

The analysis of the content presented in the media has been possible thanks to the use of theories, such as framing, which have made it achievable to understand the political context and how people develop their civic life in the different democracies and governmental systems that exist today (Neuendorf & Kumar, 2015). Moreover, content analysis has served as a method in political communication to analyze articles produced by media outlets to understand the different frames the news contains when referring to a candidate, a political party, an election, etc. (Neuendorf & Kumar, 2015).

In the specific case of this dissertation, by using framing as one of its theories of analysis in terms of news content, content analysis is generally the method selected to make an analytical link with this theory (Neuendorf & Kumar, 2015). For example, the research developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) used framing and content analysis to understand how the Danish and European media covered the meetings of members of the different European

governments. The researchers based their study on framing theory to identify the different frames through which the media focused their analysis around the meeting (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). By using content analysis, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) were able to identify which and to what extent different frames appeared in the media coverage of the meeting.

Another example of how content analysis, as a methodology, can be used for political analysis is the research developed by Meeks (2013) on the *New York Times* media coverage of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin's candidacies compared to their male counterparts in U.S. presidential elections. This research used content analysis to examine the different patterns that appear when a media outlet covers women's candidacies as compared to men.

Authors such as Caliendo and McIlwain (2006) developed analyses of how racial references during the 2004 U.S. election cycle are more common in elections with racially diverse candidates than in all-white elections. Also, this same research indicates that when there are both Black and biracial candidates, media outlets are more likely to contain race-related frames (Caliendo & McIlwain, 2006). Other research has also concluded that race, when applied to as a Black candidate, is in media content, enabling race to become more salient and making it a racial cue to be activated, either positively or negatively, by voters (see McIlwain, 2011; Ward, 2017).

Therefore, it can be inferred that there is a very close relationship between content analysis and political communication and media coverage, as well as the potential for media coverage to cue voters about a candidate’s race. In terms of research, this relationship lies in the fact that content analysis is used to analyze large amounts of data, in the case of the research mentioned above, news articles.

Procedure

Study One Design

For the analysis of the first part of this dissertation, content analysis of six Colombian newspapers was carried out to test the first hypothesis and research questions. Each article was selected as a unit of observation (Neuendorf, 2019), and the variables were coded as (0) absent or (1) present, which corresponds to the level at which the coding is done. The unit of analysis refers to the level of data in which analysis is conducted (Milne & Adler, 1999; Neuendorf, 2019). For this dissertation, there were multiple units of analysis. For example, I compared regional versus national newspapers for some analyses, whereas for other analyses, I compared each news outlet.

A codebook previously created by Restrepo Garcia and Meeks (2023) to analyze electoral news coverage of Francia Marquez Mina for VP of Colombia in 2022 was the foundation for this dissertation's codebook. Only the variables[18] that were related to this dissertation's analysis were selected. In total, 24 variables were part of the final codebook, including: Negative racial descriptors, positive/neutral racial descriptors, racial advocacy, rooted racism in Colombia, afro representation, political token, surrogate, political quota, afro-Colombian special circumscription, political phenomenon, ELN or FARC, AUC[19], corruption, class, place of origin, the region they represent, gender reference, feminized jobs, social activism, the nobodies, powerful, ignoring the use of Spanish rules, not literate or intelligent, and degree (see Appendix A for the full description of the variables). New variables were added to this dissertation's codebook from a deductive process—based on previous scholarship—on race and politics in

[18] Those variables were implemented as they were initially, only changing the phrasing to be adapted into the analysis of this dissertation's foci.
[19] These three are guerrilla or illegal groups in Colombia: ELN (the National Liberation Army), FARC (the Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia), and AUC (the United Self-Defenders of Colombia).

Colombia. Specially, variables such as ‘Racial Advocacy’ (referring to calls for protection and rights for the Afro-Colombian community) and ‘Afro-Colombian Special Circumscription’ (related to the special electoral constituency for Afro-Colombian candidates). These variables captured unique aspects of Afro-Colombian political representation. Also, some variables appeared inductively based on reading the Colombian media content, such as Place of origin, which encapsulates or refers to the place of origin of these candidates (see Appendix A for full codebook). Utilizing deductive and inductive processes helps ensure the codebook covered variables highly relevant to this set of elections and candidates (see Neuendorf, 2019). Human coding was used (Neuendorf, 2019), where the coders were trained to understand how to code the variables.

Four coders were hired: one woman and three men, professionals in communication and with previous experience in academic research. They met specific criteria for involvement. First, the coders needed to be able to read and understand Spanish so as to code the articles in their original language, which helps prevent any meaning loss when translation occurs. Second, they were knowledgeable about the country, in this case, Colombia. Those coders live in Colombia and speak Spanish since some of the variables were latent; therefore, it was helpful to have certain knowledge of the jargon, the language used, and the country's political, social, and ethical characteristics. Meeting these criteria, helped reduce training time, which was condensed to three sessions, and helped to increase reliability, as they could understand the connotative context of a variable in the analyzed text.

Once the training was completed, intercoder reliability was assessed using a random 10% of the sample (n = 41). The same set of text was used for all the coders to ensure consistency in the analysis. Following the completion of the coding process, sufficient intercoder reliability was

established, with Krippendorff's alpha rates higher than .7 for each variable, as recommended by Krippendorff (2018) and further supported by Lombard et al. (2002) and Neuendorf (2019), with the exception of one variable at positive/neutral racial descriptors = .68, which is considered a sufficient alpha for making tentative conclusions about a variable as it is higher than .67 (see Krippendorff, 2018). The rest variables alphas were: Negative racial descriptors = .98, racial advocacy = .92, rooted racism in Colombia = .92, afro representation = .94, political token = .97, surrogate = 1, political quota = .98, afro-Colombian special circumscription = .79, political phenomenon = .95, ELN or FARC = .95, AUC = .98, corruption = .95, class = .95, place of origin = .78, the region they represent = .84, gender reference = .75, feminized jobs = .95, social activism = . 76, the nobodies = .71, powerful = .83, ignoring the use of Spanish rules = .70, not literate or intelligent = .73, and degree = .80). After achieving acceptable levels of intercoder agreement, each coder independently analyzed their assigned articles.

Rationale for Selected Colombian News Outlets

Six Colombian outlets were selected to be analyzed: three national outlets and three regional outlets.

National Media Outlets. Three national media outlets, *El Tiempo, El Espectador*, and *Semana*, were selected for this analysis. I provide details on each below.

El Tiempo is owned by Luis Carlos Sarmiento Angulo, the wealthiest man in Colombia. With a center-right ideology, this newspaper is Colombia's most consulted news outlet, with 9,665,178 users as of December 2023 (Pérez Godoy, 2024). This newspaper was founded by one of Colombia's most prominent political families, the Santos family (López, 2006), which has also included two presidents, Eduardo Santos[20] and Juan Manuel Santos[21], and one vice president,

[20] Eduardo Santos (1938-1942) was elected president as part of the right-wing Colombian Liberal Party.
[21] Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018) was elected president as part of the right-wing political party La U.

Francisco Santos[22]. In addition to being the newspaper with the highest number of visitors to its website, with a total of 75,208,000 pages viewed during 2023 (Bohórquez Roncancio, 2024), it also had growth in subscribers of more than 867.6% from 2022 to 2023 (Bohórquez Roncancio, 2024), making it the number one newspaper for Colombians to acquire information.

Semana magazine is a right-wing publication and has 7,255,862 users, making it the second outlet in Colombia per users (Pérez Godoy, 2024). With 40,438,000 pages viewed during 2023, this magazine is the second outlet in Colombia with the highest online traffic (Bohórquez Roncancio, 2024). The foundation of *Semana* magazine dates back to 1946 when former president Alberto Lleras Camargo tried to create a publication similar to *Time* magazine in the United States. Still, his dream did not last long because it had to close its doors in 1961 due to an economic crisis (Flórez Suárez, 2020). In 1982, it was re-founded by Felipe López Caballero, son of former president Alfonso López Michelsen and grandson of former president Alfonso López Pumarejo (Flórez Suárez, 2020). In 2019, the Gilinski business group acquired the publication.

The newspaper *El Espectador* is a Colombian-centrist media outlet with a long history. Founded by Fidel Cano Gutiérrez on March 22, 1887, in Medellín, it is considered one of the oldest newspapers in Colombia and America (Restrepo, 2001). It has gone through several phases, from being a weekly to becoming a Sunday newspaper and then a weekly newspaper one more time (Restrepo, 2001). This newspaper was selected because it is one of the most respected in the country and has a long history. It is the eighth-largest media outlet in Colombia, with 5,016,562 users (Pérez Godoy, 2024). In addition to having 19,861,000 page views between

[22] Francisco Santos (2002-2010) was elected Vice President of Colombia as part of the Alvaro Uribe Velez ticket and his political movement, Primero Colombia.

2022 and 2023 (Bohórquez Roncancio, 2024), it is currently owned by the Valorem business group, which belongs to the second richest family in the country, the Santodomingo family.

The selection of the three national media, *El Tiempo, Semana*, and *El Espectador*, was based on the historical, social, economic, media influences, and political importance of these media throughout Colombian history. They have also maintained themselves over time as a dominant way for Colombians to acquire information about what is happening in the country (Rivera Godoy & Padilla Ospina, 2013).

Regional Media Outlets. Three regional media, *El Pais de Cali, El Colombiano*, and *El Universal de Cartagena*, were selected for this analysis. I provide details on each below.

The newspaper *El Colombiano* was founded in Medellin on February 6, 1912, by Francisco de Paula Pérez (El Colombiano, n.d.). This regional centered-right leaning newspaper is an informative medium for the upper and lower Antiqueño Cauca regions. It is the most influential regional newspaper in the central part of the country. With more than 3,322,724 users in the country, it is the tenth most used media outlet (Pérez Godoy, 2024). With a traffic of more than 20,497,000 page views, it surpasses national media such as *El Espectador* (Bohórquez Roncancio, 2024). The Gómez and Hernández families of Medellín also own *La Republica* newspaper. This family has shares in media outlets such as Colprensa, Grupo Nacional de Medios, and Periódicos Asociados Comercializadora Ltda (Monitoreo de Medios, n.d.).

The newspaper *El Pais de Cali* was founded by the Colombian conservative politician and industrialist Álvaro Lloreda Caicedo on April 23, 1950 (Monitoreo de Medios, n.d). With 5,362,344 users, *El Pais de Cali* is the regional newspaper with the highest number of users in the country (Pérez Godoy, 2024). It also had 19,432,000 page views between 2022 and 2023

(Bohórquez Roncancio, 2024), making it the ninth most visited media in the country. Nowadays, the Gilinski business group owns this publication with a right-leaning ideology.

El Universal de Cartagena is a regional newspaper serving the department of Bolivar, specifically the city of Cartagena, with a right-centered leaning ideology; this newspaper was founded on March 8, 1948, by Domingo López Escauriaza. With 1,528,000 users, this newspaper is 22 on the list of the country's 50 most important news outlets (Pérez Godoy, 2024). Currently, the Del Mar S.A. publishing group owns the newspaper *El Universal de Cartagena*

The selection of these three regional newspapers was not only related to the importance they have regarding the way people from those three regions acquire information, their political relationship, and the media influences, but also based on the fact that they are located in some of the country's capital cities where most Afro-Colombian people live. Cities such as Cartagena, which were ports of entry for the colonization of the territory due to its strategic location on the Caribbean coast, became centers of settlement for enslaved people from Africa and their descendants (Wade, 2013). Likewise, cities such as Cali and Medellin are centers of multi-diversity in the country, with a sizeable Afro-Colombian population. The problems related to the internal conflict in the country led many Black people to move to these capitals to establish their homes there (Cárdenas et al., 2020). Therefore, besides being the foremost media in the regions where they are established, these three newspapers have a good amount of information flow on the web and a significant number of readers in the regions they cover.

Sampling

Sampling Frame

The time frame selected for the newspaper review was based on the electoral calendar designed by La Registraduria, associated with the House of Representatives and Senate elections

in Colombia in 2022. This allowed for demarking how often and when to seek the necessary information. According to the electoral calendar published by La Registraduria, the deadline for the registration of candidates was December 13, 2021, and the election was held on March 13, 2022 (Registraduria Nacional del Estado Civil, 2021). Therefore, these four months were selected from December to March to analyze the different outlets. These months were essential because the Colombian media regularly covers the candidacies and the lists issued by the candidates' parties once the registration process is closed and the list is submitted to La Registraduria.

Keywords

Once the time and the respective newspapers were selected in digital form, keywords were used to search for and select relevant articles. The keywords used to determine whether an article should be selected were “Afro-Colombians,” “congressional elections” (this includes House of Representatives and Senate), “quota law,” and the “Afro-Colombian circumscription.” To be included in the sample, the article had to include at least one of these keywords.

The decision to select these words was that they focused on the frames that the media use to describe Afro-Colombian candidates. It is worth remembering that Afro-Colombians include the Raizal people of the Archipelago of San Andres and Providencia, Blacks, Mulattos, Afro-descendants, Afro-Colombians, and Palenqueros(as) of San Basilio.

Sampling Strategy and Sample

Since this dissertation was quantitative and aimed to make generalizations, the idea was to use a probability sampling method. I used a systematic random sampling technique because it allowed me to make some statistical inferences that drew generalizations from the sample of newspaper articles (Krippendorff, 2009). This type of sampling is a technique that provided

excellent external validity to my findings (McEwan, 2020). With this type of sampling, “each unit in the sampling frame has an equal opportunity of selection” (McEwan, 2020, p. 239); also, because of its randomness, such as having a random starting point amidst the sampling frame, it fulfilled elements of probability sampling (McEwan, 2020). For systematic sampling, a “skip interval” is created by dividing the population number of texts by the desired sample size. For example, if the population is 1000 and the desired sample size is 100, I would divide 1000 by 100, resulting in a skip interval of 10; therefore, I could sample every 10th article from the sampling frame. Using this approach enabled me to collect news articles throughout the election, which was critical as elections are dynamic and change over time, and such fluctuations could impact coverage. By consistently gathering articles throughout the election, I was able to determine if any of these changes were reflected in the news articles and whether they impacted my analysis.

A total of 412 news articles resulted from using the keywords and applying probability sampling to the six news entities [three national and three regionals]. Of the initial 412 articles, 208 correspond to national outlets, and 204 are from regional.

Study Two: Experiment

Experiment as a Method

Another important component of this doctoral dissertation was the development of an experiment among Colombians of legal age [18 or older] who can or have voted in congressional elections. An experiment is a method used for the purpose of collecting data designed to test different hypotheses that are situated under conditions that need to be controlled (Martin & Sell, 1979), enabling me to help reduce some bias found in other kinds of observations (McDermott, 2002). An experiment reduces these biases through controlled manipulations and "standardized

procedures, measures, and analyses" (McDermott, 2002, p. 33). Likewise, in developing this experiment, it was important to consider the following elements: "standardization, randomization, between-subjects versus within-subject design, and experimental bias" (McDermott, 2002, p. 33).

The standardization process in an experiment helps that, in the most likely event, those external factors that can affect this process can be reduced (McDermott, 2002). This characteristic of standardization is also reinforced to the extent that the application protocols are the same each time. Since the subjects are randomly assigned, this prevents the influence of biases, whether accidental or not (Suresh, 2011). Finally, the experiment may be between-subjects versus within-subjects. This phase helps compare the different conditions and these, in turn, with the control condition (McDermott, 2002). Therefore, the control condition "creates a baseline against which investigators compare the results of their manipulations" (McDermott, 2002, p. 33). Since there was exposure to the treatment or intervention during the study, this control condition aimed to identify the presence of systematic differences.

This type of design also has internal and external validity, which is considered strong. This internal validity is grounded in the idea that the design of the survey, including the variations between the dependent and independent variable, allows for the identification of statistically significant differences in responses. These differences are not solely due to the wording of the questions themselves but rather the manipulation, which captured by valid and reliable questions designed to assess the potential impact on respondents' opinions (Arceneaux, 2010, p. 2010). Moreover, external validity is supported to the extent that the sample selected is suitable as a representation of the population [population validity], on average, when this sample is chosen randomly (Devroe & Wauters, 2019).

Experiments in Political Communication

Experiments have been used in political communication to examine the impact communication has on voters' opinions and behaviors (Druckman & Leeper, 2012). Likewise, in political science, it has been determined that mass communication significantly impacts public opinion (Druckman & Leeper, 2012) due to its influence at the moment of framing a candidate, party, etc., which can influence, directly or indirectly, elections.

An example of how experiments can be used in conjunction with political communication can be seen in the research developed by Hameleers et al. (2018). Ttheir research contained an experiment in which the authors tried to unveil how populist communication has become very pervasive in some European countries, and how this variable affects people's political engagement as a factor that can mobilize voters (Hameleers et al., 2018).

Another clear example of the use of experiments in political communication is the research developed by Arceneaux et al. (2012), which sought to understand how the media, when they tend to be hostile, can influence people's biases when they report political controversies. Through a series of experiments, the authors determined that counter-attitudinal news programming tends to induce audiences' hostile perceptions of the media (Arceneaux et al., 2012). These works are a brief preview of how experiments are commonly used in political communication studies.

Participants

Initially, the dissertation was going to collect data from multiple college campuses in Colombia to achieve the required number for power in the analysis. However, only 110 responses were collected from college students at three universities in Manizales, Colombia. The data collected was insufficient to achieve the required power for my analysis after using

G*Power version 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2007) with an $\alpha = 0.05$ and power = 0.80, with the minimum sample size required for this effect size determined to be $n = 100$ per group for regression. As a result, I employed an alternative method to gather additional data. A total of 532 Colombian adults 18 and older were recruited from Prime Panels via CloudResearch, an online survey recruitment platform that allows the investigator to determine eligible criteria and demographics (Chandler et al., 2019). In total, 642 responses were collected: the 110 college responses and 532 via CloudResearch. Of these, 10 participants chose not to consent to participate in the survey, five participants were under the age of 18, and 58 responses were excluded. The excluded responses were due to incomplete surveys, participants consistently selecting extreme response options, or response time below the minimum threshold of five minutes, as set for this study.

The final sample consisted of 569 Colombian adults registered and eligible to vote in elections, with participants identifying as Mestizo ($n = 260$), White ($n = 214$), Afro-Colombian ($n = 55$), Native Colombian ($n = 12$), other ($n = 25$), and Romani ($n = 2$). Regarding gender, 382 participants identified as women (67.3%), 184 as men (32.4%), one as nonbinary (0.2%), and one did not disclose their gender (0.2%). Regarding political affiliation, 169 participants did not prefer to answer that question (29.8%), 107 identified as right-wing (18.8%), 106 as center or moderate (18.7%), 78 as center-left wing (13.7%), 61 as center-right wing (10.7%), and 47 as left-wing (8.3%). Concerning the region where the participants were from, 363 were located in the Central Region (63.7%), 105 in the Caribbean Region (18.5%), 78 in the Pacific Region (13.7%), 15 in the Orinoco Region (2.6%), 6 in the Amazonian Region (1.1%), and lastly only one in the Insular Region (0.2%).

In terms of the participants' age, the largest group was between 28-32 years old, with 84 participants (14.8%). This was followed by the 18-22 age group, with 79 participants (13.9%), and the 43-47 age group, with 73 participants (12.9%). The 23-27 age group had 70 participants (12.3%), and the 38-42 age group included 68 participants (12.0%). The 33-37 age group had 57 participants (10.0%), while 48–52-year-olds accounted for 55 participants (9.7%). There were 41 participants (7.2%) in the 53-57 age group, 25 participants (4.4%) in the 58-62 group, and 11 participants (1.9%) in the 63-67 group. The smallest groups were the 68-72 age group, with three participants (0.5%), and the 73-77 age group, with two participants (0.4%).

Lastly, concerning participants' education level, the largest group held a professional degree, with 200 participants (35.2%). This was followed by those with a two-year college degree, totaling 125 participants (22.0%), and those with a high school degree, comprising 114 participants (20.1%). The next largest group had a four-year college degree, with 52 participants (9.2%). Graduate degrees (MA, PhD, etc.) were held by 48 participants (8.5%), and completing some college was reported by 24 participants (4.2%). Lastly, five participants (0.9%) preferred not to answer.

Procedure

For the development of this experiment, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. I presented them with a stimulus in which they read an actual government proposal from the political campaign of Francia Márquez Mina and Gustavo Petro (Bastidas, n.d.) regarding the culture of peace in the country (see Appendix B), in which modifications were made to be adapted in such a way that it was presented as if a candidate for the Congress of the Republic (regardless of the position, Senate or House of Representatives), was proposing it.

The decision to use this proposal from Petro and Márquez's political agenda was based on the peace agreement being a topic that was not volatile in the political discussion compared to race, gender, workers' rights, etc., which could somehow affect the nature of this experiment.

Likewise, each text included a photo of the candidate, the name and surname assigned to the candidate, which in the collective imaginary can be linked to a specific race and ethnicity (see Umaña Baquero, 2024), as well as a place of origin. This was because, in Colombia, there are names, surnames, and areas of origin (Wade, 2020) that people may associate with specific races/ethnicities. For example, Choco is a department with a high Afro-Colombian population, so the general idea is that someone coming from this part of the country is Afro-Colombian.

This text came with the photo of a candidate[23], corresponding to a White, Mestizo, or Afro-Colombian- depending on the group assigned, who was used to measure whether the candidate's race influences the voters' decision-making. The control group received the text without a picture[24]. The photos corresponded to three models, who were not recognized people and who did not have any ties in the political arena. Using real pictures of candidates, whether Blacks, Whites, or Mestizos, could prompt several variables, including political perception and political party, to influence the experiment beyond my control, so this step was intended to control for this potential (see Appendix C). The photos of the "candidates" served as non-verbal cues that can, in a certain way, activate shortcuts (heuristic cues) attributed to the evaluative concepts of race and ethnicity (Mcdermoot, 1998; Barisione & Iyengar, 2016; Dixon, 2007).

Once participants read the stimulus and looked at the candidate's photo, they were asked to answer a survey about their perceptions of themselves regarding race and voting decisions,

[23] Pictures in this dissertation corresponded to models representing one of the three races/ethnicities: White, Black, or Mestizo candidate.
[24] This control group text included a city and a candidate's name and surname that is very common and unlikely to spark racial ties.

and their perceptions of the candidate's race regarding whether to elect the candidate and evaluations of the candidate (see Appendix D). Participants only looked at male photos for this experiment because some researchers have found that female candidates might encounter more outgroup bias than their male counterparts when evaluating their participation in democratic settings where politics is masculinized (see Meeks, 2012; Niven, 1998; Smith et al., 2007). As noted previously, Colombia's political system is masculinized; therefore, I limited the current investigation to male candidates who presented as white, Mestizo, and Afro-Colombian to control as many spurious variables as possible while keeping the experiment feasible.

Measurements

Before detailing the various measurements used, it is important to note that some of the variables' responses were modified to a 7-points Likert-type scale. This adjustment was made because such scales help reduce central tendency bias and enhance the robustness of the findings (Weijters et al., 2010).

Personal Ethnic Identity

To examine the degree of individual's ethnic identity, which is the independent variable in H6, H7, and H8, I used two scales: one from Umaña-Taylor et al. (2004) and the other from Phinney (1992). The scale created by Umaña-Taylor et al. (2004) has a subscale called affirmation, which analyzes if ethnic identity has a negative impact; however, for this analysis, items were reworded to have a positive version to measure the degree of one's ethnic identity, with sample items such as, "I feel positive about my ethnicity." This subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of .831 and employed a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). See Appendix D for the full questionnaire.

The scale proposed by Phinney (1992) was used as a complement to understand people's evaluation of their ethnicity. This scale was designed to measure the relationship between an individual's ethnicity and self-concept, with sample items such as, “I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.” This scale had multiple dimensions, and I pulled items from each dimension for the dissertation. The final combined scale had Cronbach's alpha of .922 and employed a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Candidate Evaluation

To measure candidate evaluation, which is the dependent variable in H2, H6, H7, and H8, I employed the scale developed by Zarate et al. (2024); this scale was designed to measure how Hispanic voters in the United States feel about candidates who represent them. For this analysis, the items were modified to measure candidate evaluation based on race and what representation they offered constituents when representing a racial community. This scale has three indexes: one for the candidate's evaluation, one for perceptions of the candidate's ability to represent Hispanics, and the other for perceptions of the candidate's willingness to represent Hispanics. I selected some items from each index to create this dissertation’s measure. Cronbach’s alpha was .953 for the chosen items. Items were modified to ask the participants about race; examples of the questions were “My feelings about my ethnicity/race are mostly positive.’” A 7-point Likert-type scale corresponding to options ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (7) were employed.

Voting Decision

To measure vote choice, which is the dependent variable in H3, H4, and H5, I used a scale created by Shpeer (2023), which measures the likelihood to vote. This scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of .793. Answer options followed a 7-point Likert scale, with higher values

indicating greater likelihood. Sample items include “How likely are you to vote for this candidate in the upcoming election?”

Evaluation Of Candidate’s Race

Based on the nature of this dissertation and trying to better understand for future research why race/ethnicity impacts people’s choices and decisions during an election, I included additional scales concerning a candidate’s race. For this analysis, I employed two scales: The first scale was created by McConahay et al. (1981) to determine if racism has declined in the United States, and I used this to assess perceptions within the Colombian context. Only two items were used and modified to ask participants if a candidate's ethnicity matters when they make their electoral decisions, such as: “The more important consideration when looking for a candidate is not their political background but the ethnicity they represent.” A 7-point Likert-type scale corresponding to options ranging from (1) to strongly disagree (7) to strongly agree were employed. This scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of .769.

The second scale was developed by Neville et al. (2000), which measures the Racial Privilege factor. I mention this here to highlight how the alpha values differ from those found in my study. Items were modified to measure race and its valuation when it comes to determining if a candidate can be a good choice, e.g., “Every candidate who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to be elected in Colombia.” I modified the scale from a 5-point Likert-type to a 7-point Likert-type with new values ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). This scale was reported as having a Cronbach’s alpha of .83 in Neville et al.’s (2000) study. However, the initial Cronbach’s alpha in my dissertation was 0.437, which is lower than the recommended minimum α coefficient of .7 to be considered acceptable (Taber, 2018).

After removing two of the four items: “Ethnicity/race should not matter in the selection of political candidates in Colombia” and “Candidates should be judged by their individual qualities rather than their ethnicity/race in Colombia,” the Cronbach’s alpha improved to .69, which is minimally acceptable (Cortina,1993).

Evaluation of Policy

Finally, some questions were used to measure assessments of the public policy present in the stimuli and determine how these assessments factor into candidate evaluation. The items were from the Ideological Issue Intensity scale, which was included in Huddy et al.’s (2015) investigation titled, “Expressive Partisanship: Campaign Involvement, Political Emotion, and Partisan Identity.” The scale included two subsections, reliable social and economic issue scales, which were adapted and tailored to capture how voters perceive and evaluate policies [in this case, the peace policy] based on their expectations and experiences. An example of a question is: “What is your position regarding the policy about building and agreeing on the public policy for peace, reconciliation, and coexistence with the National Peace Council.” Responses ranged on a seven-point Likert scale that consists of the following answers: (1) strongly oppose to (7) strongly support. All the scale ranges were modified to a seven-point Likert-type scale because this type offers enough response options, allowing for a more nuanced expression of opinion, and made it easier to compare results across different groups (Weijters et al., 2010).

Lastly, I used a feeling thermometer, which was not part of the original scale. This scale allowed the respondents to express varying support or opposition by capturing subtle differences in their attitudes by asking them to rate their feelings toward the candidate’s policy on a scale from 0 to 100. Specifically, I asked, “Using a thermometer scale, please indicate if you feel that

the policy proposed by the candidate addresses key issues relevant to voters" The social and economic issue scales had a combined Cronbach's alpha of .834.

In addition to these measures, the survey also included demographic questions, such as gender, political party affiliation, and, importantly, the participant's racial identity was captured.

Chapter 3 - Results, Content Analysis

To better understand the portrayal of Afro-Colombian candidates in the media, and thus the type of discourse voters have at their disposal when making electoral decisions, I conducted a content analysis to explore how different media outlets presented these candidates. The following chapter outlines the key results of the relationship between media outlets and Afro-Colombian candidates, providing insights into how these figures are framed or themed in general, across regional versus national outlets, and across different ideologically-oriented outlets.

Relationship Between Media Outlets and Afro-Colombian Candidates

H1 posited that regional media outlets would provide more coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates than large national outlets. To test this hypothesis, a chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between media outlet type (national vs. regional) and whether the article mentioned Afro-Colombian candidates during the election. The results revealed a significant association between outlet type and the presence of Afro-Colombian candidate mentions, $\chi^2(1, N = 412) = 17.99, p < .001$ (see Table 1).

Table 1

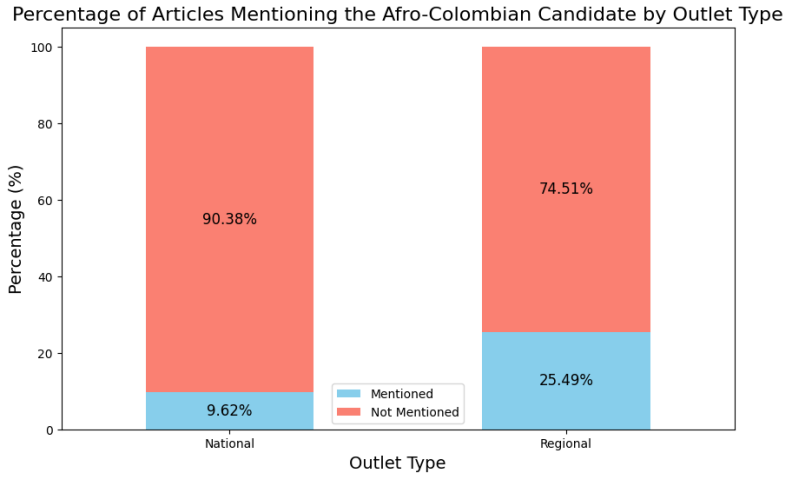
Chi-Square Test of Association between Media Outlet Type [national vs regional] and Afro-Colombian Candidate Mentions.

Media Outlet Type	Afro-Colombian Candidate Mentioned (1)	Afro-Colombian Candidate Not Mentioned (0)	Total
National (1)	Observed = 20 Expected = 36.3*	Observed = 188 Expected = 171.7	208
Regional (2)	Observed = 52 Expected = 35.7	Observed = 152 Expected = 168.3	204
Total	Observed = 72 Expected = 72.0	Observed = 340 Expected = 340.0	412

Note: X^2 (1, N = 412) = 17.997, p < .001. *While expected values assume no association between the two variables, the observed data suggest that national outlets are actually less likely to mention Afro-Colombian candidates than expected.

Out of the 412 articles analyzed, 208 came from national outlets, and 204 came from regional outlets. Of the 208 national articles, 20 (9.6%) mentioned an Afro-Colombian candidate, while 188 (90.4%) did not. In contrast, 52 (25.5%) of the 204 regional articles mentioned a candidate, and 152 (74.5%) did not (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



These results suggest that regional outlets are more likely to cover Afro-Colombian candidates than national outlets during the election period. The moderate association between

outlet type and Afro-Colombian candidate mentions (Cramér's $V = .21$) indicates that the likelihood of mentioning these candidates differs significantly by outlet type. As hypothesized, regional outlets were more likely to mention Afro-Colombian candidates, which aligns with previous scholarship highlighting regional media's focus on local or underrepresented political figures. The moderate effect size suggests that media outlet type explains a substantial portion of the variance in candidate mentions.

This trend is evident in press articles published by regional newspapers such as *El Colombiano* and *El País*. For example, *El Colombiano* reported on the electoral process, noting that political parties and groups were advocating for the inclusion of Afro-Colombian candidates in the lists, with political leaders calling for greater consideration of these candidates:

> Another discussion that opened with the registration of the lists was the lack of Afro leaders in the first place. In fact, sources of the Historical Pact confirmed to this newspaper that Francia Márquez Mina is asking for better positions to be given to candidates of her line (Ramírez Torres, 2021, para. 5).

Likewise, *El País* covered the inclusion of Afro-Colombian candidates, stating:

> 129 candidates included in the 48 lists that make up the Afro-descendant circumscription and the 22 candidates that, through the international constituency, are grouped in 10 lists, want to have a seat among the 326 seats granted by this corporation (Colprensa, 2021, para. 7).

These examples further underscore how regional outlets play a pivotal role in amplifying the visibility of Afro-Colombian candidates, especially in contrast to the more limited coverage in national media outlets.

Media Outlets' Themes and Afro-Colombian Candidates

RQ1a asked what frames the news outlets associated with Afro-Colombian candidates during the Senate and House of Representative campaigns. To answer this question, descriptive statistics were computed to analyze the themes associated with Afro-Colombian candidates. The analysis included 24 theme variables representing various descriptors, tones, and perspectives used by the media outlets in their coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates. Table 2 summarizes the means, standard deviations, and other relevant statistics for the variables.

Because the variables were coded as absent (0) or present (1), means can easily be converted to percentages, such as $M = .17$ translating to 17%. The analysis revealed that the most frequently reported theme was positive/neutral racial descriptors at 17%, followed by social activism at 11%, gender references at 11%, place of origin at 9%, and Afro-Colombian special circumscription at 8% rounding out the top five.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Themes Associated with Afro-Colombian Candidates

Frames	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Negative racial descriptors	4	0.01	0.98
Positive/neutral racial descriptors	72	.17	.380
Racial advocacy	26	.06	.243
Rooted racism in Colombia	13	.03	.175
Afro representation	10	.02	.154
Political Token	5	.01	.110
Surrogate	4	.01	.098
Political quota	3	.01	.085
Afro-Colombian special circumscription	35	.08	.279
Political phenomenon	7	.02	.129
ELN or Farc	7	.02	.129
AUC	3	.01	.085
Corruption	8	.02	.138
Class	7	.02	129
Place of origin	38	.09	.290
The region they represent	29	.07	.256
Gender Reference	45	.11	.312
Feminized jobs	8	.02	.138
Social Activism	47	.11	.318
The Nobodies	0	.00	.000
Powerful	7	.02	.129
Ignoring the use of Spanish rules	0	.00	.000
Not literate or intelligent	0	.00	.000
Degree	20	.05	.215

Note: The total number of articles was N=412.

First, the negative racial descriptors theme showed a very low mean (M = .01, SD = .098), but it was highly emphasized within the news article when it appeared. This is evident in two *Semana* articles, both highlighting a comment by Colombian comedian Alejandro Riaño in his monologue portraying the character Juanpis González. In the comments, the comedian Alejandro Riaño labels House of Representatives candidate Miguel Polo with derogatory racial and socio-economic descriptors like “Negro [black], poor, and gay" ("Polo Polo está cerca de conseguir su curul," 2022, para. 12). These descriptors, repeatedly highlighted in both articles, frame Polo Polo’s identity in a negative light, reinforcing racial stereotypes and using his skin

color (as well as his class and sexual identity) as a tool to discredit him politically. The repetition of this comment in both articles underscores how these labels are weaponized in political discourse. One article quoted: “He is called ‘black, poor, and gay’ by comedian Alejandro Riaño, who, through his fictitious character, launches strong criticisms” ("Neoburgueses, mamertos, blancos,” 2022, para. 6). This constant emphasis on negative racial descriptors illustrates how media contribute to perpetuating harmful stereotypes that associate blackness with inferiority and poverty.

Second, the positive/neutral racial descriptors theme had the highest mean (M = .17, SD = .380), reflecting a relatively higher reporting frequency. It also showed significant skewness (1.719) and kurtosis (.960), suggesting that most of the data points were concentrated on one side of the distribution (toward zero), meaning there were fewer instances of widespread usage. Still, those that did appear were notably prominent. For example, comments made by Germán Ruiz to *El Universal* newspaper (Batista, 2022, para. 10) illustrate how this variable is perceived. The professor from Cartagena University remarked on Dorina Hernández's [Afro-Colombian candidate for the Bolívar Department] candidacy

> Dorina's victory, a Black woman without political machinery, is truly incredible. It fuels progress, because the Black population of the country, even though they may not identify as Afro-descendant, could feel pride and break free from the harmful representations they have long been subjected to.

In the same article, Orlando Higuera, Director of the Political Science and International Relations program at Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar, comments on Dorina’s triumph as an exemplary case because “Dorina Hernández's history of community leadership demonstrates that

the efforts of a community [Black] historically excluded from political power can achieve representation" (Batista, 2022, para. 6).

Third, the defense of racial rights theme was present with a moderate frequency (M = .06, SD = .243), but it exhibited significant skewness (3.607) and kurtosis (11.062), implying that while it was present in some cases, it was not frequently emphasized across the sample. Fourth, the racism rooted in Colombia theme had a mean of .03 (SD = .175), with substantial skewness (5.379) and kurtosis (27.067), implying that discussions about systemic racism were relatively rare but, when they did occur, it was highly concentrated. An example of this overemphasis is found in an article from *El Colombiano*, which addresses how Afro-Colombian leaders have been involved in structural racism in Colombia. One particularly striking example illustrates the harsh realities faced by Afro-Colombian individuals during the conflict:

> The life of black men and women in the context of the Colombian conflict reached a level of contempt that the actors did not spend a bullet but preferred to chop the bodies with machetes because they were not worth the 8,000 pesos (2 dollars) that a shot could be worth (*"No valían ni un tiro,"* 2022, para. 9).

This article further notes that Afro-Colombian leaders continue to face grave threats: "Currently, leaders are being threatened by 'guerrillas and by the different expressions of paramilitarism' and receive 'stigmatizing' attacks from the institutions" (*"No valían ni un tiro,"* 2022, para. 12). Additionally, the article highlights the risks faced by Afro-Colombian leaders in several regions: "the level of risk faced by Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero leaders in the Caribbean region, Valle, Chocó, in some areas of Arauca is tremendously distressing" (*"No valían ni un tiro,"* 2022, para. 6). These quotes underscore how, in discussions about racism in Colombia,

significant emphasis is placed on the current plight of Afro-Colombian communities, illustrating both historical and ongoing systemic racism.

Lastly, representation of Afro-Colombian candidates was included with a low frequency (M = .02, SD = .154), but this theme had substantial skewness (6.205) and kurtosis (36.683), indicating a small number of highly emphasized instances, which discusses the significance of elections for Afro-Colombian seats in Congress. One of the candidates, environmentalist Isabel Zuleta López, stated in an article that she is proud to be Black. She mentioned that instead, she "chose to be black because of her ancestors and her frizzy hair, would be part of the Afro-Colombian bench" (Mera Villamizar & Cortez Palacios, 2022, para. 7).

The article also highlights how well-known Afro-Colombians could secure seats in Congress, citing former Olympic medalist Caterine Ibargüen, "whose challenge is to harvest some 100,000 votes from the affection that more than 50 million Colombians have for her" (Mera Villamizar & Cortez Palacios, 2022, para. 9). Furthermore, the article provides a numerical breakdown of Afro-Colombian representation in Congress, if the predicted votes hold for some political parties and movements:

> In addition to these six or seven probable Afro Senators (counting the one from Comunes), surprises are not ruled out in other lists, such as the preferential list of the Liberal Party, where the current representative to the House for Chocó Nilton Córdoba Manyoma is present (Mera Villamizar & Cortez Palacios, 2022, para. 10)

These projections not only highlight the growing political influence of Afro-Colombians in Colombia but also underscore the importance of continued efforts toward equitable representation and the dismantling of racial barriers within the country's political system.

Other themes had low presence and/or little to no skewness, including: The Illegal group membership theme, which is related to armed groups like the ELN and FARC, or AUC, showed a minimal mean for ELN and FARC (M = .02, SD = .129) and (M = .01, SD = .085) for AUC mentions, indicating a relatively rare focus on these topics concerning Afro-Colombian candidates. The social activism theme had a mean of .11 (SD = .318), demonstrating a moderate frequency of reporting, with relatively low skewness (2.515) and kurtosis (4.345), suggesting a more balanced representation of this theme. The political token theme was only minimally present (M = .01, SD = .110), with no significant skewness or kurtosis.

Several themes, particularly those related to negative racial descriptors and being a surrogate, were underrepresented, suggesting a nuanced portrayal of Afro-Colombian candidates in the media. In other words, the media might not be emphasizing negative or biased portrayals as much as expected based on Colombia's deep-seated racism, which could suggest more balanced or varied portrayals rather than oversimplified or biased ones.

To explore RQ1b, which examines whether the frames associated with Afro-Colombian candidates differed between regional and national news outlets, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was initially conducted (Tabachnick et al., 2007). The analysis included the 24 themes as dependent variables, and the newspapers were divided into two categories with regional including three outlets (*El Colombiano, El Universal,* and *El Pais),* and national including three outlets (*El Tiempo, El Espectador,* and *Semana)* and used as the independent variable.

However, several issues emerged during the MANOVA that impacted the assumptions underlying the analysis. Specifically, Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices revealed that some groups had singular covariance matrices, indicating insufficient variability in certain

theme variables across the groups (Hair et al., 2006; Tabachnick et al., 2007). Additionally, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances showed that several theme variables exhibited constant values [a non-zero constant] within certain newspaper groups, meaning that the theme was used uniformly across articles from a specific newspaper (Levene, 1960; Tabachnick et al., 2007). These issues violated the assumption of homogeneity of variance, making it difficult to interpret the MANOVA results reliably (Tabachnick et al., 2007).

In light of these challenges, a decision was made to combine conceptually linked/aligned themes (see Table 3) to increase variability and meet the assumptions of the analysis.

Table 3
Composite Categories and Corresponding Variables for Analyzing Media Themes of Afro-Colombian Candidates

Composite Category	Original Variables Included
Racial	Negative racial descriptors, Positive/neutral racial descriptors, Racial advocacy, Rooted racism in Colombia, Afro representation
Political Role	Political Token, Surrogate, Political quota, Afro-Colombian special circumscription, Political phenomenon
Criminalization and Corruption	ELN or Farc, AUC, Corruption
Class and Marginalization	Class, the nobodies
Gender	Gender Reference, Feminized Jobs
Social Activism	
Location and Regional Identity	Place of origin, the region they represent
Linguistic Power	Powerful, Ignoring the use of Spanish rules
Educational Background	Not literate or intelligent, Degree

However, due to the presence of extreme kurtosis in several variables (kurtosis values exceeding 50 in variables such as class and marginalization and linguistic power), and after attempting various transformations (e.g., square root, cubit root), it was determined that these

variables violated the normality assumption necessary for MANOVA (Hair et al., 2006; Tabachnick et al., 2007). As a result, these variables were excluded from the multivariate analysis to ensure the assumptions of multivariate normality and homogeneity of covariance matrices were met, which is essential for obtaining reliable and interpretable results (Hair et al., 2006; Stevens, 2009; Tabachnick et al., 2007). Mann-Whitney U tests (Field, 2024) were conducted as a non-parametric alternative to further investigate the potential differences between the outlet (1 = Regional, 2 = National) categories on class and marginalization, and linguistic power.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U tests indicated no significant differences in the distributions of Class and Marginalization ($U = 21326.00$, $z = 0.407$, $p = .684$) or Linguistic Power ($U = 21429.00$, $z = 1.175$, $p = .240$) across the regional and national outlets. Specifically, the mean ranks for Class and Marginalization were 207.04 (regional) outlets and 205.97 (national), and for linguistic power, 207.56 (regional) and 204.48 (national), suggesting these small differences that the distributions for both variables were similar across two outlets types (See Table 4). Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test results indicate no significant difference in how Class and Marginalization, and Linguistic Power were represented in regional and national outlets.

Table 4
Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test for Class and Marginalization, and Linguistic Power *by Regional vs. National Outlets*

Variable	Group	Mean Rank	*U* Statistic	*z*-Value	*p*-Value
Class and Marginalization	Regional	207.04	21326.00	0.407	.684
	National	205.97			
Linguistic Power	Regional	207.56	21429.00	1.175	.240
	National	204.48			

Note: The Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess differences in distributions across the two groups.

After excluding class and marginalization, and linguistic power due to their non-normal distributions, I examined the distribution of the remaining variables. Three variables showed significant skewness and high kurtosis. To meet the normality assumption for MANOVA (Tabachnick et al., 2007), political role was square root transformed, while criminalization and corruption, and social activism were cubic root transformed. These transformations addressed the skewness and kurtosis, and after re-assessment, the variables were deemed suitable for inclusion in the MANOVA.

Subsequently, a MANOVA was conducted to assess the impact of outlet type (Regional vs. National) on the transformed variables, including *political role*, criminalization and corruption, *social activism*, and several framing variables (racial, gender, location and regional identity, educational background). These transformations addressed the initial violations of normality, ensuring that the variables met the assumptions required for MANOVA (Tabachnick et al., 2007).

Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was significant, Box's $M = 681.249$, F (28,585297.576), $p <. 001$, suggesting that the assumption of homogeneity of covariance was violated. However, due to the robustness of the MANOVA to moderate violations of this assumption (Field, 2024; Tabachnick et al., 2007), the analysis proceeded.

The overall multivariate test was statistically significant, indicating that the regional outlet type significantly influenced the combined set of dependent variables, Pillai′s Trace = .251, $F(7,404) = 19.356$, $p < .001$. The effect size, $\eta^2 = .251$, suggests a large overall effect.

Subsequent univariate analyses revealed significant effects of regional outlets on several dependent variables (see Table 5).

Table 5

MANOVA Results for Combined Frames Across Regional and National Media Outlets

	National outlets (n = 208)		Regional outlets (n = 204)	
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Political role	0.65	0.06	0.15*	0.22
Criminalization and corruption	0.01	0.07	0.04*	0.18
Social activism	0.06	0.23	0.17*	0.38
Racial	0.36	0.111	0.09*	0.16
Gender	0.03	0.14	0.09*	0.19
Location and regional	0.03	0.15	0.13*	0.31
Educational Background	0.01	0.07	0.04*	0.13

Note: Differences at $p < .05$

Significant results include the following:

- Political Role: Regional outlets (M = .1506, SD = .25282) had a significantly higher political role score compared to national outlets (M = .0650, SD = .17750), $F(1,410)$ = 15.867, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .037$.
- Criminalization and corruption: Regional outlets (M = .0418, SD = .17678) had a significantly higher level of criminalization and corruption coverage as compared to national outlets (M = .0067, SD = .06783), $F(1,410) = 7.146$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = .017$.
- Social Activism: Regional outlets (M = .1716, SD = .37793) reported significantly higher levels of social activism than national outlets (M = .0577, SD = .23372), $F(1,410)$ = 13.587, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .032$.
- Racial: Regional outlets (M = .0863, SD = .16492) showed significantly more racial framing coverage as compared to national outlets (M = .0356, SD = .10805), $F(1,410)$ = 13.672, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .032$.

- Gender: Regional outlets (M = .0956, SD = .23157) provided significantly more gender coverage as compared to national outlets (M = .0337, SD = .14353), $F(1,410) = 10.691$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .025$.
- Location and regional identity: Regional outlets (M = .1348, SD = .30628) provided significantly more location and regional identity framing coverage as compared to national outlets (M = .0288, SD = .15270), $F(1,410) = 19.861$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .046$.
- Educational background: Regional outlets (M = .0392, SD = .13476) featured significantly more educational background coverage as compared to national outlets (M = .0096, SD = .06883), $F(1,410) = 7.927$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2 = .019$.

In summary, the results of the MANOVA indicated that regional outlets exhibit more frequent mentions of political role, criminalization and corruption, social activism, and various themes (racial, gender, location, education) as compared to national outlets (see Figure 2). The effect sizes for regional differences ranged from small (η^2 = .017) to medium (η^2 = .046), with location framing showing the largest effect.

These findings are exemplified through various articles from regional newspapers, which illustrate the prominent themes of political role, criminalization, corruption, and social activism. To contextualize, the political role coverage category refers to how Afro-Colombian candidates are portrayed as tokens, beneficiaries of quotas, or participants in special circumscription, or, in some cases, how they address issues affecting the Afro-Colombian community. An example of this category is the article in the newspaper *El Universal*, which tells how the candidate Miguel Polo Polo became one of the recipients of the special constituency seat of the Afro communities: “controversial and irreverent influencer who defends Uribism is loved and hated, but his popularity is only growing, which translated into the 32,253 votes with which he won a seat in

the House for the special Afro constituency" (Carrasquilla León, 2022, para. 8). This highlights how regional media focuses on the political significance of candidates from marginalized communities, especially within the context of Afro-Colombian representation.

Similarly, the theme of criminalization and corruption is highlighted by the newspaper *El Colombiano* through an article that establishes the alleged links between the Afro-Colombian Senator Piedad Cordoba and the FARC guerrillas. This article exemplifies regional coverage of criminalization, illustrating how the senator is not only associated with the guerrilla group but also with corruption, particularly regarding electoral manipulation through hostage exchanges. According to the article:

> The photos and versions of this chapter are added to the whole FARC-política [FARC-politics] dossier, which includes the alleged delays of Piedad for the FARC to release hostages for electoral purposes -revealed by her former advisor Andrés Vásquez-; and the alleged link with Álex Saab, alleged to be Nicolás Maduro's front man (López, 2022, para. 15).

Thus, this article underscores the prevalence of criminalization and corruption as prominent themes in regional news coverage, especially considering the senator's ties to Antioquia, where the newspaper is based.[25]

Additionally, the regional coverage of social activism in *El Universal* contrasts with national outlets, offering another example of regional outlets' focus on activism. The piece emphasizes that Francia Márquez Mina, who was relatively unknown just months ago, has gained significant attention for her Afro-Colombian, feminist, and environmental advocacy. The article notes:

[25] Regional newspapers will likely focus on their local region, candidates, and community. Therefore, themes that are more relevant to the candidates or the community are expected to receive greater coverage.

> who until months ago few knew about her Afro, feminist and environmental leadership, has been a boom. This has led many long-time supporters and recently disembarked followers to see in her the woman who could be the first woman president of Colombia (Carrasquilla León, 2022, para. 7).

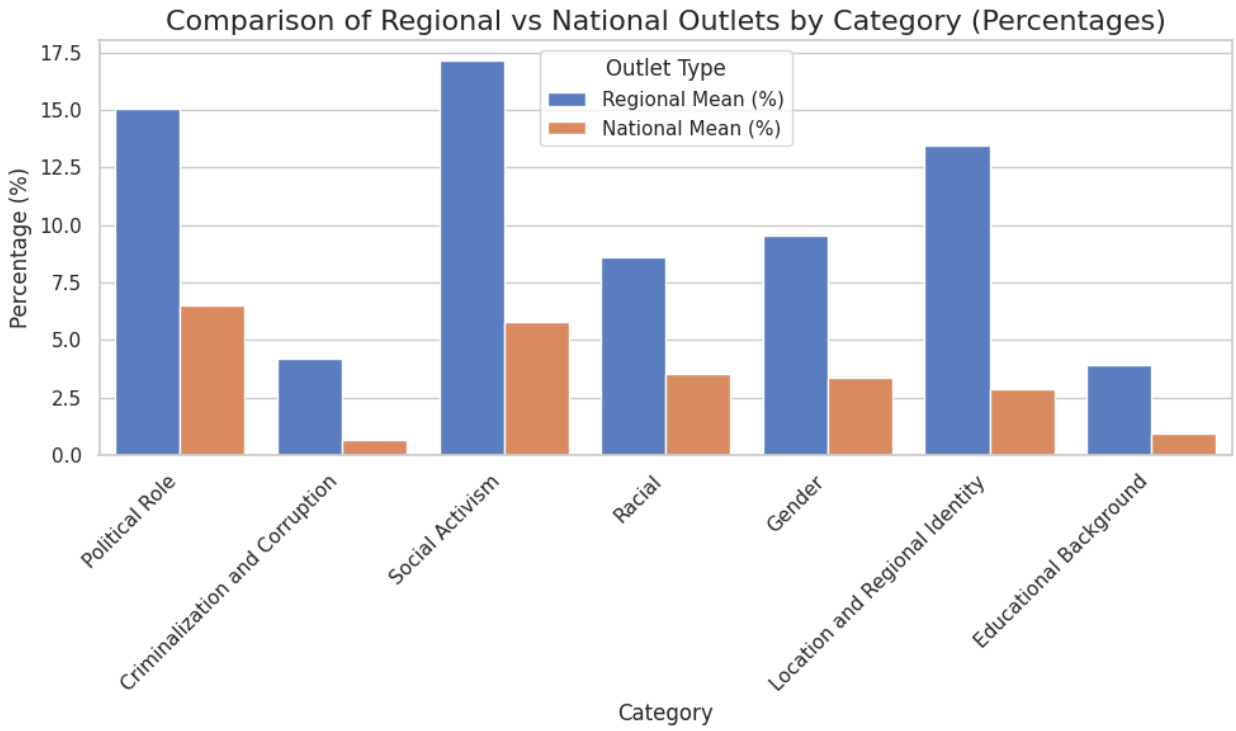
This same article highlights that her candidacy "represents the fight against institutional racism, the fight in favor of the environment, and is a woman who carries the banners of progressivism" (Carrasquilla León, 2022, para. 9). This coverage emphasizes how regional outlets are more likely to focus on emerging social activists and the significant role they play in challenging institutional norms and pushing for social change.

Finally, *El Universal* further exemplifies the higher levels of regional coverage by focusing on Dorina Hernández, the new elected member of the House of Representatives for the department of Bolívar. The article provides insight into the intersection of gender and regional identity, noting:

> A Palenque teacher wants to take her notebook with all the social, economic, and cultural problems to Congress and, thus, get involved in solving them; she is Cha Dorina Hernandez, the new representative to the House of Representatives for Bolivar of the Historic Pact (Carrasquilla León, 2022, para. 2).

This coverage highlights how regional outlets not only emphasize the political roles of candidates but also delve into their gender roles and the specific challenges they aim to address for their local communities.

Figure 2



Outlets' Coverage of Afro-Colombian Candidates

To address RQ2, which asked how and to what extent does an outlet's coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates vary based on the ideology/party affiliation of the outlet's owner, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess this difference. To measure the overall coverage, the 24 theme variables were combined into a single composite variable, termed 'coverage.' This composite variable was created by summing the values of the individual theme variables and then dividing the total by 24 to obtain an average score. Therefore, the coverage variable ranges from 0 to 1, with the values representing the average frequency of coverage across all 24 themes. This composite variable represented the aggregated presence of various themes across all articles, allowing for a more holistic assessment of media coverage.

A variable was created to represent the ideological orientation of the media outlets, with values assigned as follows: 1 for left-leaning outlets (*Semana* and *El Pais*), 2 for centrist outlets

(*El Espectador* and *El Colombiano*), and 3 for center-right outlets (*El Universal* and *El Tiempo*). The categorization of these outlets was based on their ownership structures and political stances, with particular attention to how their owners' affiliations and relationships with political and economic power influence their editorial perspectives. It is important to note that there were no purely left or left-center newspapers in the data due to these structural factors, which often shape the media's ideological positioning.

The results showed that there was no significant difference between the ideological groups, $F(2, 409) = 1.417$, $p = 0.244$. The effect size measures ($\eta^2 = 0.007$, $\omega^2 = 0.002$) indicated that the variation explained by ideology was minimal (see Table 6). To further explore the group differences, I performed post-hoc comparisons using the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test. The results revealed that the mean difference between left-wing and center outlets ($M = 0.055$, $SD = 0.072$, $M_diff = 0.017$, $p = 0.120$), as well as between center and center-right outlets ($M = 0.038$, $SD = 0.082$, $M_diff = -0.004$, $p = 0.710$), were not statistically significant. Similarly, the difference between left-wing and center-right outlets was also non-significant ($M = 0.034$, $SD = 0.083$, $M_diff = -0.022$, $p = 0.147$).

Table 6
One-Way ANOVA Results for Coverage by Media Ideology

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	.018	2	.009	1.417	.244
Within Groups	2.644	409	.006		
Total	2.662	411			

Note: There were no significant differences in coverage across media outlets by ideological orientation, $F(2, 409) = 1.417$, $p = .244$.

The effect sizes for the ANOVA indicated that the proportion of variance explained by ideology was very small. The eta-squared (η^2) value was 0.007, suggesting that only 0.7% of the

total variance in Afro-Colombian candidates' coverage could be attributed to ideological differences between outlets. The omega-squared (ω^2) values, both for fixed-effects (0.002) and random-effects (0.001), further support the conclusion that the ideological affiliation of media outlets accounted for a negligible amount of variance in coverage. Hence, the results of the one-way ANOVA suggest that there is no significant variation in Afro-Colombian candidates' coverage based on the ideology of the outlet's owner. The small effect sizes indicate that ideology has a minimal impact on how Afro-Colombian candidates are covered across different types of media outlets.

Summary

The results indicate that regional outlets provide more extensive coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates than national outlets, likely due to their closer ties to local communities and focus on underrepresented political figures. Key themes in the coverage included positive/neutral racial descriptors, social activism, and gender references. While some themes, like negative racial descriptors, were less common, others, such as racial advocacy and systemic racism, were occasionally emphasized. Regional media covered a broader range of themes, including political role, criminalization and corruption, and social activism, with a significant focus on regional identity. These outlets played a crucial role in amplifying Afro-Colombian candidates' visibility, often highlighting their activism and local connections. An outlet's ideology, however, had minimal influence on the coverage, suggesting that factors beyond political orientation shape media framing.

This chapter intended to examine how major news outlets in Colombia covered marginalized candidates during elections and whether this coverage varied by outlet type. This analysis reveals what themes the news media emphasizes and how they contribute to public

discourse about underrepresented candidates, ultimately affecting how voters evaluate candidates. To better understand voters' perceptions of race and candidacy, the following chapter explores how a candidate's race may or may not influence voter decisions in Colombia.

Chapter 4 - Results Experiment

This chapter presents the experiment's results, examining the roles of voter and candidate race and how they may align and conflict in candidate evaluations based on Colombia's hierarchies of race. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions, where they were exposed to a candidate's image (Afro-Colombian, Mestizo or White) and include name and place of origin as cues, alongside a proposal regarding the candidate's stance on peace discussions in Colombia. The control group received the same proposal, including a more "generic" name and place of origin, but no image. These cues were used to examine how racial identity and other racially-coded cues might act as heuristics for voters.

The Role of Candidate Race in Voter Evaluations

H2 posited that a candidate's race influences voters' evaluations of them. A one-way between-subjects variance analysis (ANOVA) was conducted to test this hypothesis (Tabachnick et al., 2007). The independent variable, candidate race, had four levels: White, Afro-Colombian, Mestizo, and Control (Condition Neutral). The dependent variable, voters' evaluations, was assessed using ten 7-point Likert scale items from a measure developed by Zarate et al. (2024) to evaluate political candidates across various traits. The eight items in this scale were averaged by summing the scores and dividing by the number of items to perform the inferential analysis. Higher scores indicated more positive candidate evaluations.

The ANOVA results indicated no statistically significant effect of candidate race on voters' evaluations, $F(3,564) = 2.00$, $p = .112$. The effect size, measured by eta-squared (η^2), was small ($\eta^2 = 0.011$), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.000 to 0.029, suggesting that the proportion of variance explained by candidate race was minimal. Additional effect size

estimates, including epsilon-squared (ε^2) and omega-squared (ω^2), also indicated small effects, with $\varepsilon^2 = 0.005$ and ω^2 fixed = 0.005 (see Table 7).

Table 7

Analysis of Variance for Candidate Race on Voters' Evaluations.

Source	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	8.341	3	2.780	2.003	.112
Within Groups	782.783	564	1.388		
Total	791.124	567			

Note: There was no significant effect of a candidate's race on voters' evaluation, $F(2, 564) = 2.003$, $p = .112$.

Though the ANOVA was insignificant, descriptive statistics were calculated for each candidate race group to explore the mean difference. Afro-Colombian ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.22$), White ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.15$), Mestizo ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.01$), Condition Neutral ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.25$). Lastly, post-hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted using the Tukey HSD test to further explore differences between the candidate race groups. The Tukey test showed no significant differences between most of the race groups. Specifically, there were no significant differences between White and Condition Neutral ($M = 0.02$, $p = .999$), White and Afro-Colombian ($M = -0.13$, $p = .777$), White and Mestizo ($M = 0.20$, $p = .465$), Afro-Colombian and Condition Neutral ($M = 0.13$, $p = .777$), Afro-Colombian and White ($M = 0.15$, $p = .697$), or Afro-Colombian and Mestizo ($M = 0.34$, $p =. 073$). Similarly, there were no significant differences between Mestizo and Condition Neutral ($M = -0.20$, $p =. 465$), or Mestizo and White ($M = -0.18$, $p = .541$).

However, significant differences were found when comparing Afro-Colombian and Mestizo groups, with the Mestizo group receiving significantly higher evaluations than the Afro-Colombian group ($M = 0.34$, $p = .015$). Additionally, Mestizo candidates were evaluated significantly lower than those in the Condition Neutral group ($M = -0.20$, $p = .015$). These differences were found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The effect sizes for these comparisons were small, with eta-squared (η^2) values for the pairwise differences ranging from 0.005 to 0.01, indicating that the differences between groups, although statistically significant in some cases, accounted for only a small portion of the variance in voters' evaluations.

In summary, although the ANOVA did not reveal a significant overall effect of candidate race on voter evaluations, post-hoc tests identified significant differences between Afro-Colombian and Mestizo candidates. Specifically, Mestizo candidates received higher evaluations than Afro-Colombian candidates but lower evaluations than those in the control group. These findings suggest partial support for the hypothesis, indicating that race may influence voters' evaluations in specific comparisons. However, the small effect sizes suggest that the influence of candidate race on voters' evaluations was minimal in this study.

Ethnic Identity and Voting Preferences: Group-Based Candidate Support

The next hypothesis predicted that people who consider themselves Mestizo would be more likely to vote for a (H3a) Mestizo or (H3b) White candidate than an (H3c) Afro-Colombian candidate. To test **H3**, a regressions analysis (Tabachnick et al., 2007) was conducted[26] to examine the relationship between participants' ethnic/ race identity (Afro-Colombian, Mestizo,

[26] Originally, several interaction terms were considered in the model; however, they caused issues with multicollinearity. As a result, these interactions were removed to simplify the model and mitigate the multicollinearity problem.

White), candidate race, and voting preferences. For the model, the dependent variable is a composite score derived from four questions, which are part of a scale developed by Shpeer (2023) to measure the likelihood of voting. To create the composite variable, the responses to the four questions were summed and then divided by four to calculate the average score. Higher scores indicated a greater likelihood of voting for the candidate, while lower scores reflected a reduced likelihood. The predictors included candidate race (Afro-Colombian, Mestizo, White) and racial identity strength variable using the Umaña-Taylor et al. (2004) scale (combined Likert scale).

The model explained only a small portion of the variance in voting preferences, R^2 = 0.024, indicating that the predictors accounted for approximately 2.4% of the variance in voting preferences. The model was not statistically significant, $F(4,255) = 1.600$, $p = 0.175$, suggesting that the predictors did not significantly influence voting preferences.

Examination of the regression coefficients revealed that none of the predictors were statistically significant. Specifically, voting preferences were not significantly associated with preference for a White candidate (B = -0.018, p = 0.793), a Mestizo candidate (B = 0.010, p = 0.882), or an Afro-Colombian candidate (B = 0.110, p = 0.125). The racial identity strength was also non-statistically significant (B = .020, p = 0.774), indicating that the candidates' racial/ethnic identity does not impact voters' decisions (see Table 8); therefore, **H3** (**H3a**, **H3b**, and **H3c**) is rejected.

Table 8

Regression Coefficients Predicting Voting Preference Based on Racial Identity (Mestizo)

			95% CI			
Variable	b	SE	LL	UL	β	p
Racial Identity strength	0.082	0.251	-0.411	0.575	0.020	0.744
Candidate White	-0.049	0.187	-0.417	0.319	-0.018	0.793
Candidate Afro-Colombian	0.303	0.198	-0.085	0.691	0.110	0.125
Candidate Mestizo	0.028	0.191	-0.346	0.403	0.010	0.882
Sample Size (N) Mestizo	N = 260					

Note: p > 0.05 indicate that the corresponding predictors are not statistically significant.

Examination of multicollinearity using the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance statistics revealed no evidence of problematic multicollinearity. All VIF values were well below the threshold of 10, and tolerance values were above 0.10, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue in this model (Tabachnick et al., 2007). In summary, the regression analysis did not reveal significant predictors of voting preferences, as none of the individual predictors, including identity variables or candidate race, were statistically significant. The model as a whole did not significantly explain the variability in voting preferences, suggesting that additional factors beyond identity and candidate race may influence voting behavior in this context.

To address **H4**, which predicted that people who consider themselves White would be more likely to vote for a (**H4a**) Mestizo or (**H4b**) White candidate than an (**H4c**) Afro-Colombian candidate, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. In this analysis, the same variables IV(s) and DV, as the previous model were used. The results indicated that the predictors collectively accounted for a very small portion of the variance in voting preferences,

$R^2 = 0.029$, suggesting that the model explained only 2.9% of the variability. The model itself did not reach statistical significance, $F(4,209) = 1.534$, $p = 0.194$, suggesting that the model's variables were ineffective in predicting voting behavior.

A closer inspection of the regression coefficients revealed that none of the demographic identity variables or candidate race preferences were statistically significant. For instance, preferences for a White candidate ($B = -0.023$, $p = 0.777$), an Afro-Colombian candidate ($B = -0.101$, $p = 0.222$), or a Mestizo candidate ($B = 0.062$, $p = 0.456$), and racial identity strength ($B = 0.128$, $p = 0.062$) were not significant. (see Table 9).

Table 9

Regression Coefficients Predicting Voting Preference Based on Racial Identity (White)

			95% CI			
Variable	b	SE	LL	UL	β	p
Racial Identity strength	0.130	0.070	-0.007	0.268	0.128	0.062
Candidate White	-0.064	0.226	-0.510	0.382	-0.023	0.777
Candidate Mestizo	0.166	0.222	-0.272	0.603	0.062	0.456
Candidate Afro-Colombian	0.275	0.225	-0.168	0.719	0.101	0.222
Sample Size (N) White	N = 214					

Note: $p > 0.05$ indicate that the corresponding predictors are not statistically significant.

Collinearity diagnostics further confirmed that multicollinearity was not a concern in this model, as the VIFs were all below the critical threshold of 10, and tolerance values remained well above 0.10. In conclusion, the analysis did not find support for the hypothesis that individuals identifying as White are more likely to favor a Mestizo or White candidate over an

Afro-Colombian candidate. None of the variables were significant predictors of voting preferences. These findings suggest that factors other than identity and candidate race may play a more substantial role in shaping voting behavior.

Lastly, a multiple regression analysis was employed to explore **H5**, which expected people who identify as Afro-Colombian to be more likely to vote for an Afro-Colombian candidate than a (H5a) Mestizo or (H5b) White candidate. IV(s) and DV were the same. The overall model accounted for only 4.5% of the variance in voting preferences, with $R^2 = 0.045$. The model did not reach statistical significance, $F(4,50) = 0.593$, $p = 0.670$, indicating that the demographic and candidate-related factors examined in the model were not significant predictors of voting behavior.

Upon examining the individual predictors, none were found to have a significant relationship with voting preferences. Specifically, preferences for a White candidate ($B = -0.129$, $p = 0.470$), an Afro-Colombian candidate ($B = 0.088$, $p = 0.613$), and a Mestizo candidate ($B = -0.052$, $p = 0.759$), and racial identity strength ($B = -0.116$, $p = 0.413$) were not statistically significant. (see Table 10).

Table 10

Regression Coefficients Predicting Voting Preference Based on Racial Identity (Afro-Colombian)

			95% CI			
Variable	b	SE	LL	UL	β	p
Racial Identity strength	0.242	0.394	-0.531	1.016	0.060	0.539
Candidate White	-0.317	0.435	-1.191	0.557	-0.129	0.470
Candidate Mestizo	-0.152	0.493	-1.143	0.839	-0.052	0.759
Candidate Afro-Colombian	0.249	0.489	-0.733	1.230	0.088	0.613
Sample Size (N) Afro-Colombian	N = 55					

Note: $p > 0.05$ indicate that the corresponding predictors are not statistically significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

Collinearity diagnostics indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern, as all VIFs were well below the critical threshold of 10, and tolerance values remained above 0.10, suggesting that the predictors were not excessively correlated. In conclusion, the analysis failed to provide evidence supporting the hypothesis that Afro-Colombian individuals are more likely to vote for an Afro-Colombian candidate over a Mestizo or White candidate. None of the demographic identity variables, candidate preferences, or interaction terms had significant effects on voting behavior. These results suggest that factors other than identity may be more influential in determining voting choices in this context.

Justification for the previous approach

Splitting the sample into multiple models can reduce statistical power (e.g., Afro-Colombians have 55 respondents); however, each group's identity is relatively distinct, and splitting them helps to preserve clarity in the interpretation of results. Collapsing them into one

single model, it would require me to include interactions between respondent identity and candidate race, which could create a complex model with potentially high multicollinearity[27] (Tabachnick et al., 2007), especially when including terms for three different racial identities. This [one single model] could make it harder to detect significant effects due to inflated standard errors, particularly for Afro-Colombian groups. Moreover, the complexity could also lead to a situation where the relationships I am trying to examine become less interpretable, which defeats the purpose of testing the specific hypotheses. Since **H3**, **H4**, and **H5** are distinct in their hypotheses about how different racial identities influence candidate preferences, it is methodologically sound to run separate regression models.

As I mentioned previously, while splitting the data reduces statistical power, I am avoiding the dilution of effect sizes[28] that could occur if all identities were combined in a single model, especially with a small sample of one of the groups [Afro-Colombian].

Ethnic Identity and Candidate Evaluation: The Role of In-Group Preference

H6 posited that the more an individual identifies as Mestizo, the more likely they are to evaluate candidates in the following order (from most positive to least positive): **H6a)** White, **H6b)** Mestizo, then **H6c)** Afro-Colombian. To test H6 (a, b, and c), two multiple regression analyses were employed. For the first model, the independent variables included the participant's racial identity (only including the Mestizo variable that was previously dummy coded), candidate race (dummy coded as candidate White, candidate Mestizo, and candidate Afro-Colombian), and racial identity strength using the Umaña-Taylor et al. (2004) scale (combined Likert scale). The

[27] If two predictors are very similar (e.g., "Mestizo identity" and "Preference for Mestizo candidates") to prevent multicollinearity, one of them needs to be removed or combined into a single variable, which is problematic because that can cause a loss of important information for this type of analysis.
[28] In a combined model, the effect size might be inflated or underestimated if multicollinearity exists.

dependent variable was the participants' voting preference (Shpeer, 2023) combined scale. For the results, Higher scores indicated a stronger racial identity, while lower scores reflected a weaker racial identity.

In the first model, the overall regression was not statistically significant $F(4,255) = 1.60$, $p = .175$, and explained only 2.4% of the variance in candidate evaluation ($R^2 = .024$). The coefficients for the candidate race variables— White ($B = .017$, $p = 0.828$), Afro-Colombian ($B = -.053$, $p = 0.502$), and Mestizo ($B = -.084$, $p = 0.290$)— were not statistically significant, suggesting that ethnic identity did not have a significant impact on the evaluation of candidates by race in this model (see Table 11). Additionally, racial identity strength also had no significant effect on candidate evaluation ($B = .117$, $p = 0.063$).

Table 11

Regression Coefficients Predicting Voting Preference Based on Candidate Ethnic Identity (White, Mestizo, and Afro-Colombian) and Racial Identity Strength for Mestizo Voters

			95% CI			
Variable	b	SE	LL	UL	β	p
Candidate White	0.048	0.220	-0.386	0.482	0.017	0.828
Candidate Afro-Colombian	-0.142	0.211	-0.558	0.274	-0.053	0.502
Candidate Mestizo	-0.224	0.211	-0.640	0.192	-0.084	0.290
Racial Identity Strength	0.123	0.066	-0.007	0.252	0.117	0.063
Sample Size (N) Mestizo	N = 260					

Note: p > 0.05 indicate that the corresponding predictors are not statistically significant.

For model two, I used the same dependent variable previously combined related to voting preference (Shpeer, 2023). For the independent variables, I used the same included in model one [candidate race (dummy coded as candidate White, candidate Mestizo, and candidate Afro-

Colombian)], and racial identity strength (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004), but excluding the Mestizo identity. Likewise, the centering variable option was used in the variables related to candidate race (White, Mestizo, and Afro-Colombian) as well as racial identity strength combined variable. This option allows subtracting the mean for the variables for each value, which shifts the distribution of the variable so that its mean becomes zero to reduce multicollinearity and make the model more stable.

After this, interactions were created between the variable racial identity strength and the variables related to the candidates' race (White, Mestizo, Afro-Colombian), with one interaction per variable (e.g., racial identity strength x White, etc.) which was used to examine the influence of candidate ethnic identity and interaction terms on voting preferences. This model also did not significantly improve the explanatory power of the initial model $F(7,252) = 1.52$, $p = .162$, and accounted for only 4.0% of the variance in candidate evaluation ($R^2 = .040$). While the main effects for the candidate race variables remained no-significant: White candidate ($B = .018$, $p = 0.819$), Afro-Colombian candidate ($B = -.056$, $p = 0.477$), and Mestizo candidate ($B = -.068$, $p = 0.391$), the interactions between racial identity strength and Mestizo candidate evaluations were significant ($B = .165$, $p = 0.46$). This suggests that individuals who identify more strongly as Mestizo were more likely to evaluate Mestizo candidates positively. However, the interaction terms for White candidates ($B = .058$, $p = 0.449$) and Afro-Colombian candidates ($B = .089$, $p = 0.250$) were not statistically significant, indicating that racial identity strength did not significantly alter evaluations of these candidates' racial groups (see Table 12).

Table 12

Regression Coefficients Model 2 Predicting Candidate Evaluations Based on Voting Preference Based on Candidate Ethnic Identity (White, Mestizo, and Afro-Colombian) and Interaction Terms for Mestizo Voters

			95% CI			
Variable	b	SE	LL	UL	β	p
Candidate White	0.050	0.221	-0.384	0.485	0.018	0.819
Candidate Afro-Colombian	-0.151	0.212	-0.568	0.266	-0.056	0.477
Candidate Mestizo	-0.183	0.212	-0.601	0.236	-0.068	0.391
Racial Identity Strength	0.102	0.068	-0.031	0.235	0.098	0.131
A*D[1] Interaction	0.152	0.201	-0.243	0.547	0.058	0.449
B*D[2] Interaction	0.233	0.202	-0.165	0.632	0.089	0.250
C*D[3] Interaction	0.349	0.174	0.006	0.693	0.165	0.046*

Note: $p > 0.05$ indicate that the corresponding predictors are not statistically significant. *Predictors statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. 1. Interaction between White Candidate and Racial Identity Strength. 2. Interaction between Afro-Colombian Candidate and Racial Identity Strength. 3. Interaction between Mestizo Candidate and Racial Identity Strength.

These results offer mixed support; specifically, **H6a**, no significant effect was found for evaluations for White candidates, as the coefficient for white candidates was not significant in either model. **H6b**, the hypothesis that Mestizo-identifying individuals would rate Mestizo candidates more positively was partially supported, as the significant interaction term between ethnic identity and Mestizo candidates suggests that stronger identification with Mestizo ethnicity may lead to more positive evaluations of Mestizo candidates. **H6c,** there was no significant evidence to support that Mestizo-identifying individuals would rate Afro-Colombian candidates less positively, as the coefficient for Afro-Colombian candidates remained non-significant in both models. The significant interaction for Mestizo candidates points to the

importance of ethnic identity in candidate evaluation, particularly when candidates share the voter's ethnic background.

A similar multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess **H7.** The model included the same predictors as in **H6** (**H6a**, **H6b**, **H6c**), and it predicted that the more an individual identifies as Afro-Colombian, the more likely they are to evaluate candidates in the following order (from most positive to least positive): **H7a)** Afro-Colombian, **H7b)** Mestizo, then **H7c)** White.

The results of the regression first model were not significant overall, $F(4,50) = 0.593$, $p = .670$, indicating that H7 was not supported, accounting for only 4.5% of the variance in candidate evaluation ($R^2 = .045$). Regarding the coefficients for the candidate race variable, Afro-Colombian ($B = .088$, $p = 0.613$), Mestizo ($B = -.052$, $p = 0.759$), and White ($B = -.129$, $p = 0.470$), were not statistically significant, which suggest that Afro-Colombians' race identity is not predicting how they evaluate candidates (from most positive to least positive) as established in the hypotheses (see Table 13). Also, Racial Identity Strength did not significantly affect candidate evaluation ($B = -.116$, $p = 0.413$). Therefore, the three hypotheses were rejected.

Table 13

Regression Coefficients Predicting Voting Preference Based on Candidate Ethnic Identity (White, Mestizo, and Afro-Colombian) and Racial Identity Strength for Afro-Colombian Voters

			95% CI			
Variable	b	SE	LL	UL	β	p
Candidate White	-0.317	0.435	-1.191	0.557	-0.129	0.470
Candidate Afro-Colombian	0.249	0.489	-0.733	1.230	-0.088	0.613
Candidate Mestizo	-0.152	0.493	-1.143	0.839	-0.052	0.759
Racial Identity Strength	0.125	0.151	-0.428	0.179	-0.116	0.413
Sample Size (N) Afro-Colombian	N = 55					

Note: p > 0.05 indicate that the corresponding predictors are not statistically significant.

For model two, I followed the same process as for model one to test hypothesis H6, using the same interactions. This model did not significantly enhance the explanatory power of the initial model one, $F(3,47) = 0.976$, $p = .412$, and explained only 10.1% of the variance in candidate evaluation ($R^2 = 0.101$). The results indicated that the candidate Afro-Colombian variable showed a positive non-significant relationship with voting preferences ($B = .446$, $p = 0.811$), candidate Mestizo variable had a small, non-significant effect ($B = -.007$, $p = 0.966$), and lastly Candidate White variable had a negative but non-significant effect ($B = -.152$, $p = 0.400$) on voting preferences. The interaction terms for White candidate ($B = .094$, $p = 0.528$) Afro-Colombian candidate ($B = .085$, $p = 0.635$), and Mestizo candidate ($B = -.221$, $p = 0.185$) were not statistically significant (see Table 14), indicating that racial identity strength did not significantly alter evaluations of these candidates' racial groups.

Table 14

Regression Coefficients Model 2 Predicting Candidate Evaluations Based on Voting Preference Based on Candidate Ethnic Identity (White, Mestizo, and Afro-Colombian) and Interaction Terms for Afro-Colombian Voters

			95% CI			
Variable	b	SE	LL	UL	β	p
Candidate White	-0.373	0.439	-1.257	0.511	-0.152	0.400
Candidate Afro-Colombian	0.129	0.536	-0.949	1.207	0.046	0.811
Candidate Mestizo	-0.021	0.500	-1.027	0.984	-0.007	0.966
Racial Identity Strength	-0.179	0.200	-0.581	0.223	-0.168	0.374
A*D[1] Interaction	0.245	0.386	-0.532	1.022	0.094	0.528
B*D[2] Interaction	0.262	0.549	-0.842	1.367	0.085	0.635
C*D[3] Interaction	-0.681	0.506	-1.698	0.337	-0.221	0.185

Note: $p > 0.05$ indicate that the corresponding predictors are not statistically significant. *Predictors statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. 1. Interaction between White Candidate and Racial Identity Strength. 2. Interaction between Afro-Colombian Candidate and Racial Identity Strength. 3. Interaction between Mestizo Candidate and Racial Identity Strength.

A fourth regression analysis was performed to test **H8**, which expected that the more an individual identifies as White, the more likely they are to evaluate candidates in the following order (from most positive to least positive): **H8a)** White, **H8b)** Mestizo, then **H8c)** Afro-Colombian. As with the other hypotheses, the model included the candidates' race variables (White, Afro-Colombia, and Mestizo) and the racial identity strength variable. The overall first regression model was also not significant, $F(4,209) = 1.534$, $p = .194$, suggesting that H8: a, b, and c were not supported. Only 2.9% of the variance in candidate evaluation was explained ($R^2 = 0.029$). Concerning the coefficients for the candidate race variables, the results indicate that White identity does not significantly predict their voting choice as established in the hypotheses.

Specifically, White candidates (B = -.023, p = 0.777), Mestizo candidates (B = .062, p = 0.456), and Afro-Colombia candidates (B = .101, p = 0.222), the coefficients were not statistically significant; same as racial identity strength (B = .128, p = 0.062). These findings suggest that White voters' racial identity does not play a significant role in their evaluation of candidates, as proposed in the hypotheses, from most positive to least positive (see Table 15).

Table 15

Regression Coefficients Predicting Voting Preference Based on Candidate Ethnic Identity (White, Mestizo, and Afro-Colombian) and Racial Identity Strength for White Voters

			95% CI			
Variable	b	SE	LL	UL	β	p
Candidate White	-0.064	0.226	-0.510	0.382	-0.023	0.777
Candidate Afro-Colombian	0.275	0.225	-0.168	0.719	0.101	0.222
Candidate Mestizo	0.166	0.222	-0.272	0.603	0.062	0.456
Racial Identity Strength	0.130	0.070	-0.007	0.268	0.128	0.062
Sample Size (N) White	N = 214					

Note: p > 0.05 indicate that the corresponding predictors are not statistically significant.

In the second model, the interaction terms for racial identity strength with candidate race (White, Afro-Colombian, Mestizo) were included. This model also did not explain a significant portion of the variance (R^2 = .0.37) or 3.7%, $F(7,206) = 0.588$, p = .623. The unstandardized coefficients for the candidate ethnic/race identities remained nonsignificant: For White candidates (B = -.025, p = 0.767), Mestizo candidates (B = .061, p = 0.730), and Afro-Colombian candidate (B = .105, p = 0.209). Additionally, none of the interactions between White identity and racial identity strength (B = .109, p = 0.340), Mestizo identity and racial identity strength (B

= -.031, $p = 0.712$), and Afro-Colombian identity and racial identity strength ($B = .024$, $p = 0.789$), respectively (see Table 16).

Table 16

Regression Coefficients Model 2 Predicting Candidate Evaluations Based on Voting Preference Based on Candidate Ethnic Identity (White, Mestizo, and Afro-Colombian) and Interaction Terms for White Voters

			95% CI			
Variable	b	SE	LL	UL	β	p
Candidate White	-0.067	0.227	-0.515	0.381	-0.025	0.767
Candidate Afro-Colombian	0.286	0.227	-0.162	0.734	0.105	0.209
Candidate Mestizo	0.163	0.223	-0.277	0.603	0.061	0.466
Racial Identity Strength	0.111	0.072	-0.032	0.253	0.109	0.128
A*D[1] Interaction	-0.198	0.207	-0.605	0.210	-0.079	0.340
B*D[2] Interaction	0.049	0.181	-0.309	0.406	0.024	0.789
C*D[3] Interaction	-0.079	0.213	-0.499	0.341	-0.031	0.712

Note: $p > 0.05$ indicate that the corresponding predictors are not statistically significant. *Predictors statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. 1. Interaction between White Candidate and Racial Identity Strength. 2. Interaction between Afro-Colombian Candidate and Racial Identity Strength. 3. Interaction between Mestizo Candidate and Racial Identity Strength.

In conclusion, after the results of this experiment, it is clear that neither the candidate's race nor the voters' race significantly impacted their voting decisions. This suggests that in-group biases were not prevalent in this analysis of Colombia. The next chapter discusses the implications of the results obtained from both the content analysis and the experiment, their relevance to the theoretical framework of this research, and suggestions for future research stemming from this analysis.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This dissertation explores how the historical racial and ethnic division in Colombia—rooted in the colonial period—continues to shape media coverage and perceptions of Afro-Colombian candidates. By examining how these distinctions influence both the portrayal of Afro-Colombian candidates in regional and national media during the 2022 congressional elections and voters' decisions in a racially diverse election, this study sheds light on the intersection of race, media, and electoral behavior in contemporary Colombian politics.

This dissertation focused on understanding whether regional and national media in Colombia provided different or similar coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates during the congressional elections in 2022 by conducting a content analysis of six media outlets—three regional and three national. Further, an experiment was also carried out to understand whether the candidates' race could influence voters' decisions, based on the premise that race and ethnicity can act as non-verbal communication elements that could affect voters' decisions.

Examining a candidate's race in Colombia takes on a different orientation than in the United States because according to the law, two members of the House of Representatives must represent the Afro communities in the country (Hernàndez Cassiani, 2024). Furthermore, unlike in the United States, the electoral system guarantees that the Colombian senate is national in scope, meaning that many candidates do not need close ties to any particular region or department to be elected. This means that potentially any person can be elected to this national level, making these elections a more level playing field in some respects, where candidates can compete by using their "political machinery" to secure future votes. However, the road to achieving some form of political participation in Colombia has not been an easy one for certain

racialized groups, especially considering the history of the region where race and ethnicity have played important roles in the social, political, and economic development of the country.

Looking at the statistics on the number of Afro-Colombian people living in Colombia, according to DANE in 2018, around 4.46 million people were identified as part of this population out of a total of 48,258,494 Colombians. Although Afro-Colombians make up 9.7% of the total population, in the 2022 elections, of the 2,966 candidates registered for the Senate and House of Representatives elections, only 131 candidates were registered to participate in the election for the special Afro constituency across 48 lists (Registraduria Nacional del Estado Civil, 2021). Lists represent the different councils and community organizations recognized by the Colombian state as communities of African descent. It is important to note that this number only represents those candidates registered by communities that are legally recognized under Colombian law as Afro-Colombian settlements. There is no real calculation or official statistic of how many candidates who identify themselves as part of this ethnic or racial group [Afro-Colombian] registered their candidacies for the Senate and House of Representatives elections, without the special Afro seat. The lack of a confirmed count is because La Registraduria, the entity that handles the registration of candidacies, did not include racial self-identification on the form that candidates must fill out to register their candidacy till 2023 (MOE, 2023).

It is important to clarify that although there is still a significant lag in terms of Afro-Colombian candidates in Colombia—in terms of representation—the 2022 elections marked a historic milestone in the country, as "the arrival of the first Afro-Colombian woman as vice president of the country had a clear impact on the representativeness of ethnic populations in the makeup of the national government" (MOE, 2023, p. 5). Furthermore, four women who identify as Afro-Colombian were elected to seats in the Congress of the Republic. One of them was

elected to be a senator, and two were elected to represent the departments of Bolívar and Chocó in the House of Representatives (MOE, 2022). The case of the seat in the House of Representatives in Bolivar is a special case, as the election of Dorina Hernández Palomino, a woman who identifies not only as an Afro woman but also as a *Palenquera*[29], marks another historic milestone for these communities. And finally, one more for the special Afro constituency (MOE, 2022).

Although there has been progress in terms of representation, as I discussed in chapter one, the history of racism in Colombia continues to be an impediment, which means that the participation of these ethnic and racial minorities is still very low compared to others such as Mestizos and Whites. As Reyes González (2022) mentions, in the Colombian social context, many of the inequalities and differences—political, social, racial, ethnic, economic, etc.—tend to intersect, which makes Afro-Colombians, and other marginalized groups, prone to a recurring vulnerabilities and continual inequities. Thus, it is that Indigenous communities, particularly Black communities, "located, as a general rule, in the geographical and economic periphery of the country, suffer from high levels of poverty and economic marginalization" (Reyes González, 2022, p.118). This phenomenon is not contained to the Colombian reality but also extends to other countries in the region where the same surrounding system of marginalization and poverty is tied to specific places (Agudelo, 2019).

Another element that has also affected the representation of Afro-Colombians has been the country's media ownership and production, which has always been linked to the country's political and economic power (Martín-Barbero & Rey, 1999). Members of the country's great

[29] This term refers to a woman from the Afro-Colombian community of San Basilio de Palenque, the first historical town in Colombia where runaway enslaved people formed. Also, this term refers to the women of this community who have the tradition of selling fruit or other goods in public markets, often wearing vibrant clothing with some distinctive headscarves.

economic and political families have been linked to journalism and political power, making this relationship between media and power closely related, even more so when several presidents and vice presidents have had close relationships with the press (Las Dos Orillas, 2015). Adding to this is the fact is that these media owners are part of groups that identify themselves as Mestizos and Whites. This, added to ideological dogmatism and sectarianism, as I explain in chapter one, has a much greater impact on the polarization in which the country has always existed, which contributes to attacks and othering of minorities (see Ayala Osorio, 2006; Villa-Gómez et al., 2020).

The intertwining of media and political power in the hands of a few elites is not exclusive to Colombia but also extends to the Latin American continent, where it can be said that "it is the quintessence of this concentration in media mega groups that dominate the communication scene" (González Pazos, 2020, p. 72). This concentration of power has resulted in just three large economic groups controlling more than 57% of the country's outlets (Las Dos Orillas, 2015), and, in some way, has had an impact on the production of information and the political decisions of citizens (Entman, 2007; Esser & Matthes, 2013). That is why, to understand in greater depth the dynamics surrounding the candidacy of Afro-Colombian people in general elections in Colombia, I used two theoretical positions to understand, from the perspective of media production, how these candidacies are framed across regional and national outlets, as well as outlets with different ideological leanings.

First, I employed framing to address the construction of themes around the media coverage of Afro candidates. As I explored in chapter one, framing is the act of selecting "some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Therefore, when the Colombian media produce frames or themes of the

candidacies, these media outlets are making certain elements of these candidacies more salient than others, and, via a framing effect, generating an opinion in the audience. I was interested in examining whether the racism, sexism, and classism that is prevalent in Colombia, and has become status quo of the political and media elite, would manifest in how they framed marginalized candidates. To achieve this, I used content analysis to examine news coverage across six outlets in Colombia: three regional (*El País, El Colombiano,* and *El Universal)* and three national (*Semana, El Tiempo,* and *El Espectador)*. This analysis was presented in full in chapter three.

Second, I sought to understand whether the candidate's race, as well as the voter's race, have any direct or interactive effects in a candidate's hypothetical election. To support this analysis, I used social identity theory as a theoretical lens, which establishes that in terms of group membership, people tend to look for in-group similarities and out-group differences to achieve self-categorization and in-group biases (see Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Hogg, 2016; Hogg & Mullin, 1999; Tajfel & Turner 1979, 2004). These attributes aim to make groups appear to be distinct by enacting a clear definition of each entity (Hogg, 2016). To analyze the impact of race, I carried out an experiment with adults in Colombia who were registered to vote in the elections. After randomly assigning individuals to hypothetical White, Mestizo, and Afro-Colombian candidates, I measured perceptions of electability, as well as assessed the importance of race for the respondents and how much impact the race of the candidate had on their electability. This analysis was fully explained in chapter four.

In the following sections, I first discuss the results in two parts: the first will deal solely with the content analysis, and the second will deal with the experiment. Then, I discuss the

limitations and future analysis ideas, followed by bringing these separate data chapters together to discuss their implications.

Bridging Theory and Evidence: Electoral News Coverage and Marginalized Candidates

As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, Colombia, like many other countries that emerged after the colonial dismantling of the region by the Kingdom of Spain, continued with a deeply rooted idea about the concept of *puereza de sangre* (Maya Restrepo, 2009; van Dijk, 2019). This salient element has combined some of the value scales in terms of race and ethnicity in the region (Wade, 1993), and has served to perpetuate powers to generate an idea of colorization based on social aspirations that tend to look to Europe [to Whiteness] as an aspirational characteristic (Wade, 1993; Whitten Jr., 1999). This discussion is well explained in chapter one. Therefore, I expected these conditions to be reflected in the country's media coverage, especially in the coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates during the 2022 congressional elections. In particular, given media and political alignment with the *pureza de sangre* system (Las Dos Orillas, 2023), I expected the media to frame Afro candidates with a certain ideological and racial bias due to the fact that these candidates are in the minority compared to White and Mestizo candidates, and this the news media would emphasize certain racialized aspects of these candidates (Clayto et al., 2023).

Continuing along these same lines in chapter one, I also put forth a discussion of regionality as Afro-Colombians are clustered in regions that are far from the centers of power, as is the case in Colombia where everything is centralized in the capital, Bogotá, and the people who live on the periphery tend to be disconnected from power (Pagola, 2023). Therefore, it was expected that there would be a difference between national and regional coverage due to this power imbalance. As observed in the data, 25.49% of regional news coverage as compared to

9.62% of national coverage, focused on marginalized candidates. This finding is in line with previous research that shows regional or local media outlets, due to their community-oriented values, tend to devote more time to covering marginalized groups, such as women or minority candidates. These outlets not only emphasize the qualifications of these candidates but also foster a greater sense of belonging and connection within the community. Furthermore, regional media often provide more detailed coverage of local issues, which are more directly relevant to their audiences, making it easier for these stories to be shared and amplified within the community (see Bauer, 2022; Hess & Waller, 2017; Park et al., 2022; Radcliffe & Ali, 2017; Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2019).

Likewise, it is necessary to understand that in the Colombian context, the regional media have been providing a service for many years to populations that were or have been isolated due to years of armed conflict. That is to say, these media have served to sow the information base for those regions where for many years the conflict did not allow the arrival of more nationalized media. This aligns with others who have argued that local media provides interested audiences with information on the events that happen within their rural or urban areas (Kaniss, 1991). In Colombia, these regional divides and localized interests were also prompted by geopolitical issues.

Another reason why regional coverage may differ is the characteristics of the candidacies themself. That is to say, many of the candidates who aspired to the special constituencies are located in certain areas of the country in Afro territories recognized by the Colombian laws (Ministerio de Cultura, 2014). As such, many of these marginalized candidates are outside the capital, located more on the periphery. To cover these more regional candidates, and serve more

regional news needs of the audience, regional news outlets may have provided more coverage of local candidates for voters of these communities.

This localization is also part of Colombian law. The Constitution only established the right for a conscripted candidate in the Senate for indigenous peoples, but limited the conscription of Afro candidates to the House of Representatives (Colprensa, 2021). Recall that Senate electives operate on the national level and are not elected based on a department. In turn, regional media are of greater relevance for areas such as the Colombian Pacific and the Caribbean region, where there is a greater influx of Afro population in the country. As Hess and Waller stated, these newspapers "assist in voting decisions, continue to foster community identity and solidarity" (2017, p. 13). For this reason, local media help disseminate community-centric information, which, in this dissertation, manifested as more news coverage of marginalized candidates from these periphery regions.

A clear example of this regional coverage can be seen in an article from the newspaper *El Colombiano* (Osorio Zuluaga, 2022), which covers the candidacy of a former athlete and Olympic medalist, Caterine Ibargüen, who was part of one of the lists of the political party of the U. In this article, the newspaper remarks that "the Antioquian athlete has launched herself into politics as head of the list of the Partido de la U trying to give a new air to that party" (Osorio Zuluaga, 2022, para.15). By remarking that she is an Antioquian, the newspaper text helps to contextualize that the candidate is part of the region where the newspaper is located; the same article goes on to explain that she "was born in a family of scarce resources and was a victim of the armed conflict in her native Apartado" (Osorio Zuluaga, 2022, para. 20). Such coverage informs the reader of the humble origins of the sportswoman and politician, as well as her origin in an area that in Colombia is known for having the third highest Afro-Colombian population, in

the department of Antioquia (DANE, 2021). Collectively, then, this regional paper highlighted the place of origin of Ibargüen twice, once as a political representative of the Antioquian and once as a person who comes from Apartado.

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the media framing of Afro-Colombian political candidates during the 2022 elections, particularly in terms of racial and gendered themes. The analysis revealed several significant trends in the portrayal of these candidates, with certain frames being more prevalent than others. Specifically, positive/neutral racial descriptors (17%) emerged as the most frequently used theme, followed by social activism and gender references, both at 11%. These results are reflective of the current media landscape in Colombia, where narratives surrounding race, gender, and political representation are central to ongoing societal debates.

The prevalence of positive/neutral racial descriptors suggests a growing recognition of Afro-Colombian candidates as political agents in their own right. These descriptors appeared frequently, but they were not universally emphasized across all articles based on a high degree of skewness. This may suggest that positive portrayals of Afro-Colombian candidates are still an emerging phenomenon, but when they occur, they are given considerable attention. For instance, examples from a *El Colombiano* article emphasize the candidacy of Francia Marquez Mina as an important mark that breaks all the stereotypes around politicians as "an Afro and environmental leader, without machinery and from a movement born in the regions" (El Colombiano, 2022, para. 14). Likewise, candidacies such as those of Caterine Ibargüen, a renowned Olympic Medalist and Colombian athlete, and Mabel Lara, a well-known journalist, represent examples of candidacies who fall outside the traditional framework, yet are emphasized positively in some of the news because they are framed as people who are highly regarded by Colombians (see articles

by Carrasquilla León, 2022; Mera Villamizar & Cortez Palacios, 2022). However, these positive descriptors seem to be concentrated in specific instances, reflecting uneven media attention to Afro-Colombian political empowerment.

In contrast, negative racial descriptors were used less frequently and had a high degree of skewness. This suggests that when negative racial descriptors were used, they were heavily emphasized, and upon further inspection, often in sensationalized forms. For instance, *Semana*'s coverage of Miguel Polo Polo's election as an Afro-Colombian House Representative described it as "unacceptable for a Black person from the right wing to be in the Afro-Special seat" (*Neo-burgueses,* 2022, para. 2). The article further highlighted derogatory remarks from Colombian comedian Alejandro Riaño, who referred to Polo Polo as "black, poor, and gay" (*Neo-burgueses,* 2022, para. 6), diminishing his political participation. The frequency and emphasis of such descriptors highlight the persistence of racial stereotypes and the ways in which media can perpetuate harmful narratives, reinforcing the association of Blackness with inferiority and socio-economic disadvantage. These findings align with prior research on media framing of marginalized groups, which often emphasize negative stereotypes in a way that limits political and social mobility (Dixon & Linz, 2006).

Moreover, the theme of social activism (11%) was similarly prevalent, suggesting that the media recognized Afro-Colombian candidates as engaged in broader social movements. This theme, however, was also subject to skewness (3.607) and kurtosis (11.062), implying that while social activism was highlighted in certain instances, it was not uniformly emphasized. In Colombia, social activism is a central means for Afro-Colombians to engage in political participation as they have had little progress in gaining political power via elections. For many candidates, this activism is also a means for working toward gaining visibility and getting

elected. Collectively, then, these actions seek to upset the status quo. Other research has shown how social activism among Afro-descendant populations is often framed in the media as either a radical stance or a sign of progress (see McIlwain, 2011; Pagola, 2023; Restrepo Garcia & Meeks, 2023). In the case of Afro-Colombian candidates, social activism may be viewed as either a positive force for change (Oslender, 2016) or a divisive tactic (see Diekman & Goodfriend, 2007 to understand how activist groups can elicit a negative reaction), depending on the political context.

The Afro-Colombian special circumscription frame, which accounts for 8% of the coverage, reflects the continued importance of this political mechanism in Colombia's electoral landscape. Despite its relatively lower frequency compared to racial and gender-related themes, the presence of this frame highlights the institutional recognition of Afro-Colombian political representation. However, it also suggests that discussions of political quotas and Afro-Colombian political mechanisms are still somewhat marginalized in mainstream discourse, with the emphasis more often placed on individual candidates rather than structural or systemic issues.

In light of these findings, and in keeping with the potential for framing effects, it is evident that the media continue to play a significant role in shaping the public's understanding of Afro-Colombian candidates. The frequent use of positive/neutral racial descriptors and social activism suggests an acknowledgment of Afro-Colombians' political agency, although this representation remains uneven and often tied to specific individuals or political narratives. Conversely, negative racial descriptors continue to be a potent tool for discrediting Afro-Colombian candidates, reinforcing the need for continued efforts to combat racial stereotypes in political discourse (see Restrepo Garcia & Meeks, 2023).

All media is not the same, however. Regional media often provide more coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates and tend to emphasize certain themes more than national outlets. Regional media consistently highlighted issues like political roles, criminalization and corruption, particularly by debunking false connections between candidates and armed groups. They also underscored the candidates' social activism and their effort to represent marginalized communities, often linking them to the struggles of poor or conflict-affected areas. This coverage seems to serve dual purposes: critiquing the status quo by highlighting corruption and criminalization while legitimizing these candidates as figures of resistance who play a crucial role in bridging the gap between their communities and the political system through quota laws or special constituencies. These differences in coverage reveal how regional media frame issues uniquely, shaping the public perception of candidates within their local context.

Furthermore, the emphasis put on racial and gender themes in the regional outlets suggests a sensitivity in acknowledging issues of marginalization and underrepresentation within these communities. By providing more extensive coverage of these themes, regional media may contribute to a nuanced discourse of Afro-Colombian candidates, by celebrating both their leadership and positioning them as agents of social change. Also, when the theme location and regional identity appeared, it suggests that regional outlets are not only focusing on their political stance, but on how Afro-Colombian candidates connect with the cultural and geographical reality of their constituencies. In contrast, national outlets, with their broader scope and their less community-oriented focus, appear to give a more generalized and less detailed portrayal of Afro-Colombian candidates. This broader coverage might lack the specificity required to address the local needs that the regional outlets can capture effectively due to their scope.

Lastly, this first study and its results find that the ideology of the media does not significantly influence the way Afro-Colombian candidates are portrayed in the media. Despite the categorization of outlets based on their political stance [left-leaning, center-leaning, and center-right outlets], the results yield no significant differences based on the outlets' classification. These findings can align with previous research that suggests that media outlets often maintain a level of neutrality on certain political issues despite their ideological leaning and affiliation (Bennett, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2014). This outcome is particularly noteworthy given the increased attention on identity in politics in the contemporary media landscapes (McIlwain, 2011; Meeks, 2012; Meeks, 2013; Niven,1998), where race and political affiliation often intersect (Cuevas-Molina & Nteta, 2023). These results also suggest that factors that might influence media coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates may be even more complex and multifaceted than the political orientation/affiliation of the outlet alone.

One possible explanation for these findings is that the media outlets in the study, regardless of their ideological orientation/affiliation, may share similar structural influences that may make their coverage similar. For instance, three of the outlets in the example [*Semana, El Tiempo,* and *El Espectador*] are major national media outlets, and the other three [*El Universal, El pais,* and *El Colombiano*] represent big departments and regions in Colombia. Despite being bound by similar editorial standards, economic interests, sources of information, and audience expectations, regional outlets are shaped more significantly by the distinctiveness of their local context. These outlets prioritize themes, such as political role, racial identity, and social activism, often based on the cultural, political, and historical realities of the regions they serve. While national outlets may share similar priorities, the regional focus is influenced more by the unique relationship each region has with the government, its history of conflict, and the impact of local

issues. Even though some local news outlets are owned by the same national corporations, regionality often plays a more critical role than ideology, as regional audiences connect more with coverage that reflects their specific realities, challenges, and cultural identity.

Bridging Theory and Evidence: Experimental Effects across Candidate and Voter Race

Based on the theoretical models elaborated upon in chapter one and the historical and contemporary racial tensions in Colombia, I had high expectations that a candidate's race would create strong effects. These expectations were grounded in social identity theory, which explains that people who belong to a particular group tend to identify certain characteristics that make that group different from another (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 2004). Those who do not possess these characteristics may be judged differently, generating a kind of stereotype (Hogg, 2016). That is, this sense of distinctiveness manifests itself in a self-identification (see Hogg, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 2004) or maximized prototypes that make that identity distinct. Such thinking was applied to the identification of voters in Colombia in relation to their race and how this affects the prototypical attributes that make them end up voting for or against a candidate in the in-group or out-group,

Therefore, in conjunction with the concepts of *pureza de sangre*, those candidates who wish to aspire to 'gain' the vote of members of ethnic or racial groups such as Whites and Mestizos, they would have to, in a way, distance themselves from a possible relationship with any discourse or connotation that could link them to Afro-Colombians or possibly to any trait related to African descent. These biases or forms of self-classification (Stets & Burke, 2000) influence how dominant groups perceive representation (Leal, 2010), as I explained in chapter one.

However, despite what had been theorized and my expectations, the results of this experiment showed that candidates' race does not influence voters' decisions in Colombia based on this sample. In other words, as a communicative, heuristic element, race is not seen as an element that can influence voters' decisions when deciding who to vote for in an election. As such, this finding counters some research that has shown that in elections with very little information, gender and race are elements that can influence voters' decisions (see Matson & Fine, 2006; Mcdermott, 1998). Participants in this study were given basic details about the candidate, like what one may see in a common news article, creating a low-information environment. Such an environment would seem to elevate a reliance on heuristic cues, such as the nonverbal cue of race in the candidate's picture or the textual cue of their place of origin, which has racial connections in Colombia. For this study, however, this was not the case.

Other work has found that race alone may not influence voters. In research carried out by Citrin et al. (1990), which analyzed the 1982 gubernatorial election in California, where one of the candidates was African-American, Tom Bradley, the results showed that while race does have an impact on voters' decisions, especially among White voters, race alone does not have a significant impact on the election (Citrin et al., 1990). Rather, different factors have to be taken into account, which, as was the case of this research, included the candidate's previous record and campaign style (Citrin et al., 1990). To clarify, the research mentioned above was conducted in the United States, where there is a different concept of race as compared to Colombia. Colombia's concept of race is associated with the aspirational goal of success; that is to say, White is considered the ultimate goal to obtain to be successful (Suárez Pinzón, 2005; Wade, 1993). Despite the difference in cultural contexts, as well as decades in timing, there is convergence on the finding that a candidate's race may not be the sole factor of influence.

Likewise, these results exemplify that voters in Colombia are not monolithic; that is to say, that voters in Colombia tend to prioritize different elements that go beyond the race of the candidate. In the case of this dissertation, voters might have focused on the candidate's position on public policies, such as peace-related ones. While race may influence perceptions, in this low-information environment, the policy statement determines how voters might make their decisions (Graves & Lee, 2000; Hajnal & Rivera, 2014).

The lack of a significant overall effect of candidate race on voters' evaluation aligns with prior studies in some Latin American contexts (Bailey, 2009; Hale, 1997; Wade, 2001), where racial dynamics in political evaluations have been less pronounced compared to other regions. This suggests that, while Colombia's political perceptions are shaped by a complex interplay of ethnicity, class, and historical factors, race remains a fundamental element influencing these dynamics, particularly through its connection to class and history.

Therefore, the results reflect broader regional trends rather than a distinct sociopolitical context unique to Colombia. That said, Colombia's ethnic and racial diversity, with the majority of the population being Mestizo, whose mixed identity is widely shared, may contribute to a different kind of racial politics compared to other regions. This mixed identity could mitigate the salience of race as a determining factor in candidate evaluation, further supporting the idea that, like in other Latin American countries, race does not play a dominant role in political assessments in Colombia.

When examining the regression models, the results regarding race and voting preferences were unremarkable. The 'power' associated with racial identity was weak either as a demographic trait or with the relationship to the candidate's race. In that essence, the regression analyses failed to identify statistically significant results regarding the associations between

participants' racial identity (Afro-Colombian, White, or Mestizo) and their voting preferences. This highlights that there are factors beyond racial identity that might decisively shape voting behavior in Colombia.

However, it is worth noticing that while the models did not find significant relationships between racial identity and voting preferences, there was still a small effect of race in the evaluation of candidates, this could be seen in chapter four. This was seen in particular when Mestizo participants were somewhat more likely to evaluate Mestizo candidates more positively. This partial effect in preference for in-group candidates among Mestizos supports the idea of in-group bias, which Tajfel and Turner (1979) documented in other contexts (see Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Hogg, 2016; Hogg & Mullin, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 2004 to understand in-group identification). Given that Mestizos occupy a middle ground between the historically privileged elite and the marginalized Afro-Colombian communities, this in-group preference might reflect a sense of solidarity or self-preservation, as Mestizos may perceive their identity as more closely aligned with the political and social dynamics of the broader, more powerful groups. Nonetheless, this effect was small and isolated, and the lack of significant interaction between voter identity and candidate race suggests that when it comes to group-based preferences, race might not be a strong driver of voting behavior in Colombia, at least in this study.

These findings also contribute to a growing body of literature on race, ethnicity, and political behavior in Latin America. The results suggest that while racial identity might have some influences on candidate evaluation (Barreto, 2010; Barreto & Nuño, 2011; Chong & Rogers, 2005; Sullivan & Arbuthnot, 2009), its role may not be as noticeable as in other parts of the world (Bailey, 2009; Hale, 1997; Wade, 2001). Building on this research and when developing research about political decisions in Colombia, it is necessary to include other

factors, such as political ideology, economic concerns, or social policies, that might play a role in shaping people's voting choices either directly or indirectly.

The results highlight the complexity of Colombian political dynamics, where different factors, including the historical context, socio-economic strata, urban versus rural divides, or other demographic factors may strongly influence voters in Colombia, and may reduce the impact of the racial identity in voting behavior.

Limitations and Future Analysis

This project, like any other research project, has its limitations. One possible limitation in relation to the content analysis is the keywords used to find relevant article. These keywords included: "Afro-Colombians", "congressional elections", "quota law", and the "Afro-Colombian circumscription." The use of these specific terms may have excluded relevant articles that did not explicitly contain these keywords, yet still addressed topics pertinent to Afro-Colombian political participation or the election process. This could have resulted in a sample that does not fully represent the diversity of media coverage related to the topic. Similarly, by focusing on terms closely related to Afro-Colombians and specific electoral processes, there may have been an inadvertent emphasis on particular angles or frames within the coverage. For example, articles that did not explicitly use these terms but still discussed Afro-Colombian candidates or issues in a broader context may have been overlooked. This could have limited the analysis to a narrower perspective and prevented a more comprehensive understanding of how the news media frames these candidates in various contexts.

Likewise, focusing the study on the Colombian House of Representatives and Senate elections, which have special constituencies and electoral quotas, narrowed the analysis to only these elections, and the study may have missed important nuances in how Afro-Colombian

candidates are covered in other contexts, particularly in regional elections. The media coverage of national elections, especially those with designated Afro-Colombians constituencies, may not fully reflect how these candidates are portrayed in a regional electoral context, where different political dynamics and voter behaviors may play a more significant role. Moreover, the emphasis on national elections limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader spectrum of Colombian elections. Afro-Colombians candidates running for regional elections such as governorships, assemblies, mayorships, and councils may experience different type of media framing or encounter unique challenges in their campaigns. These regional elections often involve more localized issues and voter bases, which could lead to distinct patterns of media coverage and voter engagement. Extending the analysis to include these regional elections would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the media's portrayal of Afro-Colombian political participation across different levels of government.

To fully corroborate the existence of regional versus national dynamics in media coverage, it is essential to broaden the scope of future research to include regional elections. This would help to determine if the same media frames and biases identified in national elections also apply to regional races or if there are significant differences in how Afro-Colombian candidates are portrayed. Without this broader analysis, this study's findings may only offer a partial view of the media's role in shaping political participation and public perception of Afro-Colombian candidates in Colombia.

It should be remembered, and as I stated at the beginning of this analysis, that only candidates who registered to participate within the special constituency were required to disclose their race or ethnicity as they belonged to one of the Afro-Colombian communities recognized by the Ministry of the Interior and Colombian law. Those who registered with a political party to

stand for a seat as a member of the House of Representatives or the Senate did not need to reveal their racial or ethnic identity if they did not wish to, as it was not until the 2023 regional elections that La Registraduria included this question for registered candidates on their E6 form (MOE, 2023). This limitation should be noted, as it highlights the specific context of the study, which focused primarily on Afro-Colombian candidates in general, not just those in the special constituency. However, the use of broader terms like "Afro-Colombian candidates" meant that the study also captured coverage of candidates in other electoral contexts.

However, while candidates such as Francia Márquez Mina, Dorina Hernández, and Caterine Ibargüen were not registered within the special constituency, their inclusion in the discussion helped broaden the analysis scope. By referencing well-known Afro-Colombian figures who were not part of that 'special election,' the study acknowledges the broader political context in which these candidates operate, moving beyond the limitations of a single electoral framework. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of Afro-Colombian political participation and media framing, suggesting that the dynamics identified within the special constituency may also extend to other political contexts.

One of the most significant limitations of this analysis is the lack of any left-center or left-leaning media that might contribute to a more robust analysis of the Colombian media environment. This limitation is due, in part, to the comparative scarcity of left-leaning news outlets in Colombia, particularly at the national level, therefore it is a natural limitation of focusing on Colombia's media. The absence of these outlets may have omitted a perspective that explicitly foregrounds Afro-Colombian issues through a left-leaning ideological lens, potentially influencing the findings related to media coverage and diminishing the potential for identifying significant differences in coverage. Although Colombia's political environment can be fluid

based on the diversity of political parties and movements (Consejo Nacional Electoral, n.d.), the media landscape is shaped by the dominance of right-and center-right political forces, both in government and media ownership, which has limited the space for left-leaning media to emerge and gain the same level of traction as the other outlets included in this dissertation. This political context means that the ideological spectrum within the media sample may not be distinct enough to create divergent coverage patterns. The fluidity of political ideologies in Colombia, where media outlets may align with those in power, further contributes to a lack of ideological diversity, especially at the national level, where right-leaning outlets dominate. This reflects the current concerns about the concentration of media ownership (El Expediente, 2020; Journalism Research, 2024) and its potential to limit political representation within the media landscape.

Moreover, the current concentration of media ownership in Colombia, as highlighted by El Expediente (2020) and the Journalism Research (2024), may contribute to homogenized narratives in the media. While there were distinct differences in the coverage between regional and national outlets, the concentration of media power within a few dominant outlets could still limit the diversity of political representation and the framing of minority groups, such as Afro-Colombians. This limitation may have influenced the findings, yielding more geographic differences and less ideological differences.

Future research could further address the limitations of the lack of left-center or left-leaning media by exploring the influence of media ownership. The concentration of media ownership in Colombia, primarily controlled by a few influential economic players, plays a significant role in shaping the media landscape. For instance, national outlets like *El Tiempo*, *Semana*, and *El Espectador* are owned by prominent business groups such as Luis Carlos Sarmiento Angulo, the Gilinski family, and the Santodomingo family (see Bohórquez

Roncancio, 2024; Flórez Suárez, 2020; Monitoreo de Medios, n.d.; Pérez Godoy, 2024)—some of the wealthiest and most influential in the country. These economic powers influence editorial decisions, which can lead to greater uniformity in media coverage, particularly on issues such as Afro-Colombian political representation. The concentration of the media in the hands of such powerful groups can limit the diversity of political perspectives offered to the public, thus restricting the range of discourse on Afro-Colombian candidates. Given the strong economic influence wielded by these families, the ideological leanings of their media outlets could underrepresent or omit important political narratives, such as Afro-Colombian concerns, which might feature more prominently in left-wing or alternative media outlets.

Incorporating a broader spectrum of media outlets, including those with more diverse ownership structures or center-left perspectives, would offer a more nuanced understanding of how Afro-Colombian candidates are portrayed in different ideological frameworks. This would also allow for a deeper exploration of how economic power and media ownership affect political representation in Colombia, especially for marginalized communities. By diversifying the sample to include media outlets from different political and economic backgrounds, future research could offer a more holistic view of how the news media covers marginalized candidates and thus how media coverage may influence voters' perceptions of Afro-Colombian candidates and issues, helping to address the biases that might be present in the current media landscape. Finally, it is crucial to bear in mind that in Colombia, some regional media outlets are being bought up by the owners of national media outlets, which impacts editorial policy and news coverage in the different regions. In turn, some of the regional versus national differences we saw in this dissertation may not be as pronounced in future electoral coverage, especially if local coverage becomes more nationalized with the buyouts, as has been the case in other countries

(e.g., Martin & McCrain, 2019). This also means that the greater focus on marginalized candidates in regional news may also be lost, leaving voters with less news about these candidates trying to break with the status quo.

While the study provides important insights into the role of race in political evaluations in Colombia, in terms of the experiment, as with the content analysis, this is not without limitations. Social desirability is one of the most significant considerations that could affect the results presented. Social desirability is "the tendency for people to present themselves in a general favorable fashion" (Holden & Passey, 2009, p. 441). Therefore, asking or confronting people about a candidate's race in a country with deep-seated racism, may mean that individuals could adjust themselves to appear 'politically correct' and not racist. That is to say, respondents might not really reveal their biases about the candidate's race. However, it is important to clarify that as this was a survey in which no questions were asked about any possible identifier of the respondent, they had the possibility of being 'faithful' to their convictions in relation to race. Nevertheless, social desirability could still have an impact because people may unconsciously tend toward socially desirable responses. This bias is similar to the 'Bradley Effect' (see Payne, 2010 for a deeper understanding of the Bradley Effect and its mediation in race and politics), where voters, particularly White voters, might claim they would vote for a minority candidate, such as an Afro-Colombian or mixed-race candidate, when in reality, they may not. As discussed in the article by Douglas Wilder (2012) in *Politico*, the Bradley Effect was thought to have diminished with Barack Obama's presidential win, especially given his narrow margin of victory and appeal to some White voters. However, the article argues that the effect persists, as race continues to play a significant role in voting decisions in the U.S., indicating that social desirability bias might still shape how voters respond in surveys with some relation to race.

This form of social desirability plays in conjunction with what in Colombia is conceived of as *racismo soterrado* or hidden racism in English. This form of racism is not explicitly shown and is tacit in society. This form of racism is not openly communicated due to concerns of 'social lynching' (Restrepo, 2001). However, it is a racism that still exists. Anthropologist and sociologist Dr. Fabián Sanabria stated the following in a conversation with the newspaper *El Nuevo Siglo*:

> On the surface, it can be said that this ended with the abolition of slavery, but that is entirely false…if you listen to linguistic comments such as 'the little black boy' or 'the little black girl', obviously all of this contains pejorative elements that conceal an underlying racism (Redacción Política, 2022, para. 10).

While the study offers valuable insights into race's influence on political evaluation in Colombia, the impact of social desirability cannot be overlooked. The tendency for individuals to present themselves in a socially acceptable manner may distort the true reflection of their racial biases, even in anonymous surveys. This dynamic, coupled with Colombia's hidden or *soterrado* racism, highlights the complexity of studying racial attitudes. People may conceal or downplay their prejudices due to fear of social judgment, despite these biases remaining present at a subconscious level. As Dr. Sanabria suggests, overt racism may have ended with slavery, but subtler forms persist through language and societal norms, revealing an underlying, deeply embedded racial prejudice that remains unspoken but evident in the culture.

Further research could explore ways to mitigate the influence of social desirability on survey responses related to race/ethnicity and political evaluations in Colombia. Previous studies have suggested effective methods to reduce social desirability bias in survey research. For example, Horiuchi et al. (2022) highlight the use of conjoint analysis, where the variables of

interest (e.g., race and its impact on voting behavior) is not directly presented, helping to reduce the likelihood of survey takers identifying the focus on racial bias. Additionally, using more 'forgiving' language in survey items, as suggested by Charles and Dattalo (2018), can further reduce social desirability bias by avoiding direct questions about sensitive topics. In my dissertation, I attempted to mitigate this bias by including various indirect variables that measure different elements of candidate evaluation. In addition to addressing survey biases, future research could also benefit from longitudinal studies that track changes in racial attitudes over time, particularly in response to political events or shifts in societal attitudes toward race. Furthermore, exploring the concept of *soterrado* racism, and how it manifests subtly across different social contexts could offer a deeper understanding of its pervasive influence on political and social behavior.

Another limitation that could have impacted the study was the lack of culturally-specific scales to measure racism or racial attitudes in the Colombian context, or more broadly within Latin America. Existing scales, primarily developed in the United States, often fail to account for Colombia's unique social and racial dynamics. These scales are tailored to a very specific cultural and historical context that does not fully translate to Latin America, where different historical experiences, social structures, and political realities shape racial and ethnic identities. For instance, while U.S.-based scales have developed hostile and benevolent racism scales to capture more nuanced forms of discrimination (e.g., Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2007), these scales still primarily focus on overt forms of racism and may not be fully applicable to the Colombian context. In Colombia, subtle forms of racism, such as hidden racism, are more prevalent, and these scales might not adequately address the specific racial dynamics shaped by the country's distinct historical, social, and political realities. This gap in context highlights the

need for culturally relevant tools that consider the nuances of race in Colombia or Latin America as a whole, to offer a clearer and more accurate understanding of racial attitudes in these regions. Future research should focus on developing and validating scales tailored to the Colombian context, specifically addressing how racism manifests in political settings and how it influences electoral behavior and candidate evaluation in the region.

Future research could also further investigate the impact of various communicative iterations of race in political contexts by designing experiments that manipulate racial cues in diverse ways. For instance, future studies could explore how different forms of racial representation, such as explicit racial labeling, visual imagery, or the mention of race in the candidate's political platforms, affect voters' perceptions and preferences. Additionally, researchers could examine the intensity of these racial cues to determine whether stronger racial signals lead to more pronounced voting biases or whether more subtle forms of racial identity (e.g., those implicit references or undertones) have a different impact. This approach would allow us to assess the specific conditions under which race becomes a significant factor in candidate evaluation and how varying degrees of racial salience may influence voters in the Colombian context. These elements could contribute to a deeper understanding of how racial cues, explicit or implicit, shape political behavior in multicultural societies like Colombia, where this variable [race] interacts with others, such as class, religion, armed conflict, media power and ownership, and historical experiences.

In conclusion, while the experiment's results may not have been statistically significant, this dissertation plays an important historical role by shedding light on deeply rooted racism in Colombia, offering valuable insights for non-Latin audiences. It underscores that although the concept of slavery is globally recognized, the experience and lasting impacts of slavery vary

significantly depending on the country or region. By examining the unique context of racism in Colombia, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how historical processes shape contemporary racial attitudes. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of considering regional and historical contexts when translating these experiences into research, highlighting the need for more culturally specific frameworks that can more accurately capture the nuances of racial dynamics in Latin America. This approach not only enriches the academic discourse but also supports the development of more relevant and effective tools for studying race and racism in different global contexts.

Implications

The findings of this study underscore the complex interplay between media representation, racial identity, and political context in Colombia, particularly regarding Afro-Colombian candidates. One of the key implications of this study is how race and ethnicity can manifest in the media coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates and their interplay with the historical and systemic racism in Colombia, that is mainly in the idea of *Pureza de Sangre.* This concept that is embedded in the country's colonial past has shaped societal attitudes and is reflected in the media's portrayal of race and ethnicity. One key implication of this dissertation is that Afro-Colombian candidates, initially framed through a racialized lens that often leads to marginalization or stigmatization, were portrayed in more nuanced ways by the media. While this racialized framing was present, the way it played out varied depending on the media's scope and focus—regional versus national outlets. Regional media, in particular, tended to highlight Afro-Colombian candidates in the context of local culture, emphasizing their connections to marginalized communities and regional identities. This suggests that the media's framing of Afro-Colombian candidates is not uniform but shaped by both the geographical and political

dynamics at play. Specifically, regional Colombian outlets devoted their coverage of Afro-Colombians to contextualizing them within the local culture and geographical framework, highlighting their connection to marginalized communities and their regional identity.

In that sense, news outlets and media professionals can apply the results of this dissertation in order to adopt strategies that will help to improve the way in which the diversity and authenticity of these diverse [Afro-Colombian] candidates are portrayed. Taking into account what has been said in the media coverage of the regional versus the national media, the regional media can particularly capitalize in some way on the unique role they play within the local culture of the communities they reach by emphasizing that connective function they perform (Park et al., 2022). By doing this, they can, in a way, prevent Afro-Colombian candidates from being seen from a single dimension and, on the contrary, can help to enable involvement in addressing local problems and advocating for marginalized communities. This approach allows for the fostering of meaningful connections with local audiences and thus allows for a reflection of the different needs and identities of the Afro-Colombian population in the various regions.

On the other hand, and in relation to these results, the large national media can also benefit by learning from the coverage that the regional media have been doing by including/incorporating more localized perspectives in their reports or news, through the use and inclusion of specific regional identities without losing their engagement with national narratives. This will allow them a more sensitive and balanced contextualization when reporting on Afro-Colombian candidates, which, in my way of thinking and seeing Colombian narratives regarding minorities, is crucial to combat the stigmatization and marginalization to which media companies often tend to racialize their portrayals (Mosquera Rosado, 2021). By adopting these practices, the

media can contribute to a more responsible type of journalism that looks at diversity and inclusion with different eyes, not as an attack on society, but as an understanding that there are different views on social, cultural, racial, and other issues, which will allow these Afro-Colombian candidates to be presented in a way that fully reflects their identities, which are multifaceted within both regional and national contexts.

Such coverage may help facilitate descriptive and/or substantive/policy representation (Mosquera Rosado, 2021) by underscoring the importance of considering how media coverage shapes public perception of minority groups, particularly in election periods (Pew Research Center, 2023). Likewise, policymakers can use this knowledge provided by media coverage to help implement media literacy campaigns (Media Literacy Now, 2023) that can challenge stereotypes that cause harm to minority communities, in this case, Afro-Colombians, as well as encourage more inclusive representations of their [Afro-Colombian] candidacies.

This study's results for news coverage of Afro-Colombian candidates during the 2022 elections acknowledged the candidates' political agency but was also uneven. Positive and negative racial descriptors were common, but they were not the dominant frames or themes across all outlets used for this research. This uneven portrayal shows the broader challenge of racial representation in Colombian media, where Afro-Colombian candidates sometimes are portrayed as a symbol of hope and social change or as a tool to be counted as a political token to fulfill laws or quotas. In terms of framing effects, this variety of coverage could result in different effects on public opinion. Those exposed to more hopeful coverage versus those exposed to token coverage would come away with distinct notions of Afro-Colombians' contributions to politics and prospects for winning elections. One element that struck me was the prevalence of social activism in media coverage, which highlights the role Afro-Colombian

candidates play in social movements. These results align with some previous research (e.g., Cárdenas et al., 2020; Hooker, 2008; Hooker, 2009; Lewis & Thomas III, 2019; Nieto, 2022) on the Afro-descendant population, where this kind of activism is framed in two different ways: either to request some change or a divisive political stance, all according to the context. While these dueling portrayals can create a more nuanced perceptive of the candidates, it can also enable dismissive perspectives of Afro-Colombians' continued fight for equitable representation.

The implications of this uneven portrayal of Afro-Colombian candidates are significant for both the political landscape and media practices in Colombia. There is a dichotomy between the candidates being seen as a symbol of hope as opposed to being treated as a political token and how the Afro-Colombian political agency is perceived by the public. It could be said that, when there is a positive portrayal that emphasizes hope and social change, these elements can inspire the engagement and support of communities and allies with Afro-Colombians, which allows for the creation of a sense of empowerment and representation within communities. On the other hand, when candidates are framed as simply political tokens, this creates the risk of perpetuating the notion that political participation is primarily about filling quotas rather than advancing the substance of diverse political agendas (Lozano Pereira & Molina Roys, 2014). This representation may, in some way, delegitimize Afro-Colombians' political agencies, which could lead to a diminished public recognition of the contributions that these candidates have made to the political discourse, impacting the overall progress through a more exclusive representation.

For policymakers, understanding media dynamics is crucial to designing policies that can address the underrepresentation of Afro-Colombians in the political sphere. While the concept of quotas can serve as an important tool for increasing political representation, the media and

policymakers must work together to ensure that Afro-Colombian candidates are not reduce to tokenism. Instead, there should be efforts to create narratives that substantially highlight the political implications of these candidacies and the ability of these candidates to address the diverse needs of their constituents. This includes not only making it necessary to frame Afro-Colombian candidates in ways that refer to their leadership capacity, but also in creating significant societal changes. It is also necessary to extrapolate them from the simplistic vision of being only a quota that serves to fill a demographic requirement.

Moreover, the framing of Afro-Colombian candidates as activist or divisive figures also has implications for electoral outcomes. Media portrayals of candidates, especially those focused on activism, can either galvanize voters who share their ideological stance or alienate others who view such activism as polarizing. In this context, media outlets must strive for objectivity and fairness in their coverage, ensuring that Afro-Colombian candidates are not unfairly vilified or idealized, but rather presented as capable political figures with diverse policy positions and aspirations. In the long term, this nuanced approach to media coverage could lead to a more informed electorate, one that is less likely to view Afro-Colombian candidates through a simplistic or tokenistic lens.

In terms of the experiment and its results, various implications can be taken to look at existing theories, especially in relation to SIT, which was part of the theoretical focus of this dissertation, as it has been widely used to understand how group dynamics can, in some way, influence political behavior. SIT has proposed that people seek to maintain a positive self-position insofar as there is an alignment with the groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In a political context, these dynamics can be seen when candidates attempt to appeal to a specific racial or ethnic group by associating themselves with positive stereotypes. Research on

Black Political Identity and Ethnic Politics, to name a few, have been based on SIT and have traditionally emphasized how racial identity can influence political decisions (Dawson, 1994; Esman, 1994), suggesting that in-group and out-group dynamics could shape voters' preferences, especially when a candidate's racial background is evident (Huddy, 2001).

However, and it is necessary to point out, that the results of this experiment question some of the assumptions of SIT in the context of Colombian politics. While the theory predicts that voters tend to gravitate towards candidates from their own ethnic background (in-group bias), the results of my dissertation showed that race alone is not a significant factor in determining voters' decisions. In the Colombian case, factors like class, historical conflict, social mobility, and public policies could play a more substantial role when it comes to voting decisions. SIT often emphasizes that a single group identity marker, such as ethnicity or race, can be sufficient to drive change if it is elevated in a given context to be the primary identity. I offer another perspective that suggests political behavior could be shaped by the intersection of multiple identity markers at once, not just one, especially if that intersection includes multiple forms of oppressed identities, e.g., based on race and class. This does not negate the role of ethnic or racial identity but suggests that the interactions between those markers could be key in understanding political behavior in Colombia.

However, the theory has practical implications for social mobility and change (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) when it comes to the Colombian context. SIT provides a useful framework for understanding group-based behavior, but its assumptions need to be contextualized in specific settings (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 2004). Furthermore, the results can align with these two concepts in which the potential for individuals to shift from a lower status to a higher status group [social mobility] and through social creativity or competition [social change] (Tajfel &

Turner, 1979; 2004). In the Colombian context, the boundaries between groups are often *less* permeable due to systemic discrimination, rigid socio-political hierarchies, and historical inequalities. As such, social mobility is limited for many Afro-Colombian candidates, who face significant structural barriers to advancement. In these *impermeable* conditions, the political strategies of Afro-Colombian candidates are shaped differently from those of Mestizo or White candidates, aligning more with social change than social mobility. This dynamic reflects the difficulty in achieving social change within Colombian politics, where entrenched socio-political structures create barriers to movement between groups.

Understanding the dynamics of social mobility and social change in the Colombian context can help Afro-Colombian politicians strategically navigate the entrenched socio-political barriers they face. By emphasizing social change, Afro-Colombian candidates can resonate more with voters who experience similar inequalities. From a policy standpoint, addressing these *impermeable conditions* through reforms aimed at reducing discrimination, promoting equality in education and employment, and creating more inclusive political representation, not only based on quotas, would be essential for enhancing social mobility and fostering a more equitable electoral system.

In summary, this study contributes to the literature by suggesting that when applying this theory in the context of political behavior, especially electoral behavior, it is necessary to not single out one marker, such as race or ethnicity, in cases where there are different intersections of multiple factors that might affect those decisions. While SIT remains helpful in understanding group dynamics, its assumptions must be contextualized for specific settings. In Colombia, systemic discrimination and rigid socio-political hierarchies limit social mobility, particularly for Afro-Colombian candidates, who often focus on social change rather than mobility. Addressing

these barriers through policy reforms aimed at reducing discrimination and promoting equality can enhance social mobility and create a more inclusive electoral system.

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Appendix A

Codebook for Content Analysis

The following codebook will be used as a reference to analyze the news in the six selected Colombian newspapers.

Afro-Colombian Candidates/ News Entities Codes

This codebook applies to news coverage of the Afro-Colombian candidates during the Colombian House of Representatives and Senate election, which started in December 2021 and extended until March 2022, when the Colombian people elected the new Congress for 2022-2026. News articles were selected from six of Colombia's news entities, representing three national and three regionals.

Coding instructions:

1. The variables should be coded as 0 (absent) and 1 (present). It is essential to consider that some articles could include several variables.
2. Some variables are more manifest because they are directly mentioned in the article (e.g., "renegrido"). For the more unspoken or tacit variables, it may be necessary to look at the surrounding content to understand the context of the discussion (e.g., political token, etc.).
3. If a concept is unclear, use search engines like Google to find its meaning (e.g., Registraduria, Law 1475, etc.).
4. When including the date entries, please use the following format: YYYYMMDD (e.g., March 7, 2022, would be entered as 20220307).

- **Race**: This category includes news entities, interviewers, politicians, influencers, and civil society sources who use racial labels or descriptors to comment on the candidates' race and skin tone, as well as any discussion of racism or racial relations around Afro-Colombian people.
    - Negative racial descriptors: When news outlets refer to one or several candidates using racist qualifiers (black slaves, renegrido, King Kong, etc).
    - Positive/neutral racial descriptors: When anyone in a news article, including the candidate, mentions, talks, or discusses their race, physical characteristics such as skin color or hair, or being Afro-Colombian in a positive or neutral way. For example, when the media refers to the candidate(s) as Afro-Colombia(s).
    - Racial advocacy: When the candidates or the media call out for more protection in relation to the country's Afro-community rights. When they acknowledge that due to the lack of government presence, these minorities are suffering because of internal conflict and racial issues such as segregation, forced displacement, etc.
    - Rooted racism in Colombia: When the media or the candidates discuss race problems in Colombia, such as historical or contemporary references to racism within Colombia.

    - Afro representation: When the news article mentions candidate outfits that are very characteristic of the Afro-Colombian race and African background or how their fashion symbolizes resistance.

- **Role in the election:** This category looks at the role some of the Afro-Colombian candidates play during the election and how the media can describe them as tokens, surrogates, political quotas, Afro-Colombian special circumscription, or political phenomena.
    - Political Token: This includes when the media label the Afro-Colombian candidate as a token, who will bring some votes to the political party to which he or she was subscribed.
    - Surrogate: This center analyzes how some Afro-Colombian candidates can talk about topics involving the Afro community, but Mulatos and White candidates cannot discuss them due to race.
    - Political quota: When the media mentions that the candidate was registered in the list of a political party to comply with the quota law (Law 1475) demanded by the National Electoral Council and the government.
    - Afro-Colombian special circumscription: when Colombian media mentions that the candidacy of x or y candidate is registered in the special minority constituency.
    - Political phenomenon: This discussion centers on how a candidate becomes a surprise during the election, either by getting a lot of support from important opinion leaders, creating a captivating discourse, or getting an astonishing number of votes.

- **Illegal group membership**: This category refers to when the news media present information or mention that candidates are part of one of the leftish illegal military groups in Colombia, including when they say, infer, or deduce that they are part of or head of the Farc, an ELN, or AUC (right-wing paramilitaries groups) member or that one of these organizations endorsed their campaign.
    - ELN or Farc: When the media mentioned that an Afro-Colombian candidate had or has had tides with one of these two leftist illegal groups, or when they assume their campaign has been financed by them.
    - AUC: When the media claims that these paramilitary groups have supported the political campaigns of some Afro candidate or when they assume that they have had alliances with them to win voters.

- **Corruption**: This category focuses on the different corruption scandals in which many Afro-Colombian candidates have been involved due to the political power they wield in certain areas of the country (e.g., the case of Lina Martinez Sinisterra, whose seat was supported by her father who had links with illegal groups).

- **Class**: This category looks at when the media or the candidate uses words like lower-class, poor, impoverished, or part of a working class to refer to them.

- **Location:** This category refers to when the media mentions the candidates' place of origin or the region they represent.
    - Place of origin: Any reference made to the place of origin of Afro candidates. When the media emphasizes the candidate's place of origin, especially if it mentions a region with a high Black population.
    - The region they represent: This only applies to candidates in the race for a seat in the House of Representatives. When the media emphasizes that the candidate represents an area or department with a high Afro population (e.g. if they mention departments such as Choco, Cauca, Nariño, Antioquia, Valle del Cauca, and some of the Caribbean area of the country).

- **Gender**: Refers to the media's emphasis on the Afro-Colombian candidate's gender. When they differentiate between Afro-men and women, giving more connotation to women than to men because they are considered a double minority within the community.
    - Gender Reference: This only applies when there is some gender reference to Afro-Colombian women candidates (e.g., single mother, Afro-Colombian woman, female candidate, etc.).
    - Feminized jobs: When the media emphasizes the jobs that Afro-women do as opposed to their male counterparts. (e.g., housekeeper, teacher, hairdresser, grooming, etc.).

- **Social Activism**: This category looks at when the media mentions that the candidate has been involved in minority rights organizations or emphasizes the candidate's advocacy work. Likewise, it looks at when they use words such as activist, human rights activist, union, social leader, etc.

- **The nobodies**: This category seeks to identify whether the media or the candidate uses "the nobodies," an expression used by Francia, in their political discourse, which has been used by many minorities to express themselves concerning their place in Colombian politics.

- **Lingua power**: This category positions the candidates' voices/speeches as either not aligned with the Spanish rules because Afro-Colombians have a distinct way of speaking—or from someone who wants to speak out about the different social and political problems in society to affect /enact change, which serves to heighten their linguistic power and influence.
    - Powerful: When the news article explicitly frames their voice as influential, strong, or powerful (including general mentions of their voice's strength) against any social, racial, etc., problems to promote social change.

    - Ignoring the use of Spanish rules: Refers to some people's perception that they do not speak well according to the grammatical and syntactical rules in the Spanish language.

- **Educational background:** This category examines how the media and the Colombian people see the candidates' education and intelligence.
    - Not literate or intelligent: When the media uses the words of public figures or claims that an Afro candidate does not know what he or she is saying or is not coherent when speaking.
    - Degree: When the media mentions the type of degree the candidate holds to date.

Appendix B

Stimuli Based on Peace Proposal for the Experiment

Stimulus Spanish Version for Control Group

Mi nombre es Emiliano Martínez Pérez, y soy oriundo de la ciudad de Bogotá. Como candidato al Congreso construiré y acordaré la política pública de paz, reconciliación y convivencia con el Consejo Nacional de Paz, tal y como está establecido en el punto 2.2.4 del Acuerdo Final de Paz. Entre otros, esta política integrará la educación para la paz, la resolución alternativa de conflictos, el fortalecimiento y desarrollo de las Casas de la Cultura, los Centros Deportivos Territoriales, Museos regionales, Lugares de Memoria y Observatorios de Pensamiento en función del fomento de una cultura de paz y la construcción de un proyecto común de nación. Asimismo implementaré un servicio social para la paz, involucrando masivamente a la juventud en la construcción de la paz.

Stimulus English Version for Control Group

My name is Emiliano Martínez Pérez, and I am a native of Bogotá. As a candidate for Congress, I will build and agree on the public policy for peace, reconciliation, and coexistence with the National Peace Council, as established in point 2.2.4 of the Final Peace Agreement. Among others, this policy will integrate education for peace, alternative conflict resolution, strengthening and development of the Houses of Culture, Territorial Sports Centers, Regional Museums, Places of Memory, and Observatories of Thought in the function of the promotion of a culture of peace and the construction of a joint project of nation. I will also implement a social service for peace, massively involving the youth in constructing peace.

Stimulus Spanish Version for Afro-Colombian

Mi nombre es Davison Biáfara Matamba, y soy oriundo de la ciudad de Quibdó en el departamento del Chocó. Como candidato al Congreso construiré y acordaré la política pública de paz, reconciliación y convivencia con el Consejo Nacional de Paz, tal y como está establecido en el punto 2.2.4 del Acuerdo Final de Paz. Entre otros, esta política integrará la educación para la paz, la resolución alternativa de conflictos, el fortalecimiento y desarrollo de las Casas de la Cultura, los Centros Deportivos Territoriales, Museos regionales, Lugares de Memoria y Observatorios de Pensamiento en función del fomento de una cultura de paz y la construcción de un proyecto común de nación. Asimismo implementaré un servicio social para la paz, involucrando masivamente a la juventud en la construcción de la paz.

Stimulus English Version for Afro-Colombian

My name is Davison Biáfara Matamba, and I am a native of Quibdó in the department of Chocó. As a candidate for Congress, I will build and agree on the public policy for peace, reconciliation, and coexistence with the National Peace Council, as established in point 2.2.4 of the Final Peace Agreement. Among others, this policy will integrate education for peace, alternative conflict resolution, strengthening and development of the Houses of Culture, Territorial Sports Centers, Regional Museums, Places of Memory, and Observatories of Thought in the function of the promotion of a culture of peace and the construction of a joint project of nation. I will also implement a social service for peace, massively involving the youth in constructing peace.

Stimulus Spanish Version for White

Mi nombre es William Schloss Restrepo, y soy oriundo de la ciudad de Medellín en el departamento del Antioquia. Como candidato al Congreso construiré y acordaré la política pública de paz, reconciliación y convivencia con el Consejo Nacional de Paz, tal y como está establecido en el punto 2.2.4 del Acuerdo Final de Paz. Entre otros, esta política integrará la educación para la paz, la resolución alternativa de conflictos, el fortalecimiento y desarrollo de las Casas de la Cultura, los Centros Deportivos Territoriales, Museos regionales, Lugares de Memoria y Observatorios de Pensamiento en función del fomento de una cultura de paz y la construcción de un proyecto común de nación. Asimismo implementaré un servicio social para la paz, involucrando masivamente a la juventud en la construcción de la paz.

Stimulus English Version for White

My name is William Schloss Restrepo, and I am a native of Medellín in the department of Antioquia. As a candidate for Congress, I will build and agree on the public policy for peace, reconciliation, and coexistence with the National Peace Council, as established in point 2.2.4 of the Final Peace Agreement. Among others, this policy will integrate education for peace, alternative conflict resolution, strengthening and development of the Houses of Culture, Territorial Sports Centers, Regional Museums, Places of Memory, and Observatories of Thought in the function of the promotion of a culture of peace and the construction of a joint project of nation. I will also implement a social service for peace, massively involving the youth in constructing peace.

Stimulus Spanish Version for Mestizo

Mi nombre es Carlos Pineda Gallego, y soy oriundo de la ciudad de Pereira en el departamento del Risaralda. Como candidato al Congreso construiré y acordaré la política pública de paz, reconciliación y convivencia con el Consejo Nacional de Paz, tal y como está establecido en el punto 2.2.4 del Acuerdo Final de Paz. Entre otros, esta política integrará la educación para la paz, la resolución alternativa de conflictos, el fortalecimiento y desarrollo de las Casas de la Cultura, los Centros Deportivos Territoriales, Museos regionales, Lugares de Memoria y Observatorios de Pensamiento en función del fomento de una cultura de paz y la construcción de un proyecto común de nación. Asimismo implementaré un servicio social para la paz, involucrando masivamente a la juventud en la construcción de la paz.

Stimulus English Version for Mestizo

My name is Carlos Pineda Gallego, and I am a native of Pereira in the department of Risaralda. As a candidate for Congress, I will build and agree on the public policy for peace, reconciliation, and coexistence with the National Peace Council, as established in point 2.2.4 of the Final Peace Agreement. Among others, this policy will integrate education for peace, alternative conflict resolution, strengthening and development of the Houses of Culture, Territorial Sports Centers, Regional Museums, Places of Memory, and Observatories of Thought in the function of the promotion of a culture of peace and the construction of a joint project of nation. I will also implement a social service for peace, massively involving the youth in constructing peace.

Appendix C

Representation of Afro-Colombian, Mestizo, and White Candidate Model Photos for the Experiment





From left to right, the first photo features a male actor portraying an Afro-Colombian candidate, the second photo shows a male actor representing a mestizo candidate, and the bottom photo depicts a male actor representing a White candidate.

Appendix D

Survey Experiment Questionnaire

In Appendix D, the questionnaire used in this study is presented. The items for each variable were measured using established scales from different sources, and each scale is clearly labeled in the first section below to indicate its origin. After that, is the full questionnaire used in the experiment.

Personal Ethnic Identity

From: Umaña-Taylor et al. (2004)

Items:

- My feelings about my ethnicity/race are mostly positive.
- I feel positive about my ethnicity/race.
- I am happy with my ethnicity/race.
- If I could choose, I would not prefer to be of a different ethnicity/race.
- I like my ethnicity/race.

From: Phinney (1992)

Items:

- I have a clear sense of my ethnic/racial background and what it means for me.
- I am happy that I am a member of the ethnical/racial group I belong to.
- I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic/racial group.
- I have a lot of pride in my ethnic/racial group and its accomplishments.
- I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic/racial group.

Candidate Evaluation

From: Zarate et al. (2024)

Items:

- Based on what you saw and read, do you like the candidate?
- Could you trust the candidate?
- Would you feel well represented by the candidate in office?
- Do you think the candidate wants to represent your interests?
- Would this candidate be a leader that fits your interests?
- Can you trust the candidate to represent your interests?
- Do you think the candidate is genuine when addressing important concerns?
- Do you think the candidate is committed to your interests?

Voting Decision

From: Shpeer (2023)

Items:

- How likely are you to vote for this candidate in the upcoming election?
- How strong is your preference for this political candidate?
- In your opinion, how likely is the candidate to win the election overall?

How interested would you be in voting for this political candidate in the upcoming election?

Evaluation of Candidate's Race

From: McConahay et al. (1981)

Items:

- The more important consideration when looking for a candidate is not their political background but the ethnicity/race they represent.
- A candidate's ethnicity/race reveals more about them than they can realize.

From: Neville et al. (2000)

Items:

- A candidate's ethnicity/race is very important in determining who gets elected and who does not in Colombia.
- Every candidate, no matter their ethnicity/race, has an equal chance to be elected in Colombia.
- Ethnicity/race should not matter in the selection of political candidates in Colombia.
- Candidates should be judged by their individual qualities rather than their ethnicity/race in Colombia.

Questionnaire

Please, before starting with your questionnaire, answer the following questions:

Indicate your age

☐18 to 22

☐23 to 27

☐28 to 32

☐33 to 37

☐38 to 42

☐43 to 47

☐48 to 52

☐53 to 57

☐58 to 62

☐63 to 67

☐68 to 72

☐73 to 77

☐+ 78

What is your gender?

☐Man

☐Woman

☐Nonbinary

☐A gender not listed here

☐I do not prefer to answer

What ethnical or racial group do you identify with?

☐Afro-Colombian (Raizales, Blacks, Afro-descendants, and Palenqueros)

☐Mestizo

☐Native Colombian

☐Romani

☐White

☐Other (please specify)

-Using a thermometer scale, how would you rate Afro-Colombians:

Note: Please drag and select a value from the range displayed on the slider bar. Ratings between 51 and 100 mean that you feel more favorable and warmer toward the group. Ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you feel less favorable toward the group. You would rate the group at the 50 mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the group.

-Using the same thermometer scale which you used in the previous question, how would you rate Mestizo

-Using the same thermometer scale which you used in the previous question, how would you rate Whites:

What is the highest level of education you have attained?

☐High school degree

☐Some college

☐Two years of college degree

☐Four Years of college degree

☐Professional degree

☐Graduate degree (MA, PhD, etc.)

☐I prefer not to answer

What is your occupation? If you do not want to answer this question, please leave the space blank.

_____

From what region of Colombia are you from?

☐Caribbean Region: Atlántico, Bolívar, Cesar, Córdoba, La Guajira, Magdalena y Sucre

☐Central Region: Antioquia, Boyacá, Caldas, Caquetá, Cundinamarca, Huila, Norte de Santander, Quindío, Risaralda, Santander, Tolima

☐Orinoco Region: Arauca, Casanare, Meta, Vichada.

☐Pacific Region: Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Valle del Cauca

☐Insular Region: San Andres, Providencia y Santa Catalina

☐Amazon Region: Amazonas, Caquetá, Guainía, Guaviare, Putumayo y Vaupés

Are you a registered voter?

☐Yes

☐No

☐Prefer not to say

Which of the following best characterizes your political affiliation:

☐ Right-wing

☐ Center-right wing

☐ Center or moderate

☐ Center-left wing

☐ Left-wing

☐ I prefer not to answer

Please indicate your political identification, i.e., the political party or movement to which you belong or feel you have some ideological affiliation: _____

For the following questions, please indicate your likelihood to vote for the candidate.

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
1. How likely are you to vote for this candidate in the upcoming election?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Very Low	Low	Somewhat Low	Neutral	Somewhat Hight	Hight	Very High
2. How strong is your preference for this political candidate?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely

3. In your opinion, how likely is the candidate to win th election overall?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Not at All Interested	Slightly Interested	Interested	Neutral	Moderately Interested	Very Interested	Extremely Interested
4. How interested would you be in voting for this political candidate in the upcoming election?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please indicate how you feel about the candidate based on the information provided to you.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. Based on what you saw and read, do you like the candidate?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Could you trust the candidate?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Would you feel well represented by the candidate in office?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Do you think the candidate wants to represent your interests?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Would this candidate be a	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

leader that fits your interests?							
10. Can you trust the candidate to represent your interests?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Do you think the candidate is genuine when addressing important concerns?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Do you think the candidate is committed to your interests?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The intent of these questions is to understand how you think of your race.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13. My feelings about my ethnicity/race are mostly positive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. I feel positive about my ethnicity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. I am happy with my ethnicity/race.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. I have a clear sense of my ethnic/racial background and	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

what it means for me.							
17. I am happy that I am a member of the ethnical /racial group I belong to.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic/racial group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. If I could choose, I would not prefer to be of a different ethnicity/race.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic/racial group and its accomplishments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic/racial group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. I like my ethnicity/race.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The following questions measure different perspectives about voting.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

23. The more important consideration when looking for a candidate is not their political background but the ethnicity/race they represent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. A candidate's ethnicity/race reveals more about them than they can realize.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. A candidate's ethnicity/race is very important in determining who gets elected and who does not in Colombia.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. Every candidate, no matter their ethnicity/race, has an equal chance to be elected in Colombia.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. Ethnicity/race should not matter in the selection of political candidates in Colombia.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. Candidates should be judged by their individual qualities rather than their	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ethnicity/race in Colombia.

The following questions measure different perspectives about the policy proposed.

	Strongly Oppose	Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Neutral	Somewhat Support	Support	Strongly Support
29. What is your stance regarding the candidate's position of building and agreeing on a public policy of peace, reconciliation, and coexistence with the National Peace Council?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
30. Do you agree or disagree with the candidate's position of creating a policy to promote a culture of peace in the country?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Not at All Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
31. How important is this issue to you personally?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

-Using a thermometer scale, please indicate if you feel that the policy proposed by the candidate addresses key issues relevant to voters:

Note: Please drag and select a value from the range displayed on the slider bar. Ratings between 51 and 100 mean you feel more favorable and warmer toward the policy. Ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you feel less favorable toward the policy. You would rate the group at 50 if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the policy.