

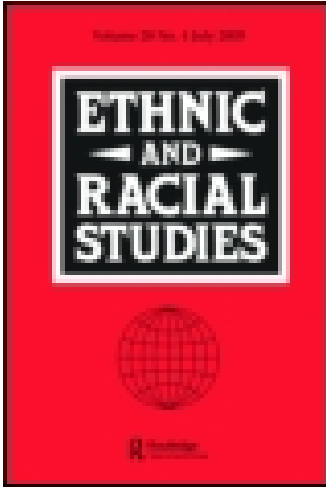
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# Counting bodies: crime mapping, policing and race in Colombia

Eduardo Moncada

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## Abstract

How do internationally informed, technology-driven efforts to democratize the police and citizen security policies in developing countries intersect with pre-existing racial dynamics and discourses? This question is relevant to scholars of both race and security in developing countries, given the current global diffusion of US policing reforms into distinct racial and political contexts. I analyse the intersection between the adoption of crime-mapping technology in urban Colombia and dynamics and discourses regarding the Afro-Colombian population. I find that efforts to democratize the police can paradoxically displace important questions about race from citizen security policy discussions and generate seemingly 'objective' findings that fuse with subjective assumptions regarding the links between criminality, violence and race.

**Keywords:** Colombia; police; race; violence; security; democracy.

## Introduction

How do efforts to democratize the police and citizen security policies in developing countries intersect with pre-existing racial dynamics and discourses? At a time when citizen security is a major concern in Latin America and the region faces multiple democratic deficits, including longstanding forms of racism, the lack of research on the intersection between these phenomena is surprising. I use the adoption of crime-mapping technology in Cali – Colombia's third most populous city and home to the largest urban population of Afro-Colombians – as a 'heuristic case'<sup>1</sup> (Eckstein 1975, p. 104) to develop a provocative hypothesis. In the absence of a broader political project that explicitly recognizes racial discrimination's potential contribution to violence, crime mapping can both displace important questions about race from

citizen security policy-making and generate seemingly 'objective' findings that fuse with subjective assumptions regarding the links between criminality, violence and race. This case study has potentially broader implications, given that Cali's groundbreaking citizen security policies are used as models throughout the region and it has one of Latin America's largest urban populations of people of African descent.

State-directed crime mapping in Colombia has gone through three phases. The first phase took place at the national level starting in the 1980s with the general mapping of urban crime and violence related to the narco-trafficking cartels and the civil war. Cali's pioneering incorporation of traditional crime mapping technologies and practices into the city's security policy-making process in the early 1990s constitutes the second phase. Crime mapping during this phase informed local state efforts to address socioeconomic and political inequities that mapped onto longstanding racial fault-lines. The third phase is Cali's continued reliance on crime mapping but without a political framework that recognizes the potential role of racial discrimination in fostering crime and violence. Crime mapping during this third period devolved into an exercise in 'counting bodies' that deracialized security analyses and policies and fused with pre-existing racial dynamics and discourses.

This study builds upon the rich literatures on race relations in Latin America (e.g. Graham et al. 1990; Wade 2001; Appelbaum, Macpherson and Roseblatt 2003; Hooker 2005; Wade 1997, 2006) and specifically in Colombia (e.g. Arocha 1992; Wade 1993; De Friedemann 1993; Wade 1995; Van Cott 1996; Restrepo 1998; Urrea and Quintín 2000; Urrea and Ortiz 1999; Barbary, Ramirez and Urrea 2002; Appelbaum 2003; Restrepo and Rojas 2004; Urrea and Barbary 2004). It considers the implications that state responses to worrisome security conditions pose for historical racial dynamics and discourses in the Americas. The paper also contributes to the burgeoning literature on the politics of police and citizen security reform (e.g. Ungar 2002; Arias 2006; Bailey and Dammert 2006; Hinton 2006; Tulchin and Ruthenburg 2006; Eaton 2008; Moncada 2009) by examining how seemingly objective policing technologies can undermine the very efforts to democratize security institutions. The analysis may also inform ongoing efforts to democratize the police and citizen security policies in Brazil, Venezuela and other Latin American countries with sizeable populations of African descent and equally complex race relations and security conditions.

## **Hypothesis**

The privileged role of crime mapping in Cali's citizen security policy-making provides a heuristic case for hypothesis-building to inform

future research on what the global diffusion of technology-driven efforts to combat crime and violence implies for racial dynamics and discourses in the developing world. My analysis considers how the political environment in which crime mapping is deployed by the state shapes policy analysis, findings and their interpretation by elites with the political resources to influence how the state responds to insecurity. The resulting hypothesis proposes that, in the absence of a political project of inclusion that recognizes how racial discrimination contributes to crime and violence, crime mapping may both displace important questions about race from citizen security policy discussions and generate seemingly 'objective' findings that fuse with subjective assumptions regarding the links between criminality, violence and race.

A political project that privileges racial inclusion increases the probability that racial discrimination will not be eclipsed as a potential contributing factor to crime and violence by the 'impartial' findings of efforts to map the spatial distribution of criminality and its proximate causal variables. Crime mapping has the potential to inform and guide comprehensive state responses to insecurity if political leaders recognize the complex links between racial marginalization and criminality. Absent this recognition, however, crime mapping can devolve into a narrow exercise in 'counting bodies' that fosters coercive state responses. A political project of racial inclusion can also affect how crime mapping's findings are interpreted by broader elements of society. The absence of a political focus on racial discrimination may result in the use of 'objective' findings to justify subjective racial discourse. Before analysing Cali's crime mapping experience, I briefly identify the main elements of crime mapping, and then outline Colombian racial dynamics into which crime mapping was inserted at both the national and urban levels.

### **Crime mapping: place and pitfalls**

An integral element of the current wave of citizen security reform across the developing world is the democratization of the police (Call 2002; Ungar 2006), which in part entails technological development linked to shifts in policing strategies. Police use of crime mapping technology began in 1994 with the New York City Police Department [NYPD]. This initiative, today known as CompStat, was intended to develop officers' knowledge of micro-level crime dynamics (Eterno and Silverman 2006). Crime mapping relies on the use of Geographic Information Systems [GIS] to produce detailed depictions of crime at varying spatial levels, from entire cities to individual neighbourhoods. These maps in turn rely on the constant collection and analysis of reported criminal activity. Crime mapping also identifies correlations

between a variety of contextual variables and criminal activity in specific geographies, including the time a criminal act takes place (i.e. specific hour, day, week and month), demographics of the victimizer and victim, potential motive(s), type(s) of weapon used and the presence of alcohol or other potential artificial catalysts.

Despite the subsequent drop in crime in New York City and the widespread emulation of the CompStat model, crime mapping has raised significant concerns (Greene 1999). The increased reliance on statistical indicators as a measurement of police effectiveness and security can generate a counterproductive tendency among police officers to focus on reducing such indicators at any cost (Eterno and Silverman 2006, p. 223), including improper or illegal practices. Between 1992 and 1996, citizen complaints against the NYPD increased by over 60 per cent (Greene 1999, p. 176). Racial minorities are frequently the targets of these excessive policies, as crime mapping often establishes a correlation between specific racial populations and criminal activity – either as perpetrators or as residents of high-crime neighbourhoods (Ibid., p. 176). In brief, crime mapping can play an important role in informing state efforts against crime and violence, but it can also introduce pitfalls that may antagonize relations between the state – principally its security forces – and racial minorities.

### **National and urban racial contexts in Colombia**

One-quarter of the Latin American population is of African descent. Of Colombia's 41.5 million residents, 4.2 million are Afro-Colombian and 1.4 million are indigenous, constituting 10.6 and 3.4 per cent of the total national population, respectively (DANE 2005). Regional fragmentation along racial and ethnic lines have characterized Colombia since its national independence and inhibited the emergence of a cohesive national identity.

Van Cott (1996, p. 526) finds that Colombian intellectuals associate racial and ethnic heterogeneity with weakness. Colombian society therefore employs a discourse that projects a racially and ethnically homogenous – and thus harmonious – nation-state composed principally of *mestizos* (mixed Amerindian-European) (Barbary 2001, p. 90). This 'deracialized'<sup>2</sup> intellectual discourse facilitates the continued exclusion of Afro-Colombians from traditional positions of power by masking racism and curbing the full potential of race as a potentially powerful 'collective action frame' (Tarrow 1994, ch. 7).<sup>3</sup> The Afro-Colombian population generally experiences unequal access to basic social services and remains mired in the low-income service and informal sectors of the economy (World Bank 2005). Afro-Colombians thus express a generalized sense of what they characterize as a 'lack of opportunities' (Ibid., p. 6).

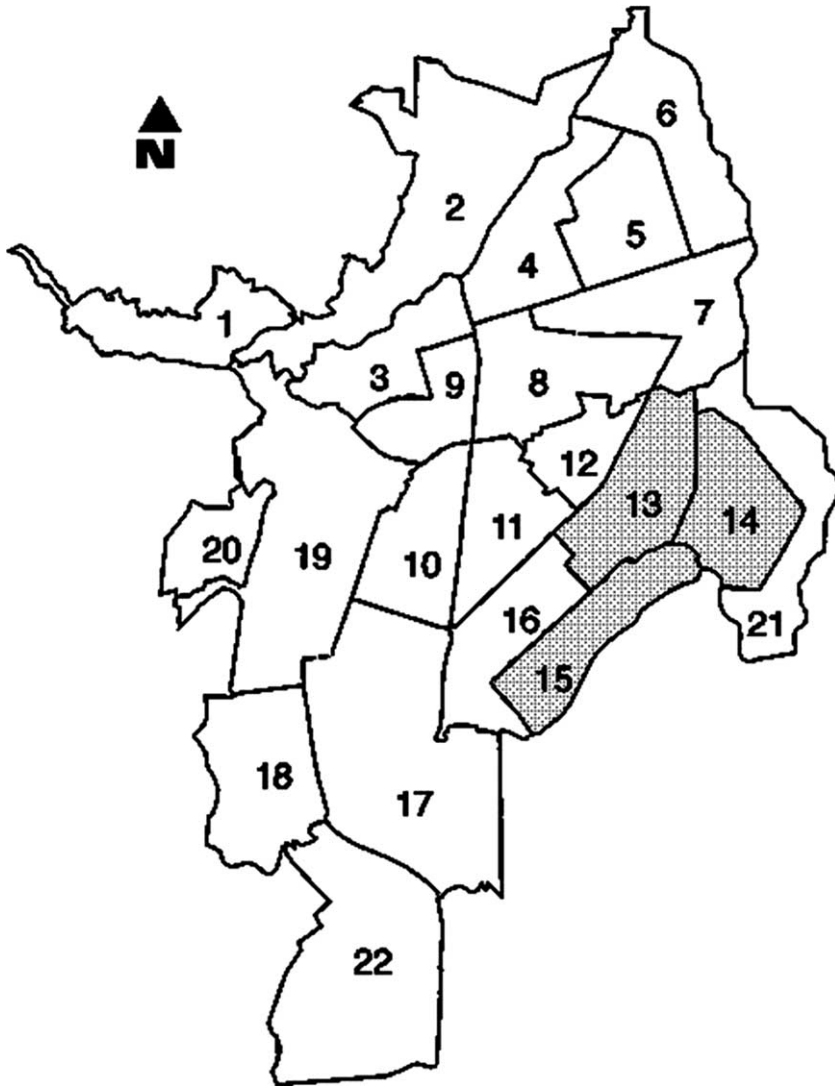
Afro-Colombians have realized some important national-level political gains in recent years. A new national constitution in 1991 recognized Colombia as a culturally and ethnically diverse nation (Barbary 2001, p.85; Barbary, Ramirez and Urrea 2002, p. 75; Oslender 2004, p. 35). National legislation in 1993, better known as 'Law 70', legally recognized the collective land rights of the Afro-Colombian communities in the western Pacific region of the country (Arocha 1992; Wade 1995; Restrepo 1998). These procedural gains, however, have not always been upheld in practice, nor have they empowered Afro-Colombians to address additional concerns in the political arena (Barbary 2001, p. 91; Oslender 2004).

At the urban level, Colombian cities underwent rapid growth in the mid-twentieth century,<sup>4</sup> and today slightly more than 70 per cent of both the general Colombian and the Afro-Colombian populations reside in urban areas (Barbary, Ramirez and Urrea 2004, p. 76). One-quarter of the Afro-Colombian population resides in the south-western Valle del Cauca, one of the country's thirty-two departments. The capital of the Valle del Cauca is Cali, where approximately 26 per cent (539,000) of the city's total population of just over two million is Afro-Colombian (DANE 2005). With over 12 per cent of the country's Afro-Colombian population (Barbary, Ramirez and Urrea 2004, p. 80), Cali has the country's largest urban population of people of African descent.

Migratory flows to Cali, unlike those of Bogota and other major Colombian cities, have historically been diverse in composition, drawing from the Pacific coastline, the highland plateaus of neighbouring districts and the southern portion of the country's main coffee-growing territory (Barbary and Hoffman 2004, p. 119). Afro-Colombians have migrated to Cali since the 1950s. Yet, the spread of the armed conflict to the country's Pacific region – whose population is predominantly Afro-Colombian – intensified migration to Cali throughout the 1990s (Ibid.). Migrants from the Pacific region now constitute 18 per cent of Cali's total migrant population, and of the Pacific migratory flow over 80 per cent is Afro-Colombian (Ibid., p. 144). The majority of Cali's Pacific migrants reside in the impoverished western fringes of the city (Barbary 2004, p. 176), including three administrative divisions – called *comunas* – that together constitute an area known as the Aguablanca District, depicted in Figure 1 with shading.<sup>5</sup>

Cali's sharp population growth since the mid-twentieth century taxed the city's capacity to provide adequate housing, which led migrants to settle on the city's outskirts. Aguablanca eventually became home to some of the city's poorest residents. The spatial concentration of a low-income population coupled with relatively deficient or absent public service provision has historically provided

Figure 1. Map of Cali and the Aguablanca District



ample fuel for clientelism. Extant supplies of local housing and public services are the result of piecemeal efforts that include the self-help of local residents, charitable donations and periodic public investment during elections (Alvarez et al. 1990; Machado and Ocoro 2004, p. 23). Table 1 indicates that approximately 40 per cent of Cali's Afro-Colombian population resides in Aguablanca,<sup>6</sup> with Afro-Colombians constituting 50 per cent or more of the total residents in Comunas 14 and 15. Table 1 also provides initial insights into the area's security dynamics.



**Table 1.** *Demographics and violence in Cali (2000–2007)*

	Cali	District of Aguablanca	Comuna 13	Comuna 14	Comuna 15
Total population	2,075,380	454,559	171,646	154,076	128,837
Total Afro-Colombia population	539,598	209,097	65,225	78,578	64,418
Afro-Colombian %	26	46	38	51	50
	Homicides as % of annual city total				
2000		20			
2001		22			
2002		20			
2003		25			
2004		24			
2005		21			
2006		28			
2007		30			

*Sources:* Demographic data for Cali and Aguablanca: Urrea and Botero. N.D. P. 3, Table 1. Homicide data: Observatorio Social. 2003–2007 and author's calculations

### Urban (in)security and crime mapping

Based on Table 1, it is evident that – on average – Aguablanca accounted for one-quarter of all homicides in Cali between 2000 and 2007. Nearly 20 per cent of the city's homicides took place in Aguablanca in 2000, and by 2007 the figure was at 30 per cent. Between 1993 and 2000, over 55 per cent of all homicide victims in Cali were youth between the ages of ten and twenty-nine (Machado and Ocoro 2004, p. 16). Of the 1,250 homicides committed against youth under the age of eighteen in Cali between 2000 and 2007, 43 per cent occurred in Aguablanca (Observatorio Social 2006, pp. 19–20). Being young *and* black – two of the defining demographic features of Aguablanca – is a particularly dangerous combination in Cali, where the mortality rate for black youth between the age of fifteen and nineteen is more than twice that of non-black youth (Urrea and Botero undated, p. 5, fig. 2). How has the periodic evolution of crime mapping in Cali intersected with the racial dynamics in Aguablanca?

#### *Phase I: war on drugs and counter-terrorism*

The first phase of crime mapping in Colombia was not a micro-level analysis but instead a national-level effort to chart the extent of the narco-trafficking cartels' urban activities and the incursion of the civil war into the country's major cities. This initial phase set the context for Cali's subsequent adoption of traditional crime-mapping technologies and practices. National-level crime mapping revealed that

the socioeconomic and political marginalization of populations living in peripheral urban areas – such as Aguablanca – facilitated the recruitment efforts of drug cartels, leftist insurgencies and right-wing paramilitary forces among disenfranchised youth.

Financial assistance provided by the United States to the Colombian military and police as part of its ‘war on drugs’ supported efforts to map the operations of drug trafficking cartels based in Cali and the country’s second largest city, Medellín. Drug-related urban violence was a major concern in Colombia starting in the 1980s and through the early 1990s. The national government was also under intense pressure from the United States to make gains against the cartels, given their export of narcotics to the lucrative North American market. Efforts to plot the cartels’ activities mainly informed military and police operations, as did the mapping of the urbanization of the country’s historically rural civil war as insurgents and paramilitaries penetrated urban peripheries. In Cali, for example, the M-19 insurgency made significant inroads via Aguablanca and other peripheral parts of the city. The national-level mapping of narco-trafficking and the civil conflict revealed how the poor socioeconomic conditions in the urban periphery facilitated the consolidation of power by several violent, non-state actors. This in turn provided the context in which Cali adopted traditional crime-mapping technologies and practices.

### *Phase II: urban violence and racial fault lines*

Arguably, nowhere in Latin America has the process to democratize the police been as extensive and complex as in Colombia. Cali was the first Colombian city to undertake a comprehensive citizen security-reform project, within which the democratization of the police was a central element.<sup>7</sup> While Cali is known for the powerful ‘Cali drug cartel’ that controlled a major portion of the cocaine that was trafficked around the world up until the late 1990s, it is paradoxically also renowned in international public health, security and development circles for its preventive citizen security policies between 1992 and 1994. Then Mayor Rodrigo Guerrero executed a series of projects focused on addressing the societal roots of crime and violence in peripheral areas of the city long ignored by the traditional political and socioeconomic elites. These initiatives were grouped under a broader programme known as Development, Security and Peace, or ‘Desepaz’ in Spanish. Interviews with Guerrero, members of his staff and several consultants to the programme reveal that crime mapping was foundational for Desepaz.<sup>8</sup>

Crime mapping during this second phase was integral for the visualization and analysis of crime and violence at the aggregate city

level and the micro level of individual neighbourhoods. Weekly meetings were held between the mayor and members of his staff, the police and other local government functionaries in rooms where the walls were covered with maps of Cali and pushpins were used to identify criminal hot spots. More importantly, data generated by crime mapping was the foundation for Desepaz's efforts to address socio-economic and political inequities that mapped onto racial fault lines. Desepaz is today recognized as *the* regional model for a preventive approach to crime and violence throughout Latin America (Ayres 1998, p. 20).

Table 2 provides an overview of Desepaz's policies. The individual programmes grouped under the five strategic objectives included targeted efforts in specific geographic areas of the city – especially Aguablanca – to reduce socioeconomic inequality, dissuade at-risk youth from using violence to resolve conflict, as well as broader city-wide efforts to increase citizens' awareness about violence through the public dissemination of crime data. Desepaz's efforts in Aguablanca were based in part on the logic that racial and cultural divergences had resulted in the fracturing of society in Cali, which in turn had contributed to the concentration of criminality and violence in Aguablanca.<sup>9</sup> Guerrero's ability to openly address racial and cultural fault lines historically considered unmentionable among the city's elite was due to the fact that he himself was drawn from this powerful elite social network. Before becoming mayor, Guerrero directed a major charitable foundation in Aguablanca whose funding came from a group of large private sector firms that had been major economic and political forces in Cali since the early twentieth century. As one of Desepaz's first consultants to work directly with black at-risk youth in Aguablanca indicated, Guerrero's approach to citizen security and his focus on Aguablanca alarmed Cali's socioeconomic and political elites. But Guerrero's own elite background enabled him to 'effectively manoeuvre past these political obstacles'.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, Desepaz all but disappeared after Guerrero left office in 1994. Subsequent mayors displaced the initiative from its central role in combating crime and violence to the periphery of local government by dismissing the majority of its staff, cutting its financial budget and providing it with little direction. Lack of participation and support from key sectors of civil society and the private sector and the legacy of corruption perpetuated by years of drug trafficking and violence contributed to its withering. The single reform from Desepaz's initial years that has persisted over several mayoral administrations is crime mapping. Yet, how have political leaders' failures to explicitly consider how racial discrimination contributes to violence impacted crime mapping's role in policy-making and elite discourse?

**Table 2.** *Desepaz's citizen security policies (1992–94)*

<b>Strategic objectives</b>				
		Education and communications for peace	Socioeconomic equity	Youth
Systematic research on violence	Institutional development			
<b>Programmes</b>				
Epidemiological study of violence through crime mapping	Weekly inter-institutional security meetings	Weekly meetings between local government and community members	Construction of new schools	Cultural activities for at-risk youth
Bi-annual public opinion survey on the police and judiciary	Education and housing provisions for the police	Cultural activities in exchange for the surrendering of toy guns	Teacher training programmes	Sports competitions
	Increased access points for citizen denouncement of crime	Public relations peace and conflict resolution training for community leaders	Public service programmes in Aguablanca	Micro-business training for at-risk youth
	Information technology for the judiciary		Housing for impoverished families	

*Source:* Guerrero (1999, pp. 4–9)

*Phase III: counting bodies*

There are two ways in which the third phase of Cali's crime-mapping experiment intersects with pre-existing racial dynamics and discourses. First, it produces deracialized policy discourses regarding the origins of and appropriate responses to violence in places like Aguablanca. An exploration of the security policy discourse and analysis based largely on crime mapping in Cali reveals the predominance of what one local scholar calls a 'focus on counting bodies' without an equal degree of attention to the racial and related political power dynamics that may shape these numbers.<sup>11</sup> Second, crime mapping generates seemingly 'objective' findings that fuse with subjective preconceptions regarding the links between criminality and race.

*Deracialized policy discourse and analysis*

I rely on semi-structured interviews with mayors, policy-makers and security consultants in Cali conducted during several field research trips between 2006 and 2009 to assess the relationship between crime mapping and policy discourse and analysis. I also analyse publications on crime generated by Cali's Secretariat of Government and Citizen Security between 2003 and 2007. The Secretariat is responsible for both designing and executing the majority of the city's citizen security initiatives.

Aguablanca has long been an epicentre of violence in Cali. Expressions and sources of violence in Aguablanca are multiple and complex. According to a recent study, 'there are gangs, social cleansing organizations, and militias in most of the area's neighborhoods who have organized themselves to address the problem of 'security' by dominating territories and restricting local residents' mobility and possibilities to associate with each other' (Machado and Ocoro 2004, p. 15). Marked inequality and poverty contribute to an overall context conducive to violence as both a means to obtain material resources and a mechanism through which to resolve conflict (Ibid.).

Yet, the fact that a significant portion of the area's population is Afro-Colombian would also be expected to generate debate and discussion among the city's political and policy-making circles about how racial dynamics and discrimination may be a contributing factor to the area's security dilemmas. Atehortua et al.'s (1998) ethnographic study of violence and exclusion in Aguablanca finds that social stigmatization of the area's black youth leads to feelings of disempowerment and consequently the use of violence to gain attention, respect and self-satisfaction. Machado and Ocoro's (2004, p. 20–8) interviews and focus groups with youth from a predominantly Afro-Colombian neighbourhood in Aguablanca also reveal a sense of racial

discrimination as a catalyst for the use of violence as a way to gain social status. Community leaders in Aguablanca who work with at-risk youth concurred that young Afro-Colombians hesitate to venture outside of their neighbourhoods because non-blacks often assume that they are readying to commit a crime.<sup>12</sup> As one black youth interviewed by Urrea and Quintín (2001, p. 1, translation by author) states:

People are very racist . . . people think that all blacks are thieves and begin to look at us suspiciously. Especially the whites . . . When we go to the city center in Cali to buy our clothes, they see us . . . as blacks and they think to themselves, “No! This one is going to rob me”, and that hurts.

Racial tensions also feed state-sponsored violence. A former consultant to Desepaz who worked on conflict resolution with youth gangs in Aguablanca during the early 1990s indicated that the city’s police harassed and ‘disappeared’ several of the young black males with whom he worked, based on their race and place of residence alone. He and his staff were ‘constantly harassed by the police’ and told to ‘stop wasting their time’ trying to incorporate young blacks into mainstream society. The consultant eventually abandoned his work in Aguablanca, as he and his team experienced intense police pressure and threats of violence.<sup>13</sup> Another Afro-Colombian community leader that works with at-risk youth in Aguablanca indicated that police assigned to the area ‘don’t assume that they’re here to protect the residents of Aguablanca, but that instead they’re here to stop [us] from committing crimes against people in the rest of the city’.<sup>14</sup> This assumption leads the police and the state to privilege repressive practices versus more preventive approaches to crime and violence.

Despite indications that racial discrimination contributes to insecurity in Aguablanca, interviews with public officials in charge of the city’s citizen security policies reveal a uniform discourse where race and racial discrimination are largely absent. There is instead a neutral discourse focused on the technical aspects of mapping criminal activity that sidesteps the contentious issues of race and racism in the urban context. Policy-makers and security consultants thus use crime mapping primarily to identify proximate variables, such as the presence of alcohol or the time of day a crime was committed.

Nonetheless, one local Afro-Colombian political leader stressed that violence in Aguablanca is much more complex in origin than establishing a link between alcohol and crime. As the studies noted above indicate, some acts of violence in Aguablanca stem partly from longstanding resentment and suppressed frustration with the pervasive mechanisms of racism that facilitate socioeconomic marginalization among a large and young population. The local state’s privileging of

crime mapping without consideration for race constrains the political space available to local community actors to debate and discuss how racial discrimination feeds violence and the necessary steps to reduce discrimination.<sup>15</sup> The director of a conflict resolution organization in Aguablanca indicated that, after the Desepaz experience in the early 1990s, the local city government has consistently refused to acknowledge the potential for racial discrimination as a macro-level factor associated with crime and violence. 'The state prefers to assume that Aguablanca's security dilemma is reducible to organized youth gangs and the appropriate response is thus more police and more coercion'.<sup>16</sup>

The failure to address race is further evident in the analyses of criminal activity published by the Secretariat of Government between 2003 and 2007, specifically the annual reports on crime based on crime mapping (Observatorio Social 2003–2007). These publications are generated by the Secretariat's Social Observatory, whose institutional mission is to 'define local [citizen security] public policies' (Observatorio Social 2004, pp. 1–2). The Social Observatory's data analysis is the foundation for weekly citizen security policy evaluation and development meetings held between the mayor, their staff, the police and other state security agencies.<sup>17</sup>

The reports consistently rank various neighbourhoods in Aguablanca, including several that are predominantly Afro-Colombian, as among the most violent in the city measured by number of homicides. Aguablanca is thus classified as a 'high priority' area for local state intervention each year. Yet, part of the logic behind labelling Aguablanca as a 'high priority' is evident in the 2003 report, which argues for targeted state intervention in Aguablanca and several other areas of the city that together account for 50 per cent of the city's total number of homicides in order to '*lower the city's overall homicide rate*' (Observatorio Social 2003, p. 17, emphasis added). Aguablanca is in part considered a 'high priority' not because of its particular violent dynamics, but because of what these dynamics imply for the overall number of deaths by homicide in the city. This logic mirrors what Eterno and Silverman (2006, p. 223) identify as a focus on the reduction of quantitative indicators without equal attention to macro-level causal forces. How does this focus shape the state's citizen security policies?

Specific recommendations to lower levels of violence in Cali based on crime mapping prioritize technocratic measures that privilege the proximate factors associated with homicides. The 2003 report (Observatorio Social 2003, pp. 18–21), for example, called for targeted intervention in Aguablanca and other high-violence areas of the city through campaigns to encourage people not to carry firearms and restrict the periods of time during which stores and entertainment venues can sell alcohol, among others. The Social Observatory's

spatial analysis of patterns of violence in 2004 led it to argue that the application of restrictive measures, such as curfews for youth and the restriction of alcohol sales in Aguablanca, had contributed to a slight reduction in the city's overall homicide rate (Observatorio Social 2004, pp. 21–5). In 2005, the institution noted that the Cali had reached its goal of limiting homicides to 'four a day' partly by focusing its intervention on weekends – which crime mapping indicated was the period of time with highest concentrations of violence (Observatorio Social 2005, pp. 25–6). In 2006 and 2007, the Social Observatory focused on lack of educational opportunities and drug addiction as key determinants of violence among youth in Aguablanca and other parts of the city, but made no mention of how these factors interrelate with racial discrimination and socioeconomic marginalization based on race (Observatorio Social 2006, p. 56; Observatorio Social 2007, p. 57). In brief, an analysis of the analyses that inform and guide state security policy-making reveals not a single reference to the potential role of racial dynamics for criminality and violence.

#### *Objective findings and subjective interpretation*

How has the 'objective' data generated by crime mapping fused with subjective assumptions regarding the link between criminality, violence and Afro-Colombians? To answer this question, I conducted interviews with several of Cali's past and present elites. A focus on elite discourse is particularly important, given that these are powerful interests with the resources to influence local state response to crime and violence.

The constant diffusion of statistics on criminal activity in Cali and the seemingly perpetual identification of Aguablanca as a 'high priority' with regards to crime and violence has become a mechanism to further crystallize what some elites frame as an insurmountable cultural division between Cali and Aguablanca as the 'other' city that has emerged inside of it. Aguablanca has historically existed at the periphery of both the city's concrete spatial expanse and the imagination of the city's socioeconomic elites. This dual marginalization has not translated into absolute abandon of the area by the city's elites; rather it is the target of public and private philanthropic and community development projects, some of which are financed by several of the city's most powerful private sector firms and families.

Nonetheless, private sector leaders responsible for these projects carefully balance a two-pronged discourse regarding Aguablanca and criminality. They profess the need for increased community development in Aguablanca to prevent delinquency. But they also argue that the cultural and racial differences between Aguablanca's predominantly Afro-Colombian population and the city's majority



*mestizo* population explain the concentration of crime and violence in Aguablanca. Despite its geographic isolation, Aguablanca's reputation for criminality and violence as documented by the state is seen as a major hindrance for Cali's overall political and economic development by local elites. Aguablanca, in other words, constrains Cali's ability to become 'modern'.

Previous migratory flows into Cali are depicted as positive by leading socioeconomic elites because they consisted of industrious individuals who arrived with 'four pesos in their pockets'<sup>18</sup> and ultimately succeeded in establishing businesses and settling into a middle-class lifestyle. According to one agroindustrial elite, these early migrants helped make Cali a 'paradise where security was never an issue'.<sup>19</sup> The current, predominantly Afro-Colombian migratory inflows are seen in a very different light. Contemporary migrants are viewed as arriving with 'empty pockets' to 'make demands on the city' and not contribute to its overall development.<sup>20</sup> How has crime mapping contributed to this conceptual divorce between Cali and Aguablanca and, more importantly, to the perceptions and assumptions that elites have of their neighbours in the city's outskirts?

Aguablanca's consistent ranking among the top security priorities in the Cali has further crystallized the divorce between it and the rest of the city in the discourse among the city's elites.<sup>21</sup> Elites repeatedly pointed to the high number of homicides in Aguablanca reported in local media outlets based on the data provided by the Social Observatory as further evidence that this is simply a world apart from the city proper. A recent opinion column in the city's main newspaper, for example, used the high degree of 'insecurity' in Aguablanca to argue that Cali would otherwise be a 'manageable' city if it were not for Aguablanca, which it characterized as the 'prototype of informality, disorder, poor management, unemployment, and *insecurity* that provides little and demands everything in return' (*El País* 3/19/2008, emphasis added).

During an interview with a representative of one of the city's major commercial business associations, the representative noted that despite living his entire life in Cali, he had never once been to Aguablanca. In further discussion about the conditions of crime and violence in Aguablanca, he echoed the sentiment that 'Cali will never prosper as long as Aguablanca is a part of the city'. Finally, he repeatedly noted how 'studies produced by the local government' show how Aguablanca 'is the most violent part of the city', further justifying the fact that he would likely never visit Aguablanca because 'it's a jungle over there'.<sup>22</sup>

An interview with a member of a well-known family from the agroindustrial sector – a key economic sector that relies heavily on the Afro-Colombian influx for manual labour – provides a particularly insightful look at elite discourse concerning Aguablanca, race and

criminality. This elite also heads a semi-formal organization supported by the private sector that works with the public sector to address crime and violence in the city – partly by supplementing the crime mapping efforts of the Secretariat of Government and Citizen Security. In addition to reaffirming the discourse that describes the current migratory inflow as ‘needy’ and overall ‘negative’ for the city, he specifically indicated that ‘criminality began to increase in Aguablanca once Afro-Colombians began migrating heavily to the area’ starting in the mid to late 1980s.

He also indicated that the private sector’s efforts in Aguablanca will likely never support a broad political project focused on the racial or socioeconomic roots of crime and violence. Instead, the private sector focuses on macro-level security issues that emphasize building the coercive capacity of the police, increased coordination between the city and the national military and combating kidnappings of business owners. Echoing the commercial sector representative’s depiction of Aguablanca as a savage and separate part of the city, he noted that his ‘charity trips’ to this area to deliver food and other basic needs are for him like ‘traveling to the Congo’ – again invoking the perception that the criminality and violence in Aguablanca constrain Cali from developing into a modern metropolis.<sup>23</sup>

### **Toward an alternative crime mapping: conclusion and future research**

How do efforts to improve citizen security and democratize the police in developing countries interact with historical racial dynamics and discourses? I identify two potential implications through a case study of crime mapping’s introduction into Latin America via the city of Cali, with its sizeable Afro-Colombian population. Because crime mapping is a critical element of the current global diffusion of policing reform models across the developing world – including several Latin American countries with their own large populations of peoples of African descent – this analysis and its findings provide a preliminary step toward hypothesis and theory development of both scholarly and policy relevance.

Cali’s adoption of crime mapping has paradoxically both deracialized policy analysis and fused with subjective assumptions regarding the links between race and criminality among the city’s political and socioeconomic elites. Interviews and archival analysis reveal a surprising lack of consideration for how racial dynamics contribute to crime and violence despite the fact that Aguablanca – an epicentre of violence in Cali – is home to a large portion of the city’s Afro-Colombian population. Policy-makers and analysts instead focus on easily quantifiable and proximate variables correlated with crime and violence that in turn produce findings and recommendations that

circumvent the issue of race in a city where one-quarter of the population is black.

Yet, the seemingly 'objective' findings generated by crime mapping and related analyses are also used as evidence to confirm 'subjective' assumptions among elites that link Afro-Colombians with criminality. The constant diffusion of crime data and labelling of Aguablanca and its Afro-Colombian neighbourhoods as 'high priority' security concerns are used by elites to validate their arguments that the cultural divide between Afro-Colombians and the 'rest' of the city's population is a detriment to Cali's overall development and modernization. Information generated by crime mapping enables elites to develop racially charged discourses regarding historical migrations to Cali, wherein the previous migrants are depicted as industrious and 'civil' while the current Afro-Colombian migrants are painted as a drain on the city's finances and culturally prone to violence.

What are the potential alternatives to the current use of crime mapping in Cali? Community leaders in Aguablanca argue for a return to the broader political project within which crime mapping was adopted in Cali in order to create the political space necessary to discuss how racial discrimination contributes to crime and violence. Increased public participation in the policy-making process is also a major demand, as Aguablanca's community leaders profess little understanding of how crime mapping works, despite the fact that it repeatedly generates categorizations of their neighbourhoods as among the most violent in the city that feed into perceptions of Afro-Colombians as somehow 'naturally' inclined toward delinquency and violence.<sup>24</sup> More broadly, community leaders worry that crime mapping is being used by political incumbents and policy-makers to justify a policy of 'carrots and sticks', where the state's focus is on repression and socioeconomic conditions. As one leader noted, 'We see socioeconomic inequalities as important factors when it comes to violence, but these inequalities are themselves products of the larger force of racism.'<sup>25</sup>

This leads us to consider potential future avenues of research. While I focus on the implications of citizen security reforms for race in this study, race in Colombia and most of Latin America overlaps significantly with class in both material reality and common discourse. Future research might explicitly consider how the intertwining of race and class in Latin America shapes the incentives for policy-makers and the police when it comes to policy choices regarding citizen security. Under what conditions does the interrelation between race and class increase or decrease the probability that political incumbents will favour crime mapping and other approaches designed to produce 'objective' scientific findings over research methodologies more likely to produce nuanced understandings of how race and class are

associated with criminality? More broadly, comparative analysis might interrogate how divergences in pre-existing dynamics between race and class both across and within cases shape political discourse and public opinion on criminality and violence.

Finally, the growing diffusion of citizen security reforms across Latin American countries with their own sizable populations of peoples of African descent and complex racial histories underscores the importance of increased debate and discussion between policy-makers and scholars of race and security as part of broader efforts to address these important and increasingly intertwined issues.

## Notes

1. A heuristic case study is purposely chosen to develop a theoretical framework or hypothesis that is potentially generalisable.
2. The concept of deracialization has been used by scholars of US city politics to categorize political campaigns by racial minorities – mainly African-Americans and Latinos – that remove race as a defining feature of the political image and platform in order to build multiracial and multiethnic political coalitions that increase the probabilities of winning an election. As the case of the official discourse concerning racial diversity in Colombia demonstrates, however, deracialization is a political tool available to those who already hold public office to advance particular depictions of social harmony. For an overview of the concept of deracialization in the context of US city politics, see Perry (1999).
3. The country's indigenous population has nevertheless managed to realize important political gains that exceed those of the Afro-Colombians. Hooker (2005) finds that that the disparity in political gains result from the indigenous population's ability to claim an ethnic identity distinct from the national culture, something which the Afro-Colombian population has had more difficulty achieving.
4. Colombia's urban population grew at a pace of 5.6 per cent annually between 1951 and 1964 (Barbary and Hoffman 2004, p. 118).
5. Cali is divided into twenty-one comunas.
6. By 1999, Aguablanca and a few smaller politically defined parts of the city housed nearly 70 percent of the city's Afro-Colombian population (Barbary et al. 1999).
7. The interests involved in the political debate and policy-making process regarding security in Colombia broadened considerably following the wave of decentralization that began with the popular election of city mayors in the late 1980s. Efforts to create a more participatory and decentralized democracy through the 1991 constitution converted citizen security in Cali and other cities into a major *local* political issue, as city mayors were made legally responsible for security.
8. Author interviews of Rodrigo Guerrero, Cali, Colombia, on 7 August 2008; former Cali Peace Councilor (1), Cali, Colombia, on 30 July 2008; former Peace Councilor (2), Cali, Colombia, on 8 August 2008; former Peace Councilor (3), Washington, DC, on 18 September 2008; former Director of Desepaz (1), Cali, Colombia, on 30 July 2008; and former Director of Desepaz (2), Cali, Colombia, on 12 August 2008.
9. Author interview of Rodrigo Guerrero, Cali, Colombia, on 7 August 2008.
10. Author interview with former Desepaz consultant (1), Bogota, Colombia, on 24 August 2008.
11. Author interview of Professor of Sociology at the Universidad del Valle, Cali, Colombia, on 31 August 2008.
12. Author interviews with Director of Asolibertad, Cali, Colombia, on 30 June 2009 and with Director of the Centro Empresarial Juvenil de Aguablanca on 30 June 2009.

13. Author interview with former Desepaz consultant (1), Bogota, Colombia, on 24 August 2008.
14. Author interview with Director of Asolibertad, Cali, Colombia, on 30 June 2009.
15. Author interview with Afro-Colombian political leader from Aguablanca (1), Cali, Colombia, on 14 November 2008.
16. Author interview with Director of Asolibertad, Cali, Colombia, on 30 June 2009.
17. Author interview with Director of the Social Observatory, Cali, Colombia, on 8 June 2006.
18. Author interview with the Executive President of a major philanthropic foundation, Cali, Colombia, on 13 November 2008.
19. Author interview with representative from the Agroindustrial Sector and Director of a private sector commission on security in Cali, Cali, Colombia, on 21 November 2008.
20. Author interview with the former president of an economic group based in Cali, Cali, Colombia, on 21 November 2008.
21. This is despite the fact that parts of the heart of the city where both formal commercial businesses and informal workers are concentrated have also historically had high levels of crime and violence.
22. Author interview with representative from a Cali-based commercial business association, Cali, Colombia, on 15 August 2008.
23. Author interview with representative from the agroindustrial sector and director of a private sector commission on security in Cali, Cali, Colombia, on 21 November 2008.
24. Author interview with Director of Comité Empresarial Juvenil de Aguablanca, Cali, Colombia, on 30 June 2009.
25. Author interview with Director of Asolibertad, Cali, Colombia, on 30 June 2009.

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