Slavery, Elections and Political Affiliations in Colombia

Ali T. Ahmed[*]   Marcus Johnson[†]   Mateo Vásquez-Cortés[‡]

New York University   University of Maryland   ITAM

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Abstract

What is the effect of slavery on long-run party system development in the Americas? Recent research has examined these issues in the U.S. by focusing on contemporary white attitudes. However, relatively little research has considered the comparative generalizability of this agenda. In this article, we explore the impact of the intensity of slavery on political behavior in Colombia, a relatively stable democracy during the 20th century, with a de facto two-party system. We find that places where enslaved Africans were a larger proportion of the population in 1843 show higher levels of support for the Liberal Party. These results are robust to different specifications and strategies to identify the effect of slavery and are consistent across a different set of elections that span the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. We further explore and test two mechanisms related to the strength of the colonial state and the development of a party stronghold in areas with slavery. To complement the argument, we explore the contemporary partisan alliances of different ethnic groups in Colombia and show that the initial affiliation between liberals and black communities remained stable over time.

Keywords: Slavery; political partisanship; path-dependence; race; Latin America.

[*]Wilf Family Department of Politics, New York University, 19 West 4th St, New York, NY 10012, USA; ali.ahmed@nyu.edu

[†]Dept. of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 7343 Preinkert Dr, College Park, MD 20742, USA; mjohnso6@umd.edu

[‡]Department of Political Science, Instituto Tecnologico Autonomo de Mexico, Rio Hondo 1, Ciudad de Mexico, 01080, Mexico; mateo.vasquez@itam.mx

1 Introduction

Prior to the back-to-back victories of Álvaro Uribe in Colombia's 2002 and 2006 presidential elections, the Liberal and Conservative parties formed the axis of one of the region's most stable party systems. The stability of Colombia's two-party system was the product of periods of frequent and intense electoral mobilization, cycles of interparty violence and civil war, and the parties' domination of national and local distribution networks. We argue that in addition to these well-known mechanisms, the electoral stability of Colombia's party system is a legacy of the partisan battle over emancipation and suffrage during the formation of the Liberal and Conservative parties in the mid-19th Century (Agudelo, 2002). In this paper, we aim to quantitatively measure the long-run effect of chattel slavery on 20th Century political development.

Our investigation in the present study is inspired by the path-breaking work by Avidit Acharya, Mathew Blackwell and Maya Sen, that traces the contemporary behavioral and attitudinal legacies of chattel slavery on political development in the U.S. South. Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2016) and Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2018) show that in the U.S. counties in which slavery was practiced most intensely, the white electorate is significantly more conservative today. We know from the historical record of chattel slavery across the Americas that there are key similarities in how this institution made race and made nations. The institution of slavery consolidated white supremacy on both sides of the equator, albeit through distinctive ideologies and racial formations (Loveman, 2014; Marx, 1994, 1998; Paschel, 2016; Telles, 2004; Wade, 1993). In this paper we leverage the particular conditions of the Colombian case to make a broader contribution that complements the findings in the U.S. and provides more tools to analyze the link between slavery and political development in other Latin American countries. Specifically, we study the effect of slavery on Colombian contemporary party affiliations and political participation. We also examine evidence of distinctive patterns of party identification, particularly for Afro-Colombians, in the areas where slavery was most intensely practiced.

Our main finding is that the historical intensity of slavery has a pronounced impact on the geography and demographics of support for Colombia's two traditional parties. Prior qualitative work suggests that the abolition of slavery and the subsequent expansion to universal male suffrage leading up to the first post-abolition elections not only undermined the political power of white elites, but forged political alliances between the Liberal Party and emancipated Blacks, free Blacks and their descendants (De Roux, 1991; Mina, 1975; Agudelo, 2002). Using historical census data and electoral records from the

post-emancipation presidential election of 1856, and a panel of national and local elections that include data from 20th and 21st centuries, we show that municipalities that had high concentrations of enslaved persons in 1843 were more Liberal than similar municipalities that share economic and demographic conditions. Evidence indicates that the greater the historical share of enslaved persons in the municipality, the greater the support for the Liberal Party in almost all the elections in our sample. These results are consistent across different specifications and different types of elections (general and local). The analysis of 21st century elections bolsters our confidence that slavery did structure the traditional party system because its effect weakens with the dealignment of the two-party system.

We contend that the politics of abolition, particularly which party could credit claim on this issue, and suffrage expansion, were linked due to a political calculation by Liberal elites to consolidate their electoral power in national elections and regional contests (McGraw, 2014; Sanders, 2004). The Conservative party, while not formally opposed to abolition, took the opposite position on the issue of extending the franchise. During the period of the Regeneration (1886 – 1936), Conservatives actively restricted suffrage to propertied, literate men, thus consolidating their political domination of national elections through much of the first half of the 20th Century. As a result, where slavery was practiced most intensely, the degree of polarization between Liberals and Conservatives was greater (as proxied by coefficients on win margins/vote share for either party). However, the direction of support predicted by slavery (Liberal or Conservative) is conditional on whether existing levels of state capacity allowed Conservatives to successfully consolidate their electoral hegemony, or Liberals to create strongholds of resistance during the five decades of the Regeneration. By this argument, the practice of slavery should predict greater support for Conservatives in places with stronger state capacity and for Liberals in places where historical state capacity is weaker.

The main challenge for identifying the effect of slavery on political development is the endogenous spatial variation of slavery's presence and intensity, which was determined by several historic and location-specific factors. To isolate the causal effect of slavery, our study combines an instrumental variable approach that leverages the historical presence of gold mines in the municipality (Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson, 2012), and a novel set of temporal and spatial measures that take into account the uneven historical presence of the institution across Colombia, to estimate the intensity of slavery in the municipality.

In addition to identifying the long-run impact of slavery on party system development, we also

explore the social and institutional mechanisms that may explain the persistence of this effect. We explore the inter-generational socialization of attitudes and behavior and the particular relationship between partisanship and Black racial identity – the latter we refer to as *discursive racial salience*. We also explore the nature of the early party-system cleavage over abolition and suffrage and the subsequent effects of institutional reforms that consolidated Conservative Party dominance in the decades after abolition – which we refer to as the *structural salience* of race.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we situate our study of slavery and political development in Latin America within the existing expectations for racial salience in the region, and in the Colombian context specifically. The section that follows presents our theory and situates it within the literature on the institutional and behavioral legacies of slavery and the intergenerational transmission of partisan identities. We follow with a presentation of the data and empirical strategy. Finally, we present the findings, explore the mechanisms, and offer a discussion and conclusion.

2   Slavery and Party Affiliations in Colombia

Every Black person that knows their history should be a revolutionary, or at least a Liberal.
I am Liberal by blood. My father and my grandfather were also Liberals.
Around here we have always been liberals all our lives. The Conservatives are very few and I don't know why they came out like that.[1]

European slave traders brought more than 10 million enslaved people from Africa to the Americas between the 16th and 19th Centuries. The majority of these enslaved Africans arrived in Latin America and the Caribbean. Chattel slavery left an enduring mark on development, political institutions, political behavior, and social conflict across the Americas. Much of this we know from recently developed national and cross-national datasets of the intensity of the slave trade. Today, we have a much clearer picture of the developmental impacts of slavery in Latin America, especially on economic inequality, than we do about its institutional and political legacies (Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson, 2012). We also see an important contrast between the study of the impacts of slavery in the U.S. and in Latin America, that typically focuses on the impacts of slavery on white-black relations in the former, and the more generalized impacts of slavery in the latter.

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[1] Taken from interviews by Agudelo (2002) of members of black communities in the Pacific region.

Slavery was an important element of the Spanish economic structure during the colonial period. While most of Spanish trade was centered in Central America, slave labor played an important role in mining, agriculture, and other aspects of local societies in Latin America. Slavery was abolished in Colombia in 1851, almost at the same time as other countries in the region, but has contemporary detectable effects. Some aspects of the institution are worth highlighting. First, although enslaved Africans initially arrived at the port of Cartagena, they were mostly located near the gold and silver mines on the Pacific coasts and haciendas on the Atlantic coast. Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson (2012), drawing on information from West (1952), show that the location of gold mines during the colonial period was an important element in the distribution of Spanish settlements. Enslaved people were forced to work in mines mostly in the Pacific region. Various additional reports document that slave labor was the most prominent source of coercive employment in these places for many years (Uribe, 1963; Meisel, 1980).

The second important element is the liberation efforts made by black communities during the colonial period. One of the most important developments during this time was the constitution of villages of enslaved people who escaped the mines and haciendas. These maroon communities, known locally as *palenques*, were located in the jungle and mountainous terrain relatively close to the towns where liberated communities had once been enslaved.[2] The following Table lists the Palenques and estimated foundation date based on (De Friedemann and Roselli, 1983), and Figure 2 shows their location.

The institution of chattel slavery was a cornerstone of race-making and social hierarchies in the Americas. Historical and contemporary patterns of racial marginalization and disadvantage are direct legacies of the political economy of slavery. This is a thread that unifies our understanding of contemporary social and economic disadvantage in the former slave states of the Americas. Yet, the legacies of slavery on electoral politics and political behavior in the two hemispheres seem to diverge substantially.

We can observe this pattern more clearly by examining the mobilization of ethnic voters using data on a cross-country sample from the Democracy and Accountability Linkages Project (Wave I, 2008 - 2009). **Fig. 1** plots the average level of effort that political parties put into mobilizing voters along ethnic and racial lines by their average vote share. Relative to other global regions, political parties in Latin America (both small and large) put little effort into directly mobilizing along ethnic and racial cleavages. Furthermore, comparing specifically the party systems in Colombia (bottom left quadrant)

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[2] One of the largest and currently recognized, for example, is the *Palenque de San Basilio*, a few kilometers from Cartagena.

Table 1: PALENQUES

No.	Name	Municipality	Date
	18th century *Palenques*		
1	Sta. Cruz De Mazinga	Riohacha	1703
2	Sn. Basilio	El Carmen de Bolívar	1713
3	Tado	Bagadó	1728
4	Guayabal De Siquima	Anolaima	1731
5	Castillo	Los Andes	1732
6	Matima	Silvania	1758
7	Sn. Jacinto	Peñol	1777
8	Guarne	Yolombó	1777
9	Cerritos	Andalucía	1785
10	Betanzi	Montería	1786
11	Ladera Judas	Caucasia	1787
12	Lorenzana	Ayapel	1787
13	Samba	Ayapel	1787
14	Palizada	Guarandá	1787
15	Guamal	Pinillos	1787
16	Pacho	La Belleza	1798
17	Cartago	Villamaría	1799
18	Otun	Pensilvania	1799
19	Sn. Bartolome	Morales	1799

to the U.S. (top right quadrant), we see that despite the shared history of slavery in both countries, they present contrasting cases of ethno-racial salience in the electoral arena. This finding would seem to track with the prevailing argument for many generations of scholarship in Latin America, which is that the attitudinal and institutional legacies of slavery were eradicated through the region's unique process of nation building (de Araújo, 1994; Freedman, 2005; Marx, 1998). Different from nation building in the U.S., which institutionalized explicit racial restrictions on citizenship rights post-emancipation in order to consolidate white national identity and preserve the Union, the prevailing trend in Latin American nation building was to erase the institutionalization of racial categories all together (Loveman, 2014; Nobles, 2000; Telles, 2004; Wade, 1995). The nation building project that came to be known as *mestizaje* flattened the formal recognition of race as a criteria for citizenship rights and thus created a national commonsense of relative racial equality and harmony.

From **Fig. 1**, it would appear that discursive racial salience is relatively limited across party systems in the region. However, a closer examination of partisan sympathies toward the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties by race shows large and significant differences across racial categories. Table **2** shows that the proportion of Afro-Colombians that sympathize with the Liberal Party is 14 - 15 p.p. greater than white and mestizo support and 7 p.p. greater than Liberal sympathy among Indigenous Colombians. Likewise, Afro-Colombians are 6-7 p.p. lower than whites and mestizos in their expressed sympathy for the Conservative Party and 4 p.p. below Indigenous Colombians. A key assumption in
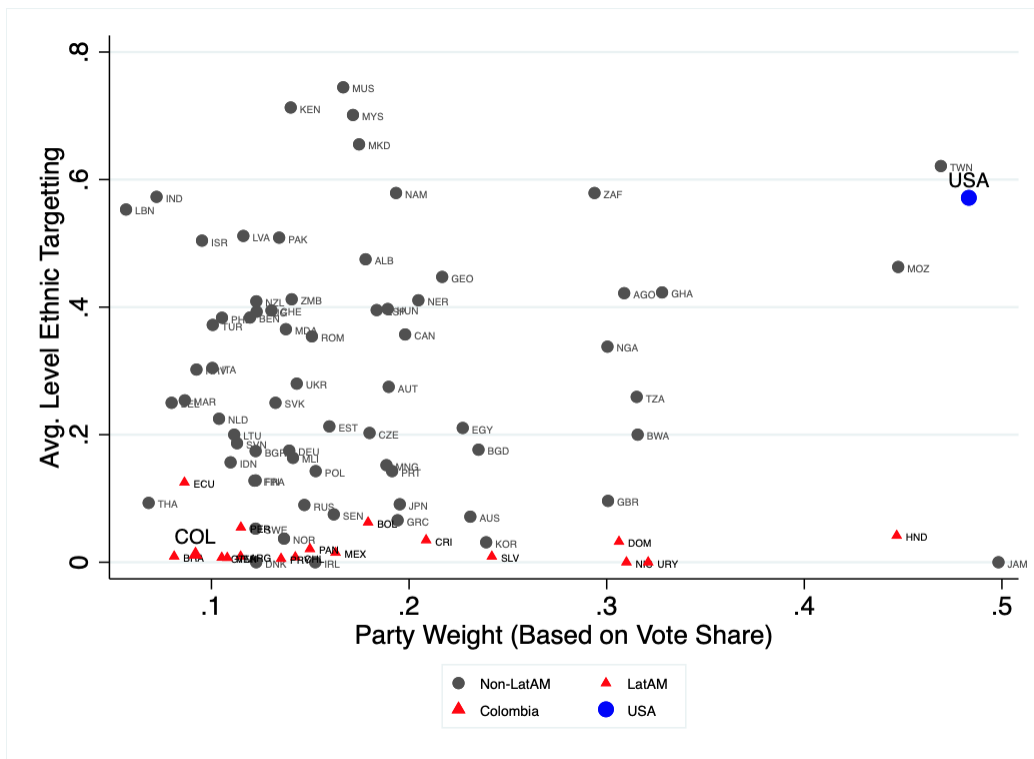
Figure 1: Avg. Level of Ethno-racial Targeting in Party System (Kitschelt, 2014)

the constructivist literature on identity salience in electoral politics is that ethnic party affiliations are drummed up and mobilized by strategic parties, so it is surprising that we observe distinctive patterns of partisan sympathy across racial categories in Colombia (Brubaker et al., 2004; Chandra, 2006; Posner, 2005; Van Cott, 2005).

We argue that the contemporary patterns of racial voting, and more generally the continued racial salience in Colombia are a direct legacy of the early partisan conflicts over abolition and suffrage between Liberals and Conservatives (Agudelo, 2002; Sanders, 2004). Similar to the U.S. case, the ideological divisions over slavery in Colombia were highly regional and significantly partisan. Liberal president, José Hilario López, presided over the formal abolition of slavery in 1851 and later the expansion of the suffrage in 1853 to all men above the age of 21, including newly emancipated peoples. This was a political calculation on behalf of white Liberal elites who speculated that credit claiming on abolition and suffrage expansion would secure the loyalty of Afro-Colombian voters. Apart from the 1856 election that pitted a split Liberal coalition against a single Conservative candidate, abolition and universal male suffrage gave Liberals a considerable electoral advantage in local, provincial and national elections. A period of Radical Liberalism followed, with a new constitution in 1863, that further expanded federalism and really irked reactionary factions of the Liberal party and Conservatives who

	Black	White	Mestizo	Indigenous
Liberal Vote (0/1)	0.08	0.05	0.06	0.10
	(0.28)	(0.22)	(0.23)	(0.30)
Sympathy: Liberal (0/1)	0.41	0.26	0.27	0.34
	(0.49)	(0.44)	(0.44)	(0.48)
Sympathy: Conservative (0/1)	0.06	0.14	0.13	0.11
	(0.25)	(0.35)	(0.34)	(0.32)
Sympathy: Independent (0/1)	0.38	0.48	0.45	0.40
	(0.49)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.49)
Closeness: Liberal Party [1 (None) - 6 (A lot)]	3.17	2.88	2.75	3.42
	(2.11)	(2.03)	(1.93)	(2.06)
Closeness: Conservative Party [1 (None) - 6 (A lot)]	2.49	2.42	2.31	2.74
	(1.82)	(1.78)	(1.68)	(1.77)
Voted (0/1)	0.62	0.63	0.64	0.65
	(0.48)	(0.48)	(0.48)	(0.48)

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. Each cell provides estimates for the mean by self-reported racial categories from the AmericasBarometer (2004 - 2018) data. Standard deviation given in parentheses.

worried that the masses of unpropertied voters and election mobs would destabilize the government. In a reflection of the failed project of Reconstruction in the U.S. South, the legacy of Colombian emancipation and the brief expansion of citizenship rights for the formerly enslaved populations precipitated political exclusions designed to protect the interests and privilege of white, propertied elites.

Conservatives and moderate Liberals banded together to pass a new constitution in 1886 that reintroduced property restrictions to the suffrage, effectively disenfranchising formerly enslaved Black people and their offspring, as well as the Indigenous population and poor mestizos. Additionally, the Conservative party returned to centralized governance by restricting elections for provincial and mayoral executives, opting instead for a system where the president would nominate provincial governors and governors would nominate mayors. This effectively ensured that the Conservatives would dominate governance at all levels and construct enduring electoral strongholds, which they did for five decades until suffrage restrictions were rolled back and local and provincial elections were reintroduced in 1936, again under the Liberal Party. After partisan violence initiated in 1948, the two parties signed an alliance, known as *Frente Nacional* (1953), in which the two main political parties agreed to rotate power, intercalating for a period of four presidential terms. In 1974 both parties returned to compete with each other and since then the political offices were primarily disputed by them until 2002 when Álvaro Uribe won the presidency.

In summary, the political debate around abolition and suffrage was a core axis of party system formation in Colombia. As a central cleavage at an important moment of political development, the dynamics of party competition froze around these racialized dynamics of competition, and thus race continued to structure Colombian political development and behavior well after the end of slavery and the reintroduction of universal male suffrage in the 1930s, and women's suffrage in the 1950s. We use the insights from this brief review of the Colombian context to develop our argument for why and how slavery continued to shape the geography of party strongholds in the century and a half of electoral competition following abolition.

3   Theory

What has been the long-run effect of slavery on party system development in Colombia? And how do we explain the persistence of this effect over time? The impact of institutions such as slavery hardly end with their formal abolition. In the past two decades, several empirical scholars have studied the long-term effects of coercive labor institutions on long-run development in the Americas (Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen, 2016, 2018; Dell, Jones, and Olken, 2012; Nunn, 2008). The findings in Colombia have mirrored those from studies of the U.S., Brazil and Peru, which suggest that the sub-national areas that most intensely relied on forced labor during colonialism and the early years of independence, exhibit lower levels of economic development and institutional strength today (Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson, 2012; Nunn, 2008).

The literature on American Political Development in the U.S. South also provides strong reasons to expect the legacies of slavery to extend beyond its economic impacts. Slavery and emancipation necessitated the creation of institutions to enforce racial subjugation and maintain the balance of elite power (King and Smith, 2005; Omi and Winant, 1994). Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2016) demonstrate that these institutions were most prevalent and strictly enforced in counties in the U.S. South that were most economically and politically reliant on slavery. They contend that emancipation created a critical juncture in the South, where slave-dependent localities built up stronger institutional legacies of racial hegemony.

We observe this relationship develop most notably in the politics of the U.S. South after Reconstruction. Jim Crow Laws and other complex franchise restrictions were implemented as a response to the

white oligarchy's fear that population demographics and black labor mobility would upend the social and racial hierarchy (Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen, 2016; Key Jr, 1949; Mickey, 2015). Even though the Voting Rights Acts of the 1960s abolished the formal practices of racial discrimination and voter suppression, these institutions created lasting impacts on Black political inclusion and the dynamics of the contemporary party system in the U.S. (Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen, 2018; Fraga, 2016; Freedman, 2017).

Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2016)'s study shows that contemporary white racial resentment and political preferences in the areas of the U.S. South that were historically exposed to African slavery diverge sharply from those of whites in areas less exposed to slavery. Their story also relies on an initial socio-cultural shock in areas of high exposure that translated into the inter-generational transmission of attitudes. They argue that racial resentment was a tool employed by lay and political whites in areas "shocked" by emancipation. Emancipation created political and economic threats that whites responded to with anti-Black attitudes, which still persist today. In the authors' 2018 book, *Deep Roots: How Slavery still Shapes Southern Politics*, they develop the concept of "behavioral path dependence" as a key explanation for why white racial resentment outlived its utility during the era of Jim Crow. They contend that white racial resentment was a rational response by elites to rally public support among poor whites to support extractive labor policies in areas highly disrupted by emancipation. These attitudes continue to outlive their function, because they were transmitted through intergenerational socialization, a process that they term "behavioral path dependence".

Building on this existing literature, we argue that the spatial variation in historical slavery should explain the stability of electoral competition in the 150 or so years that followed emancipation. As explained in the preceding section, we expect this relationship between historical slavery and 20th Century vote choice because of the initial and enduring competition over Liberal and Conservative ownership over abolition and suffrage.

The end of slavery created a set of political opportunities for Black communities, local elites, and national elites to exploit the political capital that was absent before. Black communities that had historically been excluded from having the right to vote because of their enslavement and property restrictions began to play an active role in party politics. Emancipated and "born-free" Afro-Colombians immediately lent their electoral support and political loyalty to the Liberal Party, because the Liberals could claim credit for emancipation and the expansion to universal male suffrage. Black support helped to

consolidate Liberal support in many communities, increased Liberal representation at the national level, and provided sufficient political capital to avert Conservative counter-reform for decades after abolition (McGraw, 2014; Sanders, 2004).

Emancipated Black people were not the only Liberal supporters. Liberal elites were predominately white, mobilized around the party's mission to separate the powers of church and state, to decentralize governance, and to bring Colombia into the emerging liberal, global economy (Prosterman and Riedinger, 1987). Additionally, the context of frequent civil wars from the mid-19th until the mid-20th century that pitted supporters of the two parties against one another, consolidated Conservative and Liberal partisanship as strong and enduring social identities (Sanders, 2004). The geographic and demographic bases of support for the Liberal Party historically has been diverse, but we would expect from the party's historical links to abolition and suffrage extension, that areas that practiced slavery most intensely will favor the Liberal Party over the Conservative Party. Our first hypothesis follows.

Hypothesis 1: Liberal Party vote share in the 20th Century will be greatest in municipalities where a greater proportion of the population was enslaved during the colonial era and the early Republic.

This hypothesis is hard to test empirically for several reasons. For one, we do not have the data to identify the number of Liberal and Conservative foot soldiers during the 19th and 20th Century cycles of partisan conflict. Further, we cannot disaggregate Afro-Colombian votes from Indigenous, mestizo, and white votes using the elections data that we have available. However, Colombian scholars have shown the creation of these alliances after emancipation for different regions of the country: Mina (1975) show this phenomenon for the Valle del Cauca region and (Fals-Borda, 1976) shows the same pattern for the Caribbean region. In addition, studies of the more recent period of partisanship and electoral geography assert the stability of Colombian electoral geography, going back to the formation of the traditional party system (Agudelo, 2002).

But given this expectation of geographic stability across more than a century of political, economic and social transformation in Colombia, how then do we explain the endurance of the predictive effects of slavery? The epigraphs from the previous section provide important clues that shape our expectations.

3.1 *Every Black person that knows their history should be a revolutionary, or at least a Liberal.*

The first mechanism that we consider is that loyalty to the Liberal party has been woven within racial identities, especially for Afro-Colombians, explaining the persistence of Liberal Party support within the historical geography of slavery. As the Liberal politician from Buenaventura (whose quote forms the epigraph above) argues, if race is discursively salient to Liberal party support in the 20th Century then we would expect to observe stronger support for the Liberal party among Afro-Colombians relative to members other racial groups. There could be several reasons for this. It could be that the explicit communication of the historical memory of the Liberal party's position on emancipation and slavery in Black communities has cultivated long-run support for the Liberals in Black communities. Moreover, discursive salience of Black identity to Liberal party support could be the result of a more "rational" parental socialization model, in which younger generations of Afro-Colombians take heuristic cues from older generations about the benefits that they will derive from the Liberal party (Achen, 2002). This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Contemporary support for the Liberal Party will be greater among Afro-Colombians, relative to non-Afro-Colombians.

3.2 *I am Liberal by blood. My father and my grandfather were also Liberals.*

Intergenerational socialization is another related mechanism of party identity transmission that may explain the persistent legacies of slavery on Colombian political behavior. There is substantial evidence in the political behavior literature, both in the U.S. and abroad, that shows that parents tend to pass off their political identities to their children (Jennings and Niemi, 1968; Peisakhin, 2015; Zuckerman, Dasovic, and Fitzgerald, 2007). Often, these studies tend to leverage parent-child panel surveys to measure the transmission of attitudes and partisanship over time. An important part of the behavioral path dependence argument articulated by Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen (2018) is the political transmission of racial attitudes and partisan identities in the Southern Black Belt, where chattel slavery, and later Jim Crow, was intensely practiced. The authors argue that it is the social transmission of racial resentment and racist attitudes from Jim Crow era parents that explain persistent racial resentment among later generations, even after the formal institutions of Jim Crow had been abolished. Qualitative evidence

from the Colombian context suggests that intergenerational transmission of Liberal and Conservative identities is another likely factor that explains the persisting political legacies of slavery. We would expect that attitudes toward the traditional parties will be similar across different age cohorts. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: Support for the Liberal Party will be similar across age cohorts in municipalities with greater historical exposure to slavery.

There is an important caveat to this expectation, however. The 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s marked the electoral collapse of the traditional two-party system in Colombia. The party system de-institutionalized as a result of constitutional reforms that made it easier for candidates to run independently of the two traditional parties and wrested hegemony over local distribution networks away from the Liberals and the Conservatives. As a result, overall support for the Liberal and Conservative parties was quite low in the first two decades of the 2000s (the period for which we have the survey data necessary to compare attitudes across cohorts). The party socialization literature explicitly outlines changes to the party system, like realignments and dealignments, as the types of shocks to the party system that would break the transmission of partisan identities across generations (Glaeser, Ponzetto, and Shapiro, 2005; Ventura, 2001).

3.3 *Around here we have always been Liberals all our lives. The Conservatives are very few and I don't know why they came out like that.*

In addition to the paths of active Liberal partisan identity transmission through race (discursive salience), and through inter-generational socialization, we also believe that there are structural factors that explain the persistent effects of slavery on partisan support. After the Liberal Party formally abolished slavery in 1851 and established universal male suffrage (for the first time) in 1853, the party enjoyed an extended period of electoral domination. During the period from 1852-1876, the Liberal party dominated many national and local electoral contests, oversaw further expansions of the suffrage (including local attempts to extend women's suffrage in some municipalities), and adopted liberal economic reforms. The Radical Liberal faction inspired a Conservative reaction and a split of the Liberal coalition, after which the more moderate faction of the party aligned with Conservatives to undo the radical reforms.

Once in power, Conservatives again restricted the suffrage to propertied, literate men (Constitution of 1886) re-disenfranchising peasants, indigenous, and Black communities for presidential elections. The Conservatives further consolidated their power by re-centralizing power through the executive branch. The President would remain popularly elected (albeit by propertied, literate men who were overwhelmingly white and mestizo) but all provincial governors would be named by the President and mayors would be named by the governors. In effect, this centralization, which lasted from 1886 until 1936, allowed Conservatives to build electoral strongholds across Colombia. However, this project was geographically uneven, as the sporadic presence of the Colombian state in more peripheral areas allowed Liberals to maintain their strongholds in places outside of the purview of the Conservative state. This leads to our last hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: Liberal Party vote share in the 20th Century will be positively related to the intensity of slavery, where state presence was weak (greater distance to provincial capitals). Conservative Party vote share will be positively related to the intensity of slavery, where state presence was strong (closer proximity to provincial capitals).

4   Data

The main variables we use in our analysis include a measure for historical exposure to slavery and contemporaneous political outcomes such as Liberal and Conservative party vote shares. We also use the location and establishment of the *palenques* (maroon communities of escaped slaves) and the presence of gold mining during the colonial period in our instrumental variables approach.

4.1   Slavery

Data on slavery comes from the national census of 1843 that reports municipality-level data on the share of slaves as fraction of the municipal population (del Interior Secretaría, 1843). We use these records, compiled by Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson (2012), to construct the proportion of the population that was enslaved in each municipality in 1843. Since slavery was abolished in 1851, and municipal boundaries have changed slightly since the colonial period, the measure requires some justification. This is the most desegregated data available as other accounts only consider province or department-level records of slaved population. The measure that we use keeps track of the changes in

the municipalities so it reflects the number of slaves using current municipality boundaries. Second, Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson (2012) compare the 1843 municipality-level measure that we use in this paper with the province-level information in 1778 to show that the intensity and geographical distribution of slavery was similar for the two periods.

4.2   Palenques and Gold Mines

The data for *palenques* is based on the records of De Friedemann and Roselli (1983). The authors collected information on the exact location and the year in which each *palenque* was established. We geo-referenced these locations and manually merged this data into our sample. We then calculated the centroid distance from each municipality in our sample to the nearest *palenque*. Figure 2 maps the share of slaves in 1843 and the distribution of *palenques*. Since most of these localities were established by escaped slaves, they are most often located near municipalities with a higher incidence of slavery. We discuss the implications of this proximity for our empirical strategy.

Following Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson (2012), we also use information on colonial gold mining as an additional source of variation to identify the effect of slavery on voting. The information on the location of colonial gold mines originally comes from the historical record of Colmenares (1973) and West (1952). We include the 42 current municipalities listed in those studies as having gold mines during the colonial period.

4.3   Political Data

Our main outcome of interest is Liberal Party and Conservative Party vote shares for presidential and local council elections. In our analysis we first examine the impact of slavery on vote shares in the 1856 presidential election—the first presidential election following the abolition of slavery and the expansion of universal male suffrage. Data for this first election comes originally from Bushnell (1970), and was recovered from Uribe-Castro (2019). We then turn to an analysis of one presidential election during the Frente Nacional, the 1958 presidential election, followed by an examination of all presidential and local council elections from 1974 to 2018. The data for elections held between 1958 and 2011 comes from Pachón and Sánchez (2014). Additional electoral data after 2011 comes from the Misión de Observación Electoral (MOE, 2021), which reports electoral data by party at the municipal level for recent elections.[3]

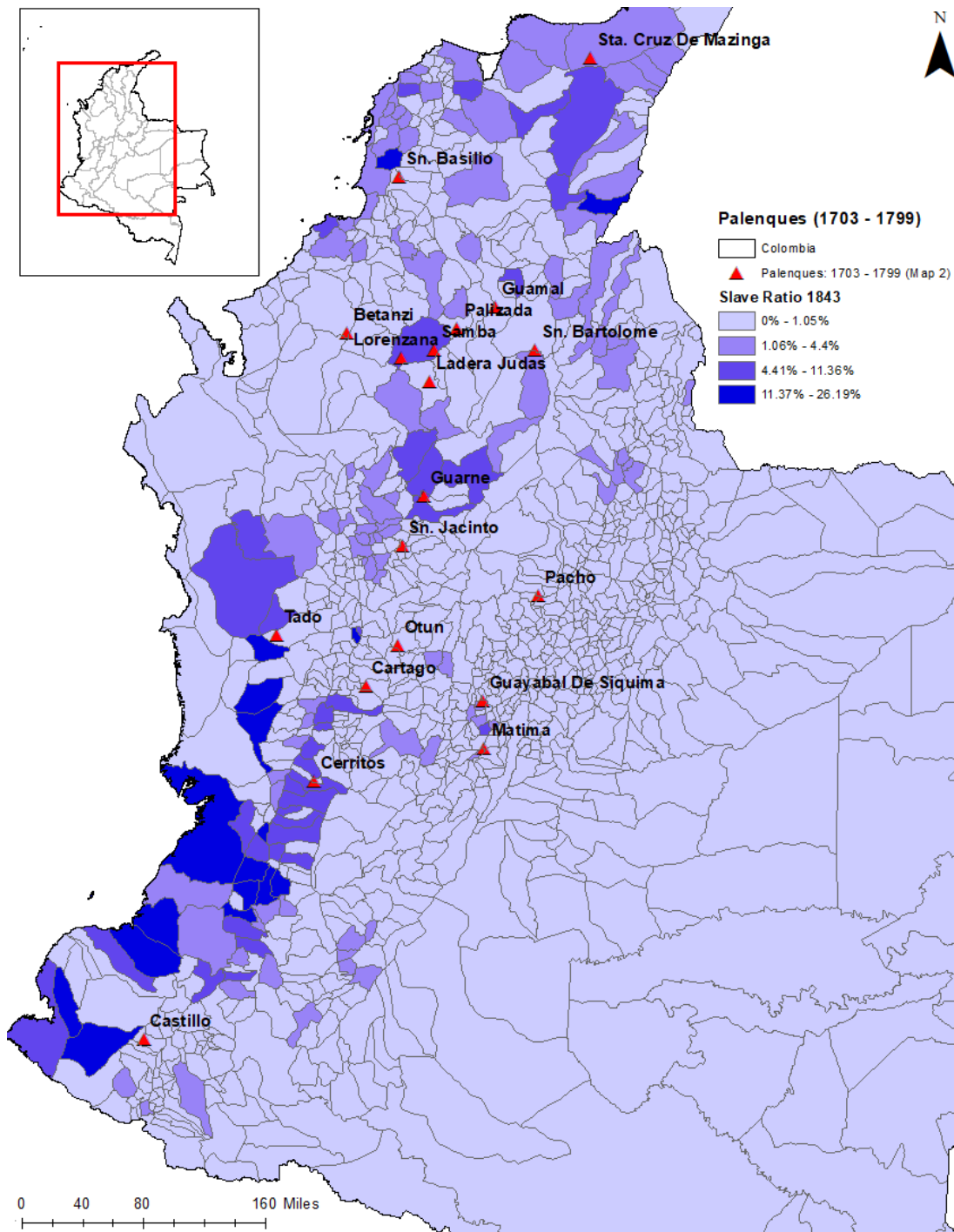[3] Data on elections after 2011 are available at the MOE's web page: .

Figure 2: Share of Slaves in 1843 and 18th century *Palenques* (De Friedemann and Roselli, 1983)

There are several reasons for the temporal gaps in our elections data. The first is availability. Apart from the 1856 election, we were unable to acquire 19th Century electoral returns. But a related problem is the reliability and completeness of election returns during this period. The municipal vote counts for the remainder of the 19th century only register hundreds of votes without sufficient municipal variation. Additionally, constant civil wars during this period suppressed turnout and limited free and fair

competition by opposition parties.

Similar challenges were documented for most of the elections that were held up until 1930. During the period known as Conservative Hegemony (1886 to 1930) the levels of participation were very low and, in many cases, the Liberal Party did not field a presidential candidate. After 1930 and until 1946 it was the Conservative Party that did not present any candidates, again limiting our ability to analyze elections during this period. The 1958 Presidential election is the first to take place during the Frente Nacional, the roughly 16 year period of Liberal-Conservative consociationalism. We use the data from the 1958 election to illustrate the stability of the Liberal-Conservative cleavage and the predictive power of historical slavery, but we do not conduct a full analysis of presidential elections during this period because the consociational agreement between the Liberal and Conservative Party effectively limited competition for the presidency since the winning party in each election during this time was predetermined. We therefore, pick up with presidential elections and local elections at the end of the Frente Nacional period (1974 for presidential elections and 1972 for local council elections).[4]

We supplement our analysis of the period of two-party dominance with an analysis of 21st century elections. Álvaro Uribe's victories in 2002 and 2006 marked the official end of the two-party system in Colombia. As a proof of concept, we interrogate the predictive effects of historical slavery on electoral competition after the collapse of the traditional parties. Because slavery was a defining cleavage for the Liberal-Conservative two-party system, we would expect its predictive effects to decline with the end of Colombian bipartisan system.[5]

We also use attitudinal data based on the information from the Americas Barometer from 2004 to 2011. While the information on attitudes is measured after the end of our study period, we construct several measures using the age of respondents to analyze the data of the relevant population as explained in the empirical strategy. The measures we use include self-reported partisanship along with social and political attitudes.

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[4] For the 2002 and 2006 elections, the conservative party did not present its own candidate but officially supported and endorsed Uribe, and we coded it as conservative votes.

[5] In the context section we name the most relevant aspects of political participation in the Colombian Pacific and Atlantic regions for the periods where we could not carry out the analysis, based on the studies of Sanders (2004), (Mina, 1975), and Fals-Borda (1976).

5 Empirical Strategy

5.1 OLS Framework

Given our hypotheses, we investigate the persistent effects of historical slavery on long-term political outcomes. We start our analysis by running the following benchmark OLS regression:

$$y_{md} = \alpha + \beta SlaveRatio_{md} + \rho_d + (\mathbf{X}'_{md})\phi + \varepsilon_{md} \tag{1}$$

Where m and d index municipalities and departments, respectively. y_{md} is the outcome of interest for municipality m in department d. The variable $SlaveRatio_{md}$ represents the number of enslaved persons recorded in the 1843 census as a share of the total municipal population. Since slavery was unevenly distributed across Colombia, the measure is highly skewed with a mean of about 0.8% (2.57 s.d.) and a median value of zero. We therefore normalize the variable by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation.

$\mathbf{X}'_{md}$ is a vector of municipal-level heterogeneity controls for location-specific characteristics which include distance to Bogotà (km), distance to the coast and ports (km), annual rainfall (mm), elevation (m), distance to rivers and river density (m/km^2), and a dummy for colonial occupation of the municipality between 1510 and 1561. We include a full set of department fixed effects to account for any department-specific differences such as local governance and administration. Finally, ε_{md} is heteroskedasticity robust standard error clustered at the municipality level.

The coefficient of interest, β, characterizes the effect of a standard-deviation increase in slavery on vote share. The main concern, however, is that municipalities in departments with a lower share of slaves may not be a valid counterfactual for municipalities in departments with a larger slave presence. This may be due to observable location-specific differences such as natural endowments, agriculture, and accessibility, which we can control for using a rich set of pre-treatment covariates. However, there may still exist systematic differences between municipalities with varying incidence of slavery which are unobservable and therefore remain unaccounted for by our baseline OLS framework. We address this empirical challenge below.

5.2 Instrumental Variables

To identify the effect of slavery, we employ an instrumental variables (IV) strategy that combines two different sets of instruments. For the IV strategy to be valid, we need a source of exogenous variation that is correlated with the slave ratio but uncorrelated with any of the municipal characteristics that affect vote share. To implement the IV, we follow Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson (2012) and use the historic presence gold mining in the municipality to instrument for the share of slavery in 1843. As noted by the authors, this is a particularly useful source of variation since most colonial gold mines "were depleted at some point between the 16th and early 19th centuries" (Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson, 2012, p. 545). Unlike other potential instruments, such as cotton and sugarcane productivity or the distance to the nearest slave auction markets, which may violate the exclusion restriction by having a direct effect on our outcomes of interest independent of slavery, the presence of historic gold mining activity is unlikely to have persistent effects on present-day elections since most colonial gold mines became obsolete in the 19th century.

Despite this, there may be reason to suspect that mining is systematically correlated with certain municipal-specific characteristics which we cannot directly control for. If gold mining was selectively done in areas with greater party mobilization, for example, our estimates will be biased. The direction of the bias would depend on the specific strategy employed by political elites to target or avoid areas conducive for mining.

We account for the potential violation of the exclusion restriction by complementing our gold mining instrument with a set of new instruments that we develop using two additional sources of variation based on the historical expansion of slavery across Colombia. During the colonial period, the presence of slavery gradually spread from the coast to the rest of the colony in waves (Meisel, 1980). The intensity of historical exposure to slavery will therefore be correlated with the timing and location of where slavery was introduced. Interacting these two sources of variation would allow us to measure a *difference-in-difference* estimator for the first-stage of our instrumental variables strategy.

To achieve this, we begin by geo-referencing the exact location of *palenques*, or historic maroon communities that were established by former slaves. These communities, some of which still exist to the present-day, were founded across Colombia at the height of slave trade in the 17th and 18th centuries. They were populated primarily by slaves who managed to escape slavery before it was formally abolished. Though some like the Palenque de San Basilio near the port of Cartagena de Indias were rec-

ognized by the Spanish Crown as areas where slaves were free from bondage, the majority remained informal settlements throughout the colonial period.

The location of historic *palenques* gives us one source of variation which is correlated with the presence of slavery. Specifically, the distance of each historic *palenque* is closely linked to the municipal share of slaves in 1843. However, since *palenque* location is endogenous to slavery, we cannot simply use it to instrument slave ratio. Instead, we rely on the foundation date when each *palenque* was established as a second source of variation. We interact both the spatial variation, given by municipal-*palenque* distance, with a dummy indicator for the year when the *palenque* was founded. The system of equations to be estimated is as follows:

$$y_{md} = \alpha + \lambda \widehat{SlaveRatio}_{md} + \rho_d + (\mathbf{X'}_{md})\phi_1 + \upsilon_{md} \tag{2}$$

$$SlaveRatio_{md} = \alpha + \sum_y \psi_y(PalenqueDist_{md} \times YrEstablish_{mdy}) + \delta GoldMining_{md}$$

$$+ \gamma PalenqueDist_{md} + \tau YrEstablish_{mdy} + \rho_d + (\mathbf{X'}_{md})\pi + \epsilon_{md} \tag{3}$$

Where equations 2 and 3 represent the second- and first-stage respectively. The first-stage is akin to a standard *difference-in-difference* estimator, with ψ_y- coefficients capturing the differential effect of the gradual increase in slavery across the region. Those municipalities that were the furthest away when the earliest *palenque* was established will have a lower incidence of slavery compared to municipalities that were closest, conditional on pre-treatment covariates and district fixed effects. Note that any endogeneity in the timing and selection of *palenque* location is absorbed by $YrEstablish_{mdy}$ and $PalenqueDist_{md}$, respectively.

The foundation of various *palenques* was determined both by endogenous factors like local state capacity, but also exogenous factors such as the variation in material or personnel resources from the Spanish Crown. Faced with significant fiscal crises during periods of European warfare and natural disasters, the Crown was not always able to adequately service the investment needs of its colonies. The timing of some of these shocks to investment would have influenced the colonial state's ability to enforce labor coercion, prompting slaves to rebel and escape. We therefore speculate that the establishment of historic *palenques* during this period corresponded, in part, to exogenous changes in enforcement, allowing us to identify a local average treatment effect. For our main IV-estimates, we also include an indicator for

the presence of historic gold mining given by the variable $GoldMining_{md}$. As we discuss below, though our estimation is robust to excluding the mining indicator, including it not only improves our first-stage *F-Stat* but also explains considerably more variation in the share of slavery across municipalities.

6   Results

Our main findings on the effect of slavery on partisanship are established using both national (*presidente*) and local council (*consejo*) election results for the Liberal and Conservative Party respectively. We combine the vote share for Álvaro Uribe's right-wing political party with the Conservative party coalition for the election cycles following constitutional reforms in 1991 when the traditional two-party system began to splinter. Estimates for the presidential elections are reported in Table 3. We start with the first election following the abolition of slavery for which we have returns. In columns (1) and (2), we regress the vote share for the Liberal and Conservative Party on the ratio of slaves to the municipal population reported in the 1843 census.

Results from the baseline OLS model with a full set of controls show that there was greater support for the Liberal Party in municipalities with a higher share of slaves.[6] A one standard deviation increase in the proportion of slaves to the population is associated with approximately a 3.1% increase in Liberal vote share (column 1). These estimates are significant at the 1% level. When we run the regression using vote share for the Conservative party, we find that there was significantly lower Conservative support in areas with a higher incidence of slavery. In panel B of Table 3, we calculate the treatment effect instrumenting slavery using the timing and distance to nearest *palenque* and an indicator for the presence of colonial gold mining. Though the absolute value of the estimates is larger in magnitude, the results are not precise. Even so, we interpret these initial findings as evidence to support our claim that slavery was indeed an important determinant of partisanship early in Colombia's political development.

Next, we examine whether the relationship between slavery and partisan support persisted in the long-run. We do so by estimating the effect using returns from the 1958 presidential election (Table 3 panel A, columns 3 and 4) and the 2018 election cycle (columns 5 and 6), which is the last election in our panel. The 2018 election is particularly relevant for our study since it was held after Colombia's electoral system shifted from the traditional two-party system to include several new left- and right-wing

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[6] We do not include department fixed effects for the election returns from 1856 since we only have information on approximately 610 municipalities, about 54% of the full sample. Including department fixed effects absorbs most of the variation in

Table 3: SLAVERY AND PRESIDENTIAL VOTE SHARE

	1856		1958		2018		1958 - 2018	
	[1] Liberal Party Share	[2] Conservative Party Share	[3] Liberal Party Share	[4] Conservative Party Share	[5] Liberal Party Share	[6] Conservative Party Share	[7] Liberal Party Share	[8] Conservative Party Share
Panel A: OLS								
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.031***	-0.031***	0.034***	-0.033***	0.000	-0.018***	0.022***	-0.023***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.000)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Adjusted R^2	0.199	0.200	0.259	0.256	0.078	0.430	0.493	0.395
Panel B: IV - 2SLS								
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.071	-0.071	0.105**	-0.100**	-0.002	-0.072**	0.055***	-0.065***
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.041)	(0.040)	(0.002)	(0.030)	(0.021)	(0.023)
First-Stage F-Stat	447.8	447.8	13.67	13.67	18.33	18.33	17.76	17.76
Fixed Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	600	600	738	738	1016	1016	12638	12638
Municipalities							1016	1016
Outcome Mean	0.538	0.461	0.732	0.265	0.0191	0.492	0.381	0.412

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is standardized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.

political parties. When we assess the impact of slavery on vote shares in 1958, we find results that are comparable to the estimates using the partial sample from 1856. Municipalities that had a greater proportion of slaves in 1843 tended to lean more Liberal than Conservative. In addition, as shown in panel B of Table 3, this relationship is strengthened when we instrument slavery to identify the local average treatment effect. A one standard deviation increase in the slave ratio is associated with approximately a 10.5% increase in Liberal vote share (panel B, column 3) and 10% decline in Conservative/coalition party vote share (panel B, column 4). Our IV estimates should be interpreted with caution. Even if our instruments are uncorrelated with idiosyncratic municipality-specific characteristics, we are unable to rule out the possibility that the timing and proximity to *palenques* has no independent effect on the vote share, invalidating the IV strategy. While we acknowledge this potential challenge, we still believe that our set of instruments perform well in addressing the main endogeneity concern for exposure to historical slavery.

In columns (5) and (6) of Table 3, we evaluate the persistent effects of historical slavery on Liberal and Conservative/Coalition party vote shares for the 2018 presidential election. The OLS results in panel A show that even though the splintering of the two-party system reduced the magnitude of the effect on overall partisanship, municipalities with a higher share of historical slavery continue to vote against the Conservative coalition. A one standard deviation increase in slavery reduced Conservative/coalition party vote share by approximately 1.8% (panel A, column 6). When we test the robustness of this relationship using our IV strategy, we find that the localized effect of slavery on political affiliation is not precisely estimated for the Liberal party. This may be because there was a significant decline in Liberal party support following the 2002 election campaign which saw Uribe consolidate support for his coalition using both legal and extra-legal means.[7]

Finally, in Table 3 columns (7) and (8), we calculate the impact of slavery on long-term partisanship using a pooled sample for all national elections between 1958 and 2018. These latter estimates include returns from thirteen different election cycles,[8] allowing us to identify the overall impact of slavery on political support controlling for any cyclical shocks using election year fixed effects. The OLS results reported in Panel A show that a one standard deviation increase in slavery leads to a 2.2% increase in Liberal party support (panel A, column 7). Again, the local average treatment effects conditional on

the slave ratio variable.

[7] The Liberal party received about 2% of the vote nationally in 2018 compared to 33% in 2014 and 74% in 1958.

[8] We drop all elections that took place during the power-sharing Frente Nacional period between 1958 and 1974 since only one party was mandated to have control over the legislature.

Table 4: SLAVERY AND LOCAL COUNCIL VOTE SHARE

	1972		2019		1972 - 2019	
	[1] Liberal Party Share	[2] Conservative Party Share	[3] Liberal Party Share	[4] Conservative Party Share	[5] Liberal Party Share	[6] Conservative Party Share
Panel A: OLS						
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.036***	-0.031***	0.001	-0.007**	0.027***	-0.027***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Adjusted R^2	0.183	0.160	0.102	0.065	0.346	0.287
Panel B: IV - 2SLS						
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.118***	-0.127***	0.014	-0.031**	0.060***	-0.075***
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.022)	(0.026)
First-Stage F-Stat	12.80	12.80	18.66	18.66	17.05	17.05
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	911	911	1014	1014	16543	16542
Municipalities					1016	1016
Outcome Mean	0.500	0.407	0.150	0.146	0.383	0.327

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is normalized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.

fixed effects and the full set of controls are both larger in magnitude and robust at the 1% level. Taken together, we interpret these preliminary results as evidence to support our hypothesis that slavery had a significant, long-lasting impact on partisan behavior in Colombia.

We supplement our findings with estimates from local council (*consejo*) elections. There may be reason to suspect that differences in party support may vary at the national and local level due to candidate performance, party brokers, or mobilization networks. As a result, partisanship may be more salient on the national-level but disappear when we explore a more local setting. For slavery to have shaped the political identity of the electorate, we should expect consistent effects regardless of the type of elections we examine. In Table 4, we estimate the impact of slavery on partisan support using all eighteen local council elections held between 1972 and 2019.[9] Columns (1) - (4) provide results for the first (1972) and last (2019) elections in our (unbalanced) panel. We report results using a pooled sample in columns (5) and (6). Overall, we find that slavery significantly predicts Liberal party support. A one s.d. increase in slavery causes Liberal party support to increase by roughly 2.7% - 3.6% depending on the sample used (Table 4, panel A). These results are precisely estimated and robust to instrumenting slavery for earliest years in our panel. However, for later years in the sample, there is a loss in precision. Estimates are comparable if we look at individual elections or the full panel (panel A, columns 5 and 6).

We conclude our analysis of the main results by examining the trends in partisan support across both national and local council elections. Specifically, we are interested in exploring how the effect of slavery evolves over time and whether the trends in these effects are similar if we compare between different types elections. In Figure 3, we plot coefficients from the OLS regressions using equation 1 for each election separately.[10] The top panel provides estimates for national elections; the bottom panel reports analogous estimates using local council elections.

Analyzing the results, we find that the trends are comparable between national and local elections. Liberal party voter share is significantly larger in municipalities with a higher incidence of historical slavery. The effects remain relatively consistent over time with a sharp decline in support following the 2002 presidential election. As expected, this change corresponds to the deinstitutionalization of the Colombian party system. Furthermore, the evolution of partisan support in presidential elections is similar to the trends in local elections. As shown in bottom panel of Figure 2, changes in the effect

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[9] We only have election returns for 45 municipalities for the 1990 *consejo* election. This election preceded the 1991 Constitutional reforms, which limited the information available on Liberal and Conservative party vote shares. Estimates for the pooled sample are comparable if we exclude this election.

[10] IV results are reported in Figure A.2 in the appendix.

Presidential Elections

Liberal Party Vote Share

Conservative Party Vote Share

Council Elections

Liberal Party Vote Share
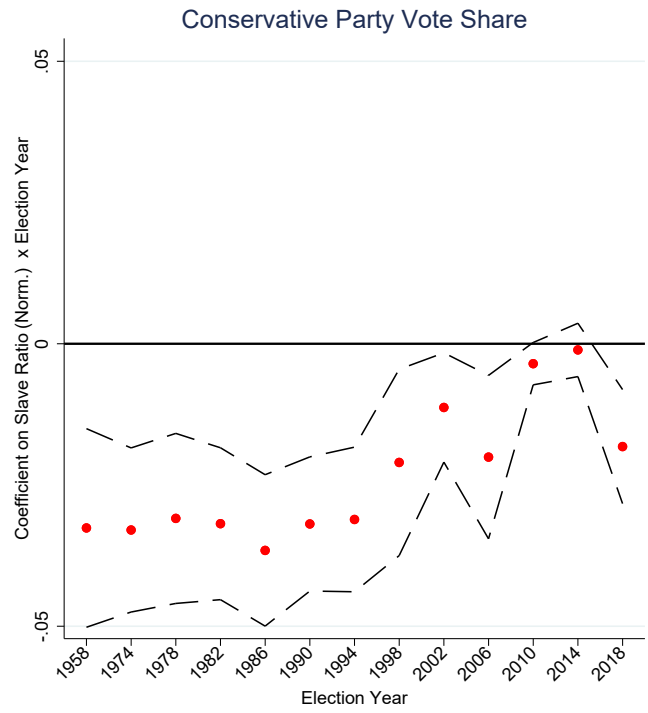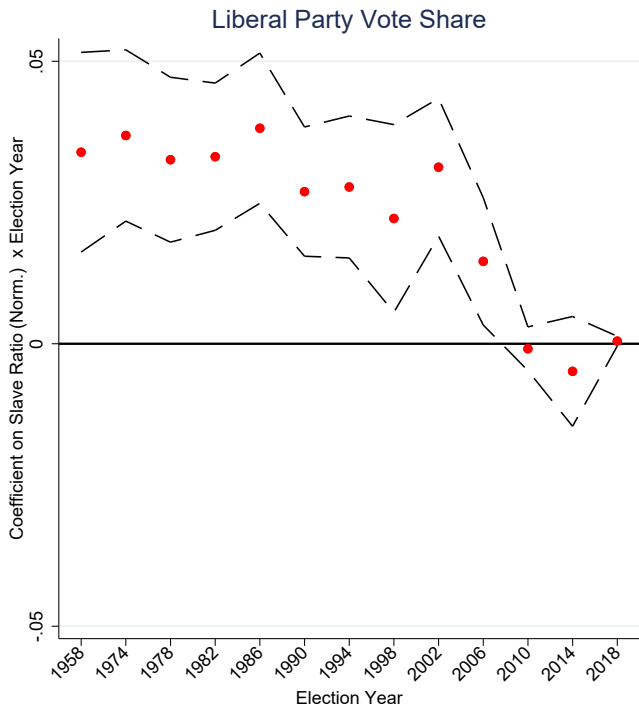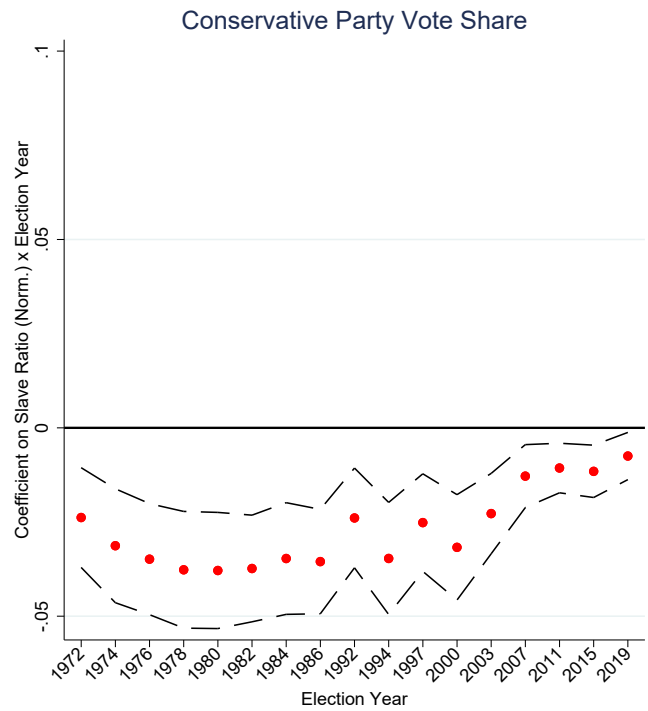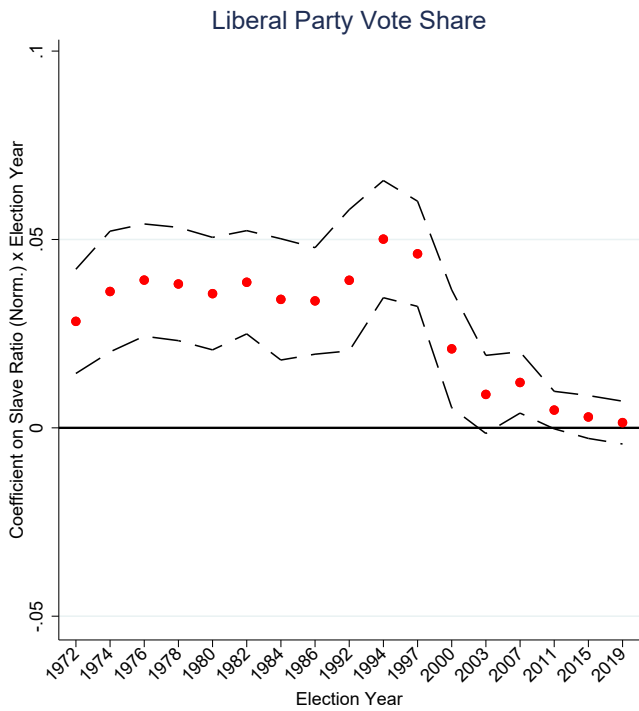

Conservative Party Vote Share

Figure 3: EFFECT OF SLAVERY ON LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PARTY VOTE SHARES BY ELECTION CYCLE (*OLS ESTIMATES*)

25

of slavery on partisan support in council elections roughly parallel changes over time in presidential elections. This additional evidence further supports our earlier findings regarding the path-dependent impact of slavery on political affiliation in Colombia.

7   Exploring Mechanisms

In the previous section, we reported on the effect of slavery on electoral outcomes and political affiliations in the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Those results are quite striking by themselves. However, it is worth exploring how this effect interacts with other changes and policies in order to understand how its impact can vary over time and across different regions. To carry this out, in this section we are going to explore some mechanisms and structural changes in the intermediate period between the end of slavery and our outcomes that could affect the relationship between slavery and political participation. First, we explore the inter-generational socialization of attitudes and behavior – which we refer to as discursive salience. Second, we study the effect of institutional reforms in shaping the effect of slavery by looking at the consolidation of conservative dominance after emancipation – which we refer here as structural salience.

Discursive Salience

To explain our results, we first consider a theory of the historical persistence of political attitudes. According to this explanation, slavery and emancipation defined regional differences in political attitudes and these differences have persisted over time.

Below, we draw primarily on historical accounts to provide some qualitative background on how Black populations had incentives to join and maintain a Liberal party affiliation in the former strongholds of slavery. We then discuss some observable implications of this theory.

Political and economic incentives affected the decision to support the Liberal party. The intensity of slavery, the process of emancipation, and the enfranchisement process of the 1930s created strong incentives for Black voters to support the Liberals and oppose to the Conservatives.

Why will membership in the Liberal Party persist after emancipation? Several factors could explain this phenomenon. First, joining the most powerful party in the region represents a strategic advantage. Liberals, through their policies, created a loyal base among black voters in the second half of the 19th
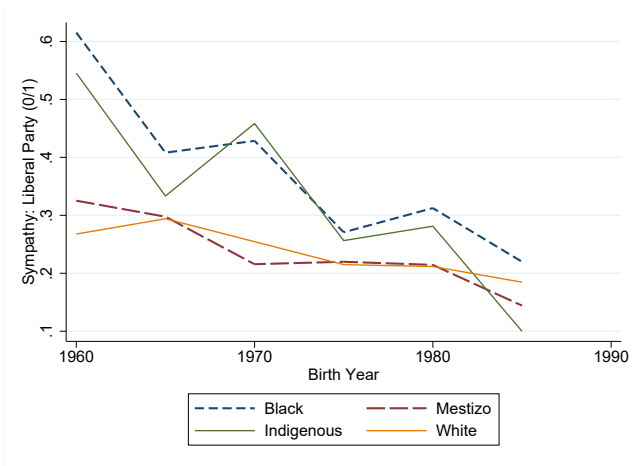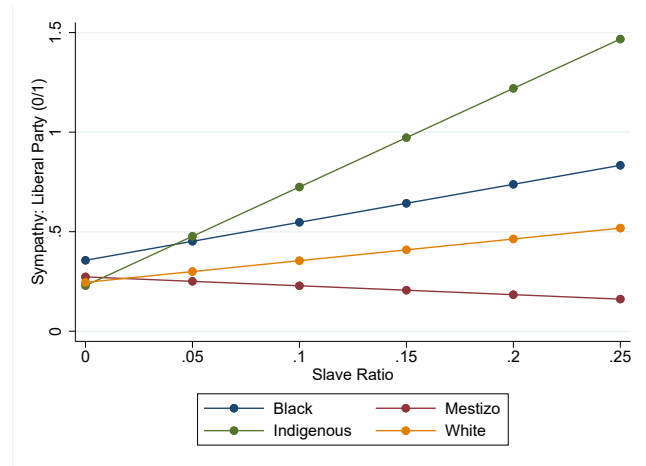
Figure 4: Sympathy Liberal Party by Age

Figure 5: Sympathy Liberal Party by Race

century. Years after this initial alignment, joining the party represented an opportunity to be part of the organization that had the best chance of controlling local politics. The initial advantage and the ideological affiliation of the great majority of the population make this option more feasible to access the economic and political opportunities that would arise from belonging to the winning side. The new generations thus have not only ideological incentives given by what the party has done historically, but also strategic given the advantages of intervening more directly in local politics. Second, the inter-generational transmission of political attitudes. Following other studies, the idea is that attitudes and preferences can be transmitted from one generation to another. In our case, it is partisanship, rather than socio-political attitudes, that is transmitted from parents to children. As explained before, qualitative evidence reports not only strong affiliation but the cultural transmission of liberal attitudes among black voters in the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Interviews and historical accounts refer to the affiliation to the party by families and the identification of black voters with the Liberal Party for many years (Agudelo, 2002). Following the literature, this effect is expected to decay over time. In particular, we should expect to see a decline in the support for the Liberal Party after misalignments with its core supporters, as in the alliance with the Conservative Party during the *Frente Nacional*.

We can derive three observable implications from these explanations. First, Black voters will express greater support for the Liberal Party than non-Black voters. Second, younger voters will express similar levels of support for the Liberal Party to older voters. Those results are presented in Figures 4 and 5. Figure 1 in the Appendix shows the distribution of support for the Liberal and Conservative parties for different groups in Colombia. It is worth drawing attention to the proportion of Afro-Colombian citizens who say they support each party: although we are looking at the responses for the period 2004
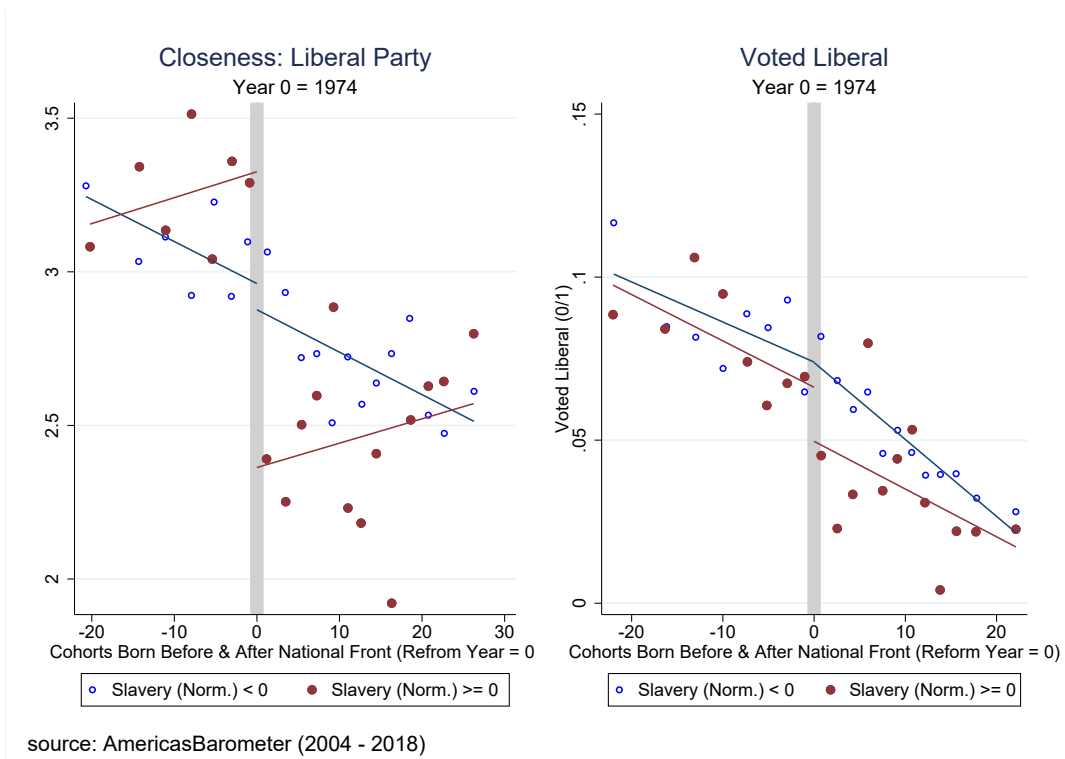
Figure 6: Liberal Party Support Post-Frente Nacional

- 2018, partisan support for the Liberal Party is most evident across ethnic lines for Afro-Colombians.

Third, we should expect to see a decline in the support for the Liberal Party in voters socialized after the Frente Nacional. Figure 6 shows closeness to Liberal Party and Liberal Party vote for cohorts born before and after the *Frente Nacional*. Both figures show a sharp drop in Liberal Party support in slave-holding areas after the Liberal-Conservative alliance, and is consistent with the discursive salience explanation.

Structural Salience

In the previous subsection, we focused on the social factors that could affect the relationship between slavery and contemporary political affiliations. In this subsection, we proceed to discuss the institutional factors that could have the most impact on this relationship. In particular, we are going to refer to the effect that the consolidations of Conservative dominance had for around four decades in the country, from 1886 to 1930, known in Colombian history as the *Hegemonía Conservadora*.

After 1886, the Conservatives established their power in the central government and made efforts to expand their control locally. Based on a new constitution, the conservatives implemented a series of
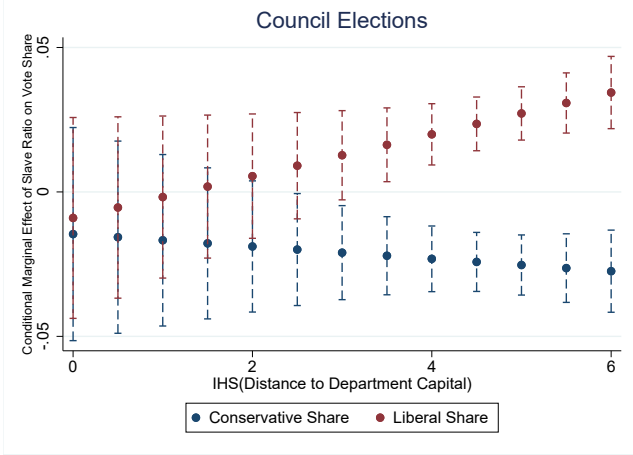
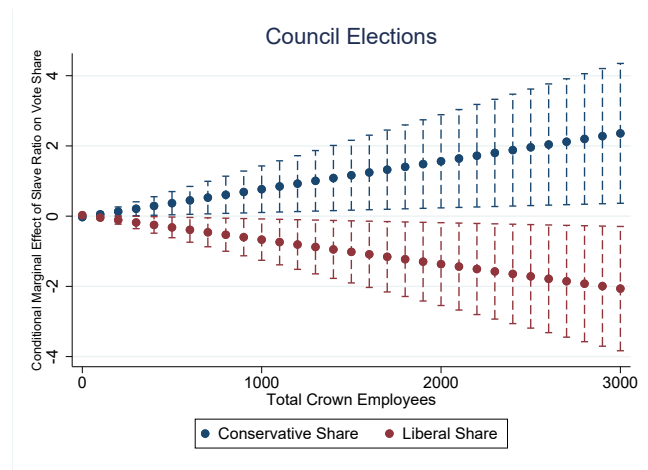**Figure 7:** Slavery and Partisanship by Distance to Department Capital

Figure 8: Slavery and Partisanship by Crown Employees

policies that affected the relationship that the slave-owning areas in the Colombian Pacific and Atlantic had with the two parties. We want to draw attention to three aspects of these initiatives. First, the new Constitution restricted suffrage along class lines, but with clear racial implications. Citizens had to know how to read and write and have an annual income of more than five hundred pesos or properties whose cost was higher than fifteen hundred pesos. This restriction that impeded the electoral participation of the vast majority of the black population at the time. Second, the central government advocated a centralized executive power in which the most important decisions were transmitted from Bogotá to the regions and in which the president appoints the provincial governors and the governors appoint mayors. Third, attempts to consolidate power and implement political change were restricted by the consolidation of state capacity at the time, which in turn was bounded by the presence of the colonial state.

From the reasons outlined above, we derive an additional observable implication. Liberal Party vote shares in the 20th century will be positively related to the intensity of slavery, where the state presence was weak. In other words, we should expect greater effects of slavery on Liberal participation further away from the provincial capitals.

Figures 7 and 8 show the conditional marginal effect of slave ratio on vote shares across distance to departmental capital and different levels of colonial state capacity. The results show the variation of the effect consistent with the previous discussion: the *Hegemonía Conservadora* and state presence are strongly related to an increase in support for the Conservative Party. What is interesting is that in places where there was more slavery, the effects are more pronounced.

Finally, the results of the elections after 2006 show a reduction in support for the Liberal Party in places where there was slavery, compared to previous periods. These results should be interpreted with caution. As we have previously mentioned, after this period, bipartisanship in Colombia broke down and the votes that went to traditional parties started to decline with respect to the results they obtained throughout the 20th century. However, the electoral results of this period can help us to better understand the proposed mechanisms. For example, we can see that although there is a drop in support for the Liberal party after the realignment brought about by Uribe's electoral victories, places where slavery had an effect on elections continue to vote for leftist alternatives, rather than right-wing parties. Support for candidates from left-wing parties could indicate that ideology and the transmission of political attitudes may be the reason for the legacy of slavery. In fact, the results in Table 9 and Figure 4 in the appendix show that, in places where there was more slavery, the proportion of support for the leftist candidate in elections since 2006 is higher. [11] The explanation is consistent with discursive salience: the continued support for the left after the dissolution of the Liberal party would be consistent with voters that have been socialized into left (or anti-conservative) support and internalized the heuristics of ideological labels.

While these results support an explanation based on an ideological mechanism, we believe that structural salience, the option of the party machine, cannot be completely ruled out. Especially during the 20th century, party affiliations were particularly important in much of the country. Indeed, Uribe's victories accelerated the decline of traditional party labels, but support for anti-conservative parties, fostered by the strong presence of the Liberal party during the 20th century in the region, could be feeding the support for leftist alternatives after this realignment.

8 Robustness

In this section, we put our results through a series of robustness checks. We summarize these checks briefly here and provide more details in the Appendix.

Alternative Strategy. To address concerns regarding over-identification of our IV-estimates we follow Acemoglu, García-Jimeno, and Robinson (2012) and re-do the analysis using gold mining as the sole instrument in our first-stage. This allows to directly compare the slave ratio in municipalities that

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[11] The leftist candidate was Carlos Gaviria in 2006, Gustavo Petro in 2010, Clara López in 2014 and Gustavo Petro in 2018.

had gold mines during the 17th and 18th centuries with municipalities that had no mining during this period, allowing us to avoid some of the pitfalls associated with having a large set of instruments.[12] This strategy identifies the effect based on the idea that gold mines were a major source of demand for slaves and now no longer exist. Though we do lose some power and have a moderately weaker first-stage, Appendix Tables A.1 and A.2 show that the effects on the electoral results of both the presidency and the local council are robust to this alternative strategy.

Reduced Sample. We replicate our analysis using only a sample of municipalities located in the Atlantic, Andean and Pacific regions. As an illustration, Appendix Figure A.3 shows the share of votes for the Liberal Party in presidential elections in these regions. Appendix Tables A.3 and A.4 show the estimations using only municipalities located in the mentioned regions. While the sample is greatly reduced we observe similar and statistically significant results to ones with the full sample discussed in previous sections.

Additional Elections. We also carry out the analysis with the mayoral elections. However, we do not have information on these types of elections before 1992, and even for this period we have considerably fewer observations for the first elections. Appendix Table A.5 shows the results of the relationship between slavery and voting in mayoral elections, in which we observe effects that remain statistically significant at conventional levels. The results are noisier once we examine the relationship with our instrumental variables strategy, as we lose more observations, but the results remain in the same direction and significant.

Migration. Internal migration can be a problem for our results if we find that slavery is correlated with migration, and migration affects slavery results on elections. However, in Appendix Table A.7, we show that slavery is not correlated with mobility between municipalities based on data from IPUMs on the level on inter-municipal and inter-departmental migration data from 1973. In Appendix Table A.8, we re-run the main analysis using presidential and local council elections, flexibly controlling for migration by interacting baseline measure with a linear time trend using the information on respondents reported a different birth municipality (even-numbered columns) and a different department (odd-numbered columns). Overall, we recover comparable estimates for presidential elections. Results are consistent for local elections but moderately noisier depending on the specification.

---

[12] When we run endogeneity tests using the pooled sample of presidential elections and our full set of instruments, we get a Wu-Hausman *F-stat* of 0.056 (p-value=0.812) for the Liberal party results and an *F-stat* of 0.021 (p-value=0.885) for the Conservative/coalition. These tests provide evidence that our estimates are not inconsistent.

Margin of Victory. We also estimate the effect of slavery on the margins of victory in municipal council elections (the difference in percentage of votes between the winner and runner up). This measure helps us to observe to what extent the winning party has greater power over local electoral dynamics. The results are presented in Appendix Table A.6. We see a relationship between the presence of slavery and margin of victory consistent with a pattern of party dominance in slave-holding areas.

9 Conclusions

In this article we present suggestive evidence that slavery still plays an important role in Colombian politics. We show that the legacies of slavery are not limited to development, but in fact we can detect a considerable effect of the institution of slavery on contemporary vote choices. We argue that slavery and abolition affected party affiliations and that these effects persisted over time, and show that slave holding areas show more support for the Liberal Party across time.

We also explore the potential mechanisms and the evolution of party affiliation across different generations. Our study suggests that state capacity and the transmission of attitudes played an important role in shaping the effect of slavery on contemporary politics. Our results provide a broader version of the possible effects of slavery in politics and open the debate on the possible channels through which these effects may vary over time. Most studies that look at determinants of development at the local level often focus on proximate factors, and tend to ignore persistent political dynamics that may explain low levels of political competition or local partisan strongholds that they often point as determinants of underdevelopment. Our study points to the limitations of excluding long-term factors that may explain both the persistence of partisan affiliations and lower levels of development.

Future studies may examine the impact of other colonial institutions on local electoral dynamics, and better explore mechanisms for accounting for long-term effects. Alternatives such as a detailed survey among families can shed light on the transmission of attitudes. Finally, we also believe that this type of analysis can be carried out in other contexts to have a broader vision of the historical legacies in politics.

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Slavery, Elections and Political Affiliations in Colombia

Online Appendix

Ali T. Ahmed
PhD Candidate NYU
ali.ahmed@nyu.edu

Marcus A Johnson Jr
Assistant Professor Baruch College (CUNY)
marcus.johnson@baruch.cuny.edu

Mateo Vásquez-Cortés
Assistant Professor ITAM
mateo.vasquez@itam.mx

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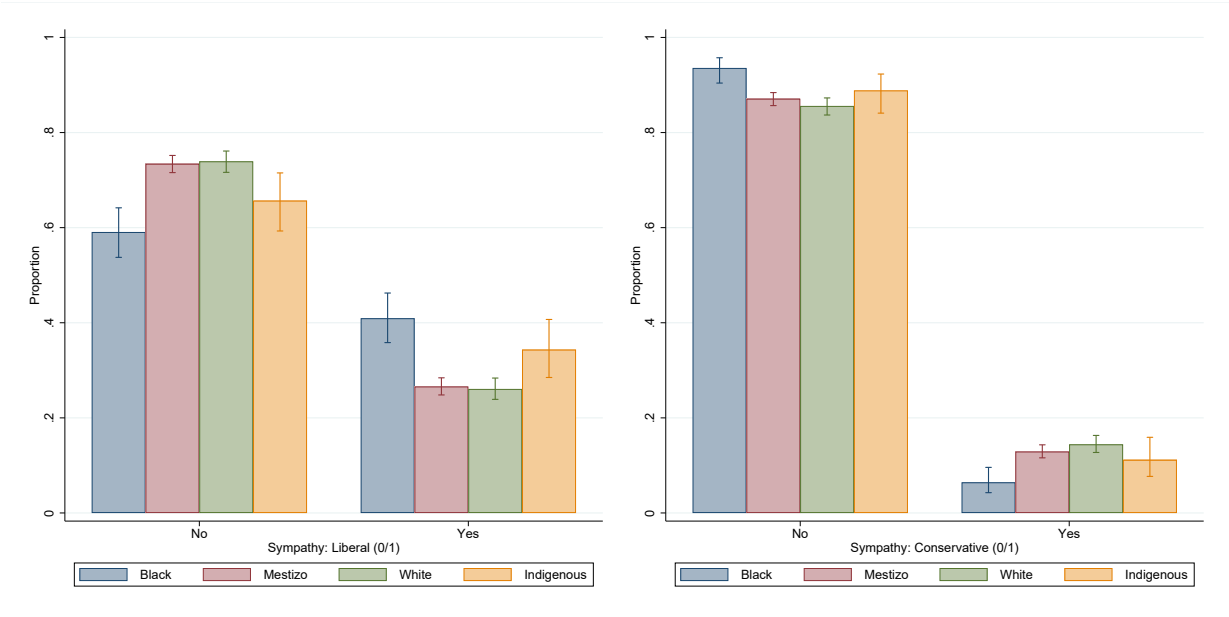
Figure A. 1: Support for Political Party - LAPOP (2004 - 2018)

Presidential Elections

Liberal Party Vote Share

Conservative Party Vote Share

Council Elections

Liberal Party Vote Share

Conservative Party Vote Share
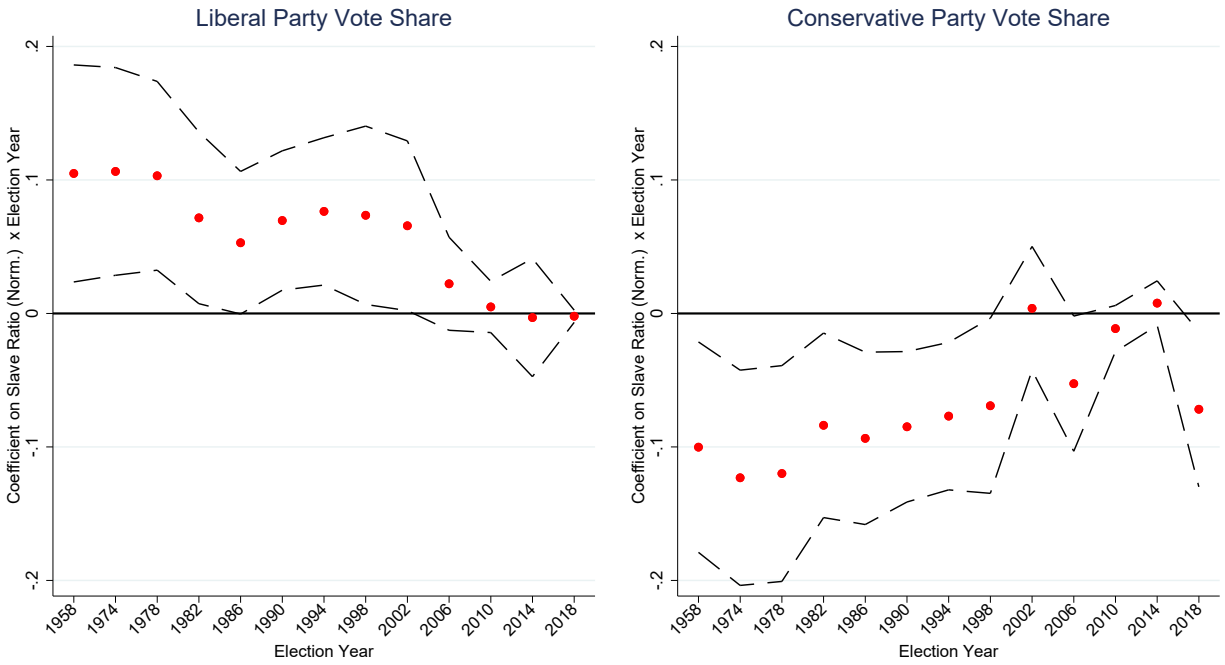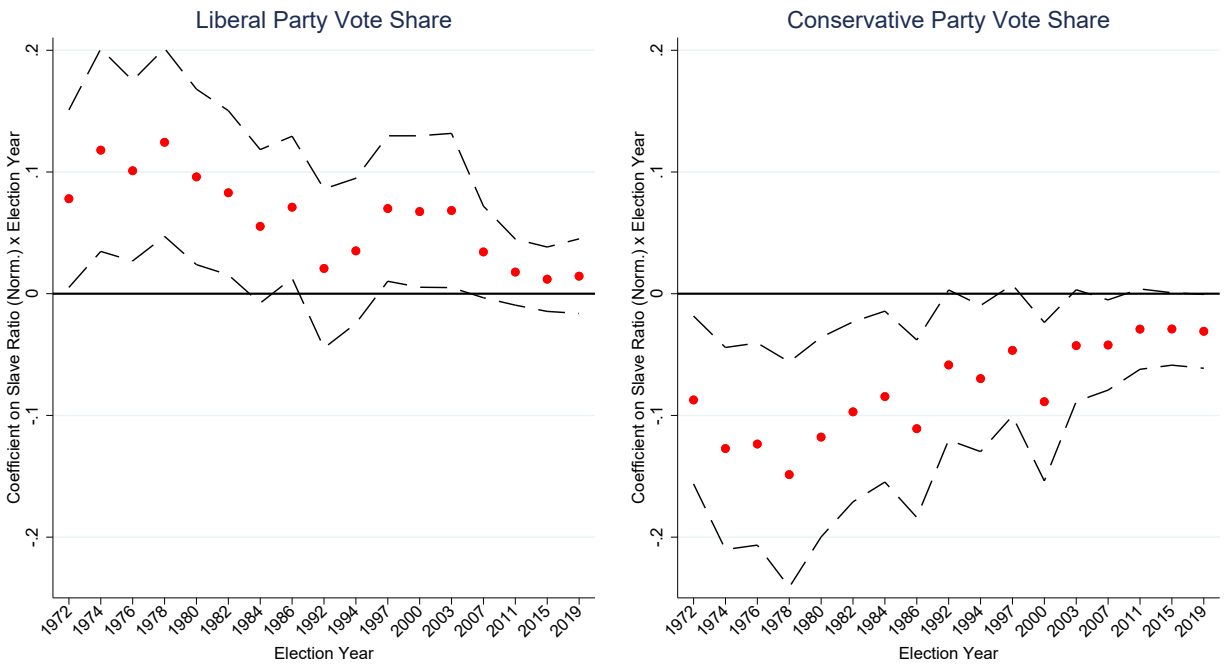
Figure A. 2: Slavery and Elections (IV - 2SLS)

Table A. 1: Slavery and Presidential Vote Share (*IV-2sls Mines Only*)

	1856		1958		2018		1958 - 2018	
	[1] Liberal Party Share	[2] Conservative Party Share	[3] Liberal Party Share	[4] Conservative Party Share	[5] Liberal Party Share	[6] Conservative Party Share	[7] Liberal Party Share	[8] Conservative Party Share
Panel A: IV -2sls								
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.022	-0.022	0.093*	-0.087*	0.001	-0.053*	0.054**	-0.061**
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.002)	(0.032)	(0.025)	(0.027)
First-Stage F-Stat	7.407	7.407	6.603	6.603	9.048	9.048	9.032	9.032
Fixed Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	601	601	738	738	1018	1018	12658	12658
Municipalities							1018	1018
Outcome Mean	0.538	0.462	0.732	0.265	0.0192	0.492	0.381	0.412

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is standardized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.

Table A. 2: Slavery and Local Council Vote Share (*IV-2sls Mines Only*)

	1974		2019		1974 - 2019	
	[1] Liberal Party Share	[2] Conservative Party Share	[3] Liberal Party Share	[4] Conservative Party Share	[5] Liberal Party Share	[6] Conservative Party Share
Panel A: IV -2sls						
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.114**	-0.122**	0.019	-0.026	0.062**	-0.072**
	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.026)	(0.031)
First-Stage F-Stat	8.440	8.440	9.053	9.053	9.199	9.199
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	912	912	1016	1016	16571	16570
Municipalities					1018	1018
Outcome Mean	0.500	0.408	0.150	0.146	0.383	0.327

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is standardized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.

1986

Liberal Share
- (80,100]
- (60,80]
- (40,60]
- (20,40]
- [0,20]

1990

Liberal Share
- (80,100]
- (60,80]
- (40,60]
- (20,40]
- [0,20]

1994

Liberal Share
- (80,100]
- (60,80]
- (40,60]
- (20,40]
- [0,20]

1998

Liberal Share
- (80,100]
- (60,80]
- (40,60]
- (20,40]
- [0,20]

2002

Liberal Share
- (80,100]
- (60,80]
- (40,60]
- (20,40]
- [0,20]

2006

Liberal Share
- (80,100]
- (60,80]
- (40,60]
- (20,40]
- [0,20]

Figure A. 3: Liberal Vote Share (*Andean, Caribbean and Pacific Region*)

Table A. 3: Presidential Vote Share (*Andean, Caribbean, and Pacific Region Sample*)

	1856		1958		2018		1958 - 2018	
	[1] Liberal Party Share	[2] Conservative Party Share	[3] Liberal Party Share	[4] Conservative Party Share	[5] Liberal Party Share	[6] Conservative Party Share	[7] Liberal Party Share	[8] Conservative Party Share
Panel A: OLS								
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.007 (0.010)	-0.007 (0.010)	0.034*** (0.009)	-0.033*** (0.009)	0.001 (0.000)	-0.019*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.004)	-0.021*** (0.005)
Adjusted R^2	0.303	0.304	0.259	0.256	0.094	0.436	0.487	0.395
Panel B: IV - 2SLS								
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	-0.008 (0.050)	0.008 (0.050)	0.105** (0.041)	-0.100** (0.040)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.075** (0.030)	0.059*** (0.022)	-0.068*** (0.024)
First-Stage F-Stat	31.79	31.79	13.67	13.67	18.71	18.71	18.25	18.25
Fixed Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	589	589	738	738	936	936	11770	11770
Municipalities							936	936
Outcome Mean	0.533	0.467	0.732	0.265	0.0189	0.490	0.381	0.418

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is standardized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.
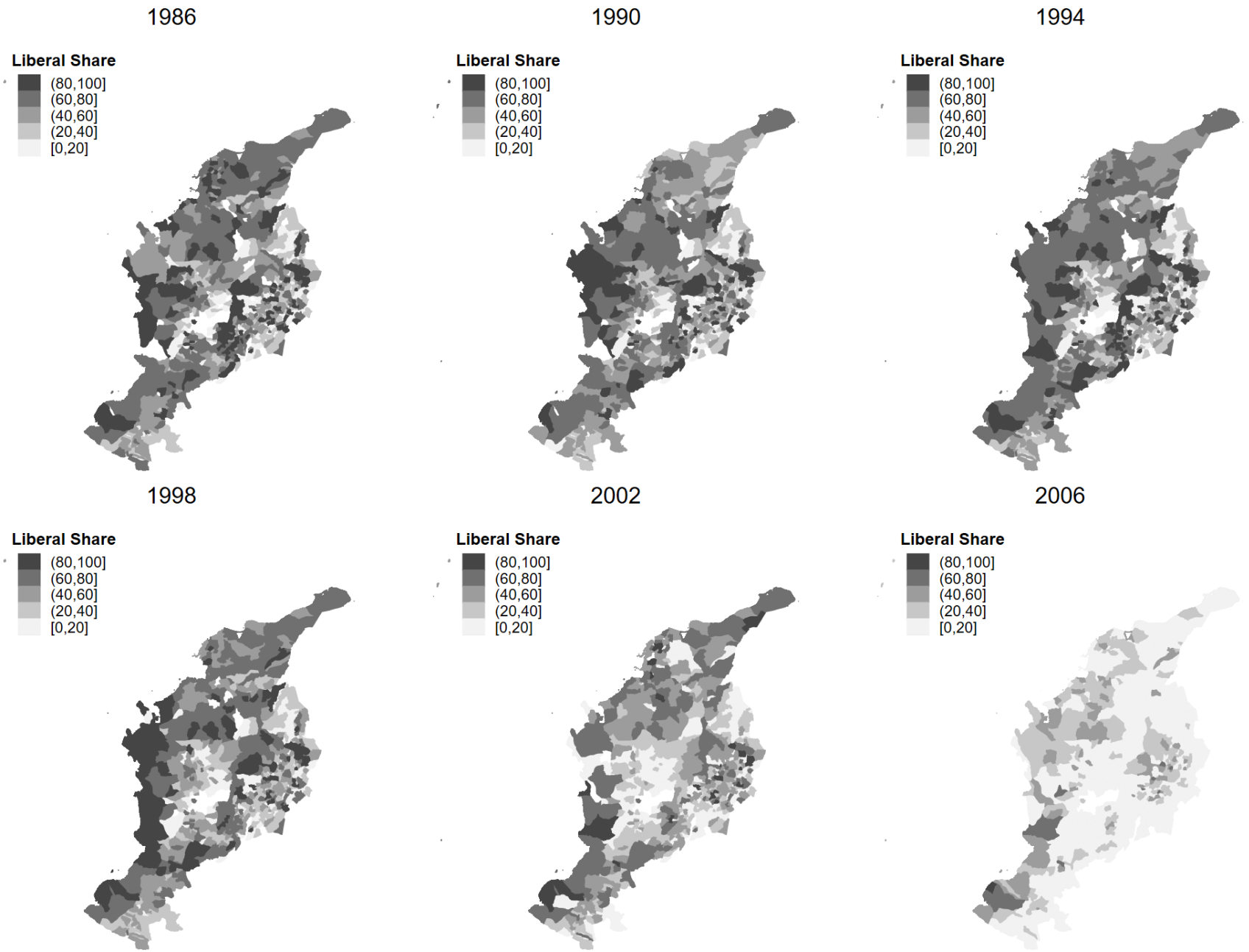
Table A. 4: Local Council Vote Share (*Andean, Caribbean, and Pacific Region Sample*)

	1972		2019		1972 - 2019	
	[1] Liberal Party Share	[2] Conservative Party Share	[3] Liberal Party Share	[4] Conservative Party Share	[5] Liberal Party Share	[6] Conservative Party Share
Panel A: OLS						
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.033***	-0.028***	0.001	-0.007**	0.026***	-0.024***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Adjusted R^2	0.157	0.138	0.102	0.037	0.334	0.276
Panel B: IV - 2SLS						
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.120***	-0.130***	0.017	-0.028*	0.064***	-0.075***
	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.027)
First-Stage F-Stat	13.58	13.58	19.07	19.07	17.59	17.60
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	863	863	934	934	15504	15503
Municipalities					936	936
Outcome Mean	0.488	0.420	0.148	0.150	0.380	0.338

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is standardized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.

Table A. 5: Mayoral Elections

	1992		2007		1992 - 2007	
	[1] Liberal Party Share	[2] Conservative Party Share	[3] Liberal Party Share	[4] Conservative Party Share	[5] Liberal Party Share	[6] Conservative Party Share
Panel A: OLS						
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.046***	-0.034***	0.026***	-0.022***	0.034***	-0.032***
	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Adjusted R^2	0.076	0.052	0.095	0.085	0.155	0.119
Panel B: IV - 2SLS						
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	-0.078	-0.035	0.058*	-0.059*	0.031	-0.061*
	(0.073)	(0.059)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.033)
First-Stage F-Stat	17.07	17.07	18.52	18.52	20.77	20.77
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1006	1006	1013	1013	5751	5751
Municipalities					1016	1016
Outcome Mean	0.386	0.279	0.182	0.194	0.350	0.275

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is standardized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.

Table A. 6: Margin of Victory (*Local Council Elections*)

	1974		2007		1974 - 2007	
	[1] Victory Margin	[2] Margin Victory (Share)	[3] Victory Margin	[4] Margin Victory (Share)	[5] Victory Margin	[6] Victory Margin (Share)
Panel A: OLS						
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	550.576***	0.003	14.542	-0.003**	219.487***	-0.007
	(181.448)	(0.009)	(10.569)	(0.001)	(62.347)	(0.005)
Adjusted R^2	0.019	0.122	0.764	0.007	0.189	0.493
Panel B: IV - 2SLS						
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	2016.713*	-0.035	-17.557	-0.005	731.355*	-0.050**
	(1165.869)	(0.040)	(43.109)	(0.006)	(414.805)	(0.024)
First-Stage F-Stat	13.59	13.59	18.93	18.93	17.34	17.32
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	862	862	935	935	12696	12686
Municipalities					936	936
Outcome Mean	2092.4	0.461	101.9	0.0167	1039.2	0.281

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is standardized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.

9

Table A. 7: Correlates of Migration

	OLS		
	[1] Born Same Municip.	[2] Born Diff. Municip.	[3] Born Diff. Dept.
Panel A			
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.002	0.003	-0.005**
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Municipalities	1011	1011	1011
Outcome Mean	0.714	0.154	0.132

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is standardized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.

	Liberal Party Share				Conservative Party Share			
	[1] OLS	[2] OLS	[3] IV-2SLS	[4] IV-2SLS	[5] OLS	[6] OLS	[7] IV-2SLS	[8] IV-2SLS
Panel A: Presidential								
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.025***	0.024***	0.040*	0.051**	-0.026***	-0.023***	-0.048**	-0.059***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.022)	(0.023)
First-Stage F-Stat			14.53	17.65			14.53	17.65
Observations	12582	12582	12570	12570	12582	12582	12570	12570
Municipalities	1011	1011	1010	1010	1011	1011	1010	1010
Outcome Mean	0.381	0.381	0.381	0.381	0.413	0.413	0.413	0.413
Panel B: Local Council								
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.030***	0.028***	0.043**	0.056**	-0.029***	-0.025***	-0.051**	-0.067***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.024)	(0.025)
First-Stage F-Stat			13.95	16.77			13.95	16.77
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Different Dept. Trend	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Different Muni. Trend	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	16472	16472	16454	16454	16471	16471	16453	16453
Municipalities	1011	1011	1010	1010	1011	1011	1010	1010
Outcome Mean	0.383	0.383	0.383	0.383	0.327	0.327	0.327	0.327

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is standardized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.

Table A. 9: Left-wing Party Share (2006 - 2018)

	Left-wing Party Share	
	[1] OLS	[2] IV-2sls
Panel A		
Slave Ratio (Norm.)	0.006*	0.034***
	(0.003)	(0.013)
First-Stage F-Stat		19.11
Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	4071	4064
Municipalities	1018	1016
Outcome Mean	0.149	0.149

Note: The unit of analysis is a municipality. The independent variable, *Slave Ratio (norm.)*, represents the proportion of the municipal population that was enslaved in 1843. The variable is standardized by subtracting the sample mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Standard errors clustered at the municipality level reported in parentheses. *** is significant at the 1% level, ** is significant at the 5% level and * is significant at the 10% level.
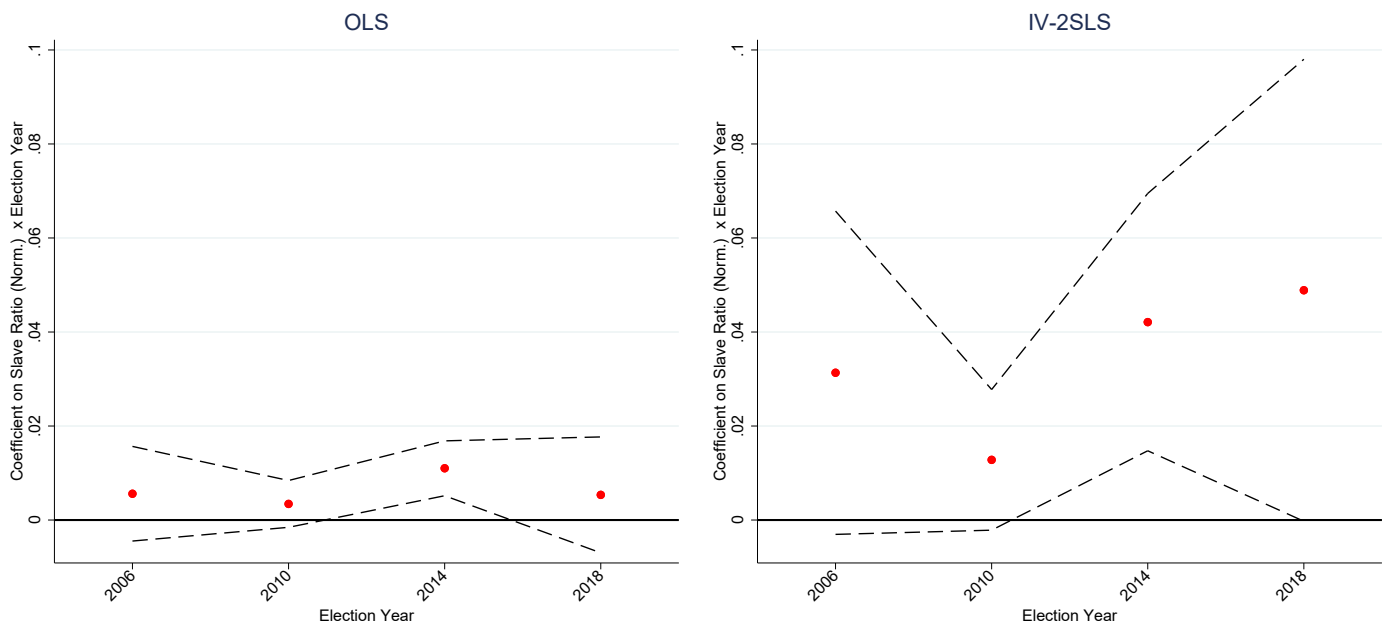
Figure A. 4: Presidential Elections Left-Wing Party Share (2006 - 2018)