

# **Colombia: The Nation Beyond the Screen**

Deconstructing the Image of Colombia in Popular Culture Productions about Pablo Escobar.  
A study on Netflix's *Narcos* (2015) and *Escobar: The Drug Lord* (2012)

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## **Colombia: The Nation Beyond the Screen**

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### **Abstract**

Entertainment media, encompassing films and television series, wields significant influence in shaping global perceptions of nations and cultures. However, Colombia has frequently fallen victim to negative stereotypes in international media, often associated with violence, poverty, and exoticism, leading to a distorted global image. These stereotypical portrayals, rooted in cost-effective production strategies, perpetuate an oversimplified narrative. The advent of narconovelas, now available on streaming platforms such as Netflix, introduces a fresh approach to storytelling by dramatising drug trafficking narratives. Nevertheless, these portrayals often lack socio-political and historical context, resulting in one-dimensional perspectives that reinforce existing stereotypes, further contributing to the perception of Colombia as a threat. Negative stereotypes wield the power to shape perceptions of Colombia as a violent and insecure nation, perpetuating the criminalisation of Latinos within media narratives. In this study, we analyse two television series that delve into the rise of the Colombian drug trafficking empire. The central research question driving this analysis is: How do television series about Pablo Escobar, specifically Netflix's *Narcos* (2015) and *Escobar: The Drug Lord* (2012), contribute to shaping Colombia's national identity among global audiences?

The study aims to facilitate a comprehensive discussion on constructing Colombia's national identity from domestic and international perspectives. We employ a multimodal critical discourse analysis to achieve this, systematically studying 19 episodes. Our focus encompasses visual and textual elements and the impact of contextual factors like production decisions. The findings unveil evolving trends in the representation of Colombia, indicating a departure from generic Latino identity portrayals. Growing stability within the country's political landscape allows for more accurate depictions, with narratives filmed and acted by Colombians. Furthermore, simplistic representations of Colombia as an antagonist persist, with *Narcos* (2015) exemplifying the use of Latinamericanism discourses that perpetuate binary oppositions, constructing notions of whiteness and reinforcing narratives of the white hero and US intervention. In contrast, *Escobar: The Drug Lord* offers a nuanced view of the challenges faced during the tumultuous 1980s, presenting a broader societal context and addressing issues of corruption and negligence, ultimately reflecting

the nation's recovery from a decade of terror.

Despite the differences between the two series, a troubling pattern emerges regarding the portrayal of women. In both narratives, female characters are depicted as submissive objects of desire and ownership, relegated to secondary roles dependent on male characters. These women are confined to household and caregiving duties that reinforce traditional gender roles. Moreover, the hyper-sexualisation of female bodies contributes to their dehumanisation, glamorising male dominance and violence. In conclusion, the arrival of national narratives, such as *The Drug Lord*, to streaming platforms of global reach, such as Netflix, offers an opportunity for compelling stories to encounter foreign markets and provide another perspective of Colombia's national identity. However, concerns are raised due to the lack of racial diversity in representing Afro-American characters and non-heterosexual relationships. This absence contributes to the invisibility of these communities and underscores their social significance within the nation's identity.

KEYWORDS: *Stereotype, Representation, Colombian, Nationality, Netflix series*

## Introduction

*"In journalism, just one fact that is false prejudices the entire work. In contrast, in fiction, one single fact that is true gives legitimacy to the entire work. That's the only difference, and it lies in the commitment of the writer. A novelist can do anything he wants so long as he makes people believe in it".*

Gabriel García Márquez, *The Art of Fiction* No. 69

This quote by Gabriel García Márquez profoundly showcases the power of fiction to shape our perceptions of reality. García Márquez's observations connect us to a journey to study the world of fictional narratives in entertainment media products. Entertainment productions such as films and television series hold a unique way of presenting nations and cultures on the screen. For instance, Hollywood and other international media outlets portray Colombia as a country full of violence, exoticism, and poverty (Helmbrecht, 2016). Historically, the film industry has been known for using stereotypical images of specific cultures, events, and people as a cost-effective production strategy (Chicangana-Bayona & Barreiro Posada, 2013).

Nevertheless, due to the international success of the telenovela *Sin Tetas no Hay Paraíso* (Without Boobs, there is no Paradise), a new genre stylistically and thematically similar to traditional Latin American telenovelas but with an emphasis on the dramatisation of stories about narcotraffic was born (Cabañas, 2012). The narconovelas quickly gained popularity globally due to the inclusion of this new form of storytelling in the Netflix productions *Narcos* (Naef, 2018). However, the problem with the negative representation of Colombia is more complex, and it goes beyond the use of stereotypes and the media industry's obsession with stories about violence and narcotraffic. The issue with these narratives that move between fiction and reality is that they present a single dimension of the event described, leaving behind socio-political and historical contexts (Cabañas, 2014). Instead, some productions, such as *Narcos*, turn real-life historical events, such as the rise of drug trafficking in Colombia, into a story that makes the country's violent past a commodity to attract audiences (Cabañas, 2014).

### **1.1. Societal Relevance**

Representations of Colombia in entertainment media products are problematic because they convey a limited view of the country based on negative stereotypes. This representation in Hollywood goes along with a tradition of presenting Colombia in films as a barbarian and exotic place filled with violence and poverty, contributing to the way Colombia has been imagined in the

US consciousness (Smith & Huber, 2017). In a study about Americans' perception of Colombia, scholars found that negative images in the mass media influenced the construction of a country's image into perceptions of insecurity, fear and violence (Echeverri et al., 2017). Moreover, scholars have shown that the association of Colombia with the drug trade, crime and violence have influenced targeted discrimination of Colombian citizens in migration procedures and their perception of migrants when living abroad (Bovenkerk et al., 2013).

Scholars have studied the influence of the representation of Colombia in the perpetuation of hegemonic discourses of otherness and exclusion. Forster's (2020) study on the politics of fear of Trump argues that the criminalisation of Latinos in entertainment media products serves as a tool to impose fears on the community to legitimate state actions against Latin American immigration (Forster, 2020). Furthermore, scholars are concerned about the lack of context regarding the complexities of the social problems highlighted in narconovela, which leads to romanticisation, the commodification of violence, and the heroisation of drug lords (Ruiz, 2020).

## **1.2. Theoretical relevance**

A literature review was conducted to determine the reach of studies about the representation of Colombia in the international and domestic media. The literature review showed significant studies from a diversity of perspectives. For instance, in the international media, there are studies of the images of Colombia in Hollywood (Chicangana-Bayona & Barreiro Posada, 2013); the reproduction of racial hierarchies in US films about Colombia (Smith & Huber, 2018); the construction of masculine Latino identities in Hollywood (Liberato et al., 2009); and the commodification of female Latino bodies in the US popular culture (Molina-Guzman & Valdivia, 2004). From a domestic perspective, there are studies about strategies of Colombian mass media to construct the national identity (Arias et al., 2018), the creation of Colombia's identity and the commodification of Sofia Vergara as a cultural symbol of Colombia in the international sphere (Porrás Contreras, 2017); the representation of Afro communities in Colombian national television (Nieves, 2018); the use of symbolic violence and masculine domination in Colombian television products (Muñoz Rodríguez, 2016); the effect of the drug trade in Colombia and the rise of narco-related popular culture products, such as the narconovela (Rincon, 2009); the portrayal of women in narconovelas (Miller et al., 2019) and their sexual objectification in narconovelas such as *'Sin Tetas No Hay Paraiso'* (Cabañas, 2012).

Lastly, studies that focus specifically on analysing the series *Narcos* (2015) focus on the analysis of the articulation of memory in the series (Amaya Trujillo & Charlois Allende, 2019); the problem with these popular culture productions (Ruiz, 2020); the commodification of violence and

touristification of Pablo Escobar (Naef, 2018); media's coverage of the two first seasons of *Narcos* (Arredondo Espinosa & Barrera Lopez, 2019)

and audience reception of the Netflix series *Narcos* (Cano, 2015). This exploration reveals several gaps in research: First, most previous research focuses on the series' content. Second, most studies need to delve into a more nuanced discussion about the relevance of context, production methods, and distribution in the media products studied. Third, non-existent studies approach the topic using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis. Therefore, the study aims to fill this gap by answering How do television series about Pablo Escobar, specifically Netflix's *Narcos* (2015) and *Escobar: The Drug Lord* (2012), contribute to building Colombia's national identity among international audiences?

### **1.3. Outline of the Thesis**

The second chapter will establish the theoretical foundation of the thesis, starting with an exploration of the concept of representation and its relationship with the creation of the nation in the media to the representation of Colombia in International and domestic media productions. Furthermore, a discussion about the origins and traits of Colombia's national identity and the use of media, such as television, to produce a sense of national identity are also discussed. The third chapter contains a detailed outline of the research design and the methodology for this thesis, the sampling and data collection process, including the criteria for selecting the series studied, data collection, operationalisation of relevant concepts and the description of how the analysis was done. The fourth chapter describes the results of the analysis within four sections; the first explores the construction of Colombia's identity through national symbols, cultural practices and social settings; the second section delves into the common narratives of the series; the third section delves into the specific discursive lenses that guide the series narratives. The fourth section explores the use of archive footage and historical events to support these narratives. The final chapter includes a discussion of the theoretical implications of the analysis and research findings, as well as the study's limitations and future research.





considered transparent or value-free (Cheek, 2004). According to Hall (1997), representation and the circulation of meaning are deeply connected to power relations, and this link cannot be ignored. The media has become society's most powerful system of circulation of meaning (Hall, 1997). Therefore, it is crucial to understand that media practices are charged with ideology and use specific frameworks of knowledge that work within a socio, economic, political, and even historical context.

These frameworks of knowledge are also known as Discourse. Michel Foucault's work on Discourse serves as a foundation for understanding the role of power in representations. For Foucault, Discourse is a group of statements that supplies ways of talking (and even thinking) about a subject within a particular historical moment. Discourse governs how a topic is discussed and reasoned about, influences our ideas of the world and others, and determines our place and societal roles (Hall,1997). Besides, Discourses create opportunities and limitations for knowledge production, functioning as frameworks of knowledge that decide which voices are meant to be heard, which have authority, and which should remain silenced (Cheek, 2004). However, it is crucial to note that those Discourses that organise our society are deeply embedded with ideology and power. On the one hand, ideology is vital in making specific social conventions appear natural or inevitable; ideology makes people forget that the world has been historically constructed (Billig, 1995). On the other hand, whoever produced a specific Discourse had an intention, a historical context, and an agenda (Kidd,2016).

### **2.1.1. The Role of Media in Representation**

We rely heavily on various media, such as textbooks, newspaper articles, documentaries, and TV shows to understand the world around us. With the global proliferation of communication systems, images have saturated the world, making visuals a privileged signifier of the late modern culture (Hall,1997). The last decades have brought significant transformations to the media landscape; due to technological advancements, the capacity of television to produce historical narratives has increased, and at the same time, the democratic role of media has also been challenged (Amaya Trujillo & Charlois Allende, 2017). Media entertainment was for a long time considered a site for recreation. However, scholars have discovered the entertainment industry's power in engaging citizens with significant political and social issues (Curran, 2011). Nowadays, the entertainment industry functions as a place of information about values and identities, providing forms of talking (Discourses) and understanding the world of events, nations, and people (Kidd, 2016).

Nevertheless, the media industry has historically been dominated by elites. These middle and upper-class men reflect their perspectives in media productions. Consequently, this has led to

problematic and stereotypical representations of class, gender, race, and sexual orientation (Croteau & Hoynes, 2014). Media representations are a cultural issue with political, historical, and social repercussions; they carry specific connotations that are neither incidental nor accidental, charged with ideology and invested with power (Kidd, 2016). Even though we are far from the idea of the hypodermic needle effect of media in society, media and culture still have an impact on shaping our perceptions of people from different cultural contexts, people that we might not encounter in our daily lives or know about besides those images we see of them in pictures or television programs (Kidd, 2016).

Regardless, representations are not static; they are meant to change or to be negotiated. What is considered acceptable today may be challenged in a year. Audiences have become agents of change, demanding the media to broaden their narrow perspectives; these challenges have created changes in the social world and have affected the organisation of the media industry, increasing the diversity of representations. However, to this day, many communities still feel misrepresented and underrepresented (Croteau & Hoynes, 2014). Hall (1997) argues that the problem goes beyond mere representation but is about the kind of representation we give certain races and nationalities and the discourses that feed those representations.

## **2.2. Representation and The Nation**

As discussed in the previous segment, representation is crucial in creating our identity; it is embedded with cultural norms and values and essential in our relationship with the world and others, thus making it a key element in creating a national identity. Representations are embedded with frameworks of knowledge that organise our society and structure what we know as common sense. One example of something we consider a natural aspect of our existence, like the sky is blue and the trees are green, is the concept of national identity (Billig, 1995). According to Smith (1989), national identity is formed and solidified through economic struggle, warfare, and collective remembrance of historical events. We are surrounded by symbols and objects that remind us that we belong to a specific nation, and we feel proud of it. Michael Billig coined the term "banal nationalism", which explains how mundane, routinary and unnoticed acts quietly perform as forms of daily flaggings of the nation (Billig, 1995, p. 37).

However, what is a nation? The nation is a socially constructed entity (Billig, 1995), a premodern phenomenon whose origins can be traced back to distant eras and ancient traditions (Smith, 1989). According to Smith (1989), the nation is a named community with shared history and culture, a shared economy, a mass education system, and common legal rights" (p.4). Nevertheless,

for him, the core of the nation is the use of a common language (Smith, 1989). In contrast, Benedict Anderson (2006) describes the nation as an "imagined political community, imagined inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). For Anderson (2006), the nation is an imagined community in which members might never know most of their fellow members or even heard of them, yet in their minds, each one identifies as part of the nation. Nationality is a cultural artefact; thus, we must consider its origins and the cultural systems that preceded them: the religious community and the dynastic realm (Anderson, 2006).

Anderson (2006) focuses on the role of the religious community in creating a sense of community. For Anderson, religious beliefs and practices have impacted people's behaviours and perceptions about themselves and others. Conversely, Anderson (2006) stresses the effects of the inherited culture and symbols from old monarchies in the new nations. However, Anderson (2006) asserts that modern nations are based on shared cultural, linguistic and territorial characteristics.

### **2.2.1. Building the Nation**

Now that we have discussed the components of national identity and the concept of the nation, let us explore the different approaches to nation-building. There are multiple approaches to building a nation; in this segment, we will discuss three approaches: Top-down, the flaggings of the nation and nation branding. The top-down approach or State and elite-driven efforts are the set of cultural, economic and social policies driven by stata forces to reinforce the idea of the nation (Dumitrica, 2019). Smith (1989) explains that national identity is reinforced through education, legal codes and systems of communication like the mass media. In contrast, another form of building the nation is integrated into everyday life; it is present in people's conversations, in their behaviours, it is present in the material infrastructure of our cities, in the flags of the buildings, in the money we use to purchase groceries, in the newspapers we read, in the weather, in the sports we play; these reminders of the nation is what Billig (1995) called the daily flaggings of the nation, a core element of banal Nationalism. For Billig (1995), "We" are constantly reminded that "we" live in nations; we are reminded of "our" identity; nations are reproduced daily; their political discourses and cultural products are present in the habits of our everyday lives.

Additionally, another strategy to build the nation is known as nation branding. Nation branding uses marketing strategies to promote nations in the global market to attract investors and tourism (Dumitrica, 2019). There have been debates on whether national branding strategies that target foreign audiences align with a discussion about national identity. Nonetheless, Bolin and Miazhevich (2018) argue that national branding strategies can strengthen national identity and sense of belonging. Similarly, Anderson (2006) claims that to exist; a nation must be imagined as a

nation among other nations. Therefore, governments use national branding strategies to gain recognition from established nations, which helps them to achieve legitimacy and maintain or improve their reputation (Bolin & Miazhevich, 2018).

### **2.2.2. Stereotyping the 'Other'**

Billig (1995) argues that the creation of our community involves the imagining of the other. For Smith (1989), cultural differentiation is vital to our social life. Likewise, Helmbrecht (2016) asserts that "nation-building discourses cannot be separated from alterity discourses" (Helmbrecht, 2016, p. 38). Thus, to create our identity and relationship with the world, we must also create 'the other' from which we are different. For Hall (1997), meaning-making practices are tied to creating our identity, as it gives us a sense of who we are and where we belong based on cultural frameworks that mark differences between us and others. Those discourses we hear about 'others' determine our behaviour and how we treat them (Helmbrecht, 2016). Billig (1995) argues that nations use positive stereotypes about themselves to mark differences with 'other' nations, which are assigned negative stereotypes.

Hall explains three separate elements that are part of the process of stereotyping. Firstly, stereotyping "reduces, essentialises, naturalises and fixes difference"; secondly, it divides behaviours in what is considered normal or acceptable from what is abnormal and unacceptable; and thirdly tends to blossom in unequal power relations in which particular worldviews appear as "natural or inevitable" (Hall, 1997, p. 258). Hall (1997) sees these as regimes of representation, a "repertoire of imagery and visual effects through which difference is represented at any historical moment" (Hall, 1997, p. 232).

However, Ernst Gombrich, cited in Chicangana-Bayona and Barreiro Posada (2013), argues that stereotypes function as a representational scheme that facilitates the repetition and reproduction of information. Stereotypes feed the expectations we have of a person or an image. Thus, our perceptions carry preconceived assumptions and possible biases (Hall, 1997). Thus, stereotypes act as simplistic over-generalisations filled with prejudices and discrimination learned from our exposure to specific sociocultural contexts (Hinton, 2020). For Billig (1995), stereotypes distinguish 'us' from 'them' and are forms that allow us to confirm our claims of national identity. Regardless, stereotypes are charged with ideology and power relations, and we need to be aware that what for one person is a harmful stereotype for someone else is part of his common sense (Hinton, 2020).

### **2.3. Stereotypes in Popular Culture:**

Cultural producers work together to dominate representation paradigms following an elite-driven agenda (Smith & Huber, 2018). Kidd (2016) emphasises on media's ability to actively re-present over and over again images that become familiar whilst excluding other images that contest those specific representations. Stereotypes are about repetitive characterisation; stereotypes are used in film and other forms of media as narrative tools that link particular identities to simple narratives about specific cultures and ethnicities (Chicangana-Bayona & Barreiro Posada, 2013). Now that we know how stereotypes are used in the media industry, we will explore the media's role in creating a nation and the opportunities and challenges that new media technologies have brought to nation-building projects.

#### **2.3.1. The Media and National Identity**

Benedict Anderson (2006) identifies three primary factors that contributed to the rise of Nationalism: the widespread availability of print media, the emergence of educated and politically active provincial elites in the Americas and the integration of nations into empires through bureaucratic means, such as Britain and Russia (Anderson, 2006). For modernists, the nation is a product of modern conditions like industrialism (Smith, 1989). For instance, the advent of print capitalism and the proliferation of mass media promoted language standardisation. Rituals like reading newspapers and watching the news became a tool for building the national community (Anderson, 2006).

There has been an increasing interest in nationalism studies focusing on mass media's role in creating national identities (Willems et al., 2020). Historically, the media has worked as an instrument for propaganda and reproduction of existing hegemonic discourses that build narratives of the nation (De Cillia et al., 1999). Scholars argue that the evolution of audiovisual media products has encouraged film, radio, and television use for nationalism projects in forms like propaganda and everyday Nationalism (Willems et al., 2020). For instance, television has been closely bound to local territories, tied to a national project of engineering national identities (Chalaby, 2005). However, the democratic role of television and, specifically, entertainment media has been challenged by the evolution of media technologies. According to James Curran (2011), when the democratic role of the media was first elaborated, their views were meant to cover the world of events from the perspective of the home nation. However, with the arrival of internet network technologies and the expansion of television beyond national borders, its role in maintaining a project of the nation was challenged (Chalaby, 2005). Nonetheless, the potential of audiovisual media to promote historical

narratives is becoming more evident (Amaya Trujillo & Charlois Allende, 2017). The entertainment industry, which was once considered not serious enough, gained a democratic role in promoting the democratic values of the nation and in engaging citizens with complex political issues (Curran, 2011).

### **2.3.2. The Transformation of Television**

Historically television has been linked to the nation, its signal covered the length of the national territory, and foreign broadcasters were not allowed to transmit beyond the nation's borders (Jenner, 2018). Any attempts to breach those limits were seen as breaches of sovereignty. Since its invention was tied to the national project in modern nations, television became the central medium for fostering national identity (Jenner, 2018). The playing field and rules drastically changed with the arrival of transborder television and global television networks (Chalaby, 2003). These new forms of media challenged the relationship time-space that characterised traditional television.

Transborder television has features like cross-border coverage, a multinational audience and, in some cases, international production operations (Chalaby, 2003). The powerful force of technological advancements that transformed the media over the last years has changed how nations are being reproduced; from the rise of Nationalism with the advent of print capitalism to the transformation of national television into transnational broadcasting networks, we have seen how the media has become an even more powerful tool to build the nation. However, one of the latest transformations in television and film production happened with the advent of Netflix in 1997.

Netflix is a particular case of study because the giant media conglomerate has shaken the audiovisual industry to its core, transforming not only its production and distribution logic but it also has been capable of generating a novel phenomenon in the television consumption experience, known as binge-watching (Heredia Ruiz, 2017). The streaming platform claims over 100 million subscribers in 190 countries<sup>1</sup> (Jenner, 2018). One of the most appealing features of Netflix services is content availability in different time schedules, the translation of the content into multiple languages, and its commitment to inclusion and diversity of programs and representation

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<sup>1</sup> The number of subscribers, according to Statista.com, in the second quarter of 2023 has increased to 238 million paid subscribers. This number refers to only active subscriptions with paid accounts; this does not count as a specific number of audience reached, as some Netflix accounts are shared among family and friends.

(Jenner, 2018).

However, some scholars claim that Netflix's commitment to diversity is a strategy to address its transnational audience, as Netflix's in-house content is produced with a transnational audience in mind. Another element raised is that even though Netflix audiences are fragmented across borders, Netflix content still needs to undergo domestication like translations, dubbing and adaptations to comply with specific regulations and norms of existing national media systems (Jenner, 2018). Additionally, it is essential to remember that audiences are not passive; the role of interpretation is crucial because it determines how the content is received, decoded, and accepted by the audience (Hall, 1997), which sometimes can prove that even though media has gone international, media practices are still being shaped by social context, national customs, cultural frameworks and national identity.

Lastly, it is crucial to discuss its limitations too. Even though Netflix is advertised as a global service, the streaming platform is hampered by a new digital divide based on wealth, age, generation, class and geographical location (Straubhaar et al., 2019). Even though Netflix offers a wide range of languages in the form of subtitles and dubbing, the disponibility for translation to specific languages still needs to be made available, leaving behind individuals without specific language literacy, which limits the advancements of Netflix as a Global streaming service.

#### **2.4. Representations of the 'Other' on the International Stage**

Through the previous segment, we explored various aspects of representation and its widespread presence. We explored the different ways Discourses reinforce the status quo, and the text addressed the relationship between representation, cultural and national identity in how we perceive the world. We also examined the historical use of various forms of media in national identity projects. Additionally, we argued that the media rely on simplistic stereotypes of the 'other' as production strategies that allow replication and immediate audience recognition.

Moreover, we explored the film and television industry changes and the limitations and challenges nations face in adapting to different forms of media for nation-building projects. Nonetheless, we highlighted the benefits and opportunities that new forms of entertainment, such as streaming services like Netflix, offer to diversify the contents of the media industry and challenge the hegemonic discourses about nations and cultures. In this section, our focus shifts to the critical discussion about the naturalisation of negative stereotypes of Colombia in international media.

As discussed before, the community-building potential of films and other media is not restricted to reproducing national cultures. Indeed, films can create imagined communities capable



of transcending territorial boundaries. Nevertheless, they have become a site where different cultures encounter each other (Willems et al., 2020). Films make distant places appear closer, giving us a glimpse into what other nations look like, their behaviours, aesthetics and even values (Smith & Huber, 2018).

Scholars of Latin American media studies raised concerns about the media's inadequate, contradictory, and stereotypical representations of Latinos (Cepeda & Casillas, 2017). Stuart Hall's (1997) studies of images of blackness across history have proven a connection between media representations and power differences, manifested in the ability of some dominant cultures (specifically Western culture) to frame the Other. Hence, it is crucial to recognise that films and the media are charged with ideologies and representations that are not exempt from the influence of broader discourses, such as Orientalism.

Edward Said introduced the concept of Orientalism in 1978, one of the founding ideas of postcolonial studies; this theory describes how Western media outlets fabricate stereotypical representations of the Middle East and East Asia (Kidd, 2016). Orientalism follows discourses of the 'Orient' that reinforced the images of Eastern cultures as backward, exotic, and dangerous (Kidd, 2016). Said's work on Orientalism served as an influence on the creation of Latinamericanism. This term describes European and Anglo-American discourses about Latin America that gained prominence and attention in postcolonial studies in the early 1990s (Beverley, 2011). Latinamericanism follows specific narratives that promote the idea of the primitive South. These narratives about Latin America carry stereotypes and visual conventions that can be traced back to Christopher Columbus's journals in the 15th century and the works of Casta paintings (Cepeda & Casillas, 2017). Now that we know the context in which discourses of Colombia are produced, the next segment will focus on presenting the different themes of representation that construct the image of Colombia in the US popular culture.

#### **2.4.1. Representation of Colombia in the US Popular Culture**

Latinamericanism is a theoretical starting point for understanding how the image of Colombia has been constructed in the US consciousness. Someone might ask about the relevance of talking about Latinamericanism in a research study about the specific representations of Colombia; the answer is that Latinamericanism discourses guide representations of every country of Latin America, Colombia included, and its forms of representation are problematic because the integration of every Latin American nation under the umbrella of sameness, despite their independent cultural differences and socio-political contexts, obliterate their national identities (Dávila, 2000).

According to Dávila (2000), the pan-ethnic Latino identity was developed as a marketing

strategy to target Latino audiences in the United States. This strategy centres on homogenising the Latino audience into specific ethnical traits related to the use of the Spanish language, a low social status, tropicalism, olive and dark skin colour and hypersexuality, especially in women (Swanson, 2010). For example, a study of the films *Romancing the Stone* (1984), *Delta Force 2: The Colombian Connection* (1990), and *Colombiana* (2011) found traits of representation that reinforce the generic aesthetics of Latin America. Although the films claim to be set in Colombia, none were filmed in Colombian territory. Additionally, there is evidence of a lack of consistency in the racial features and ethnic traits of Colombian characters. Furthermore, the films did not cast Colombian actors; instead, dark-brown skin colour Mexican and Filipino actors were used to portray Colombian characters, ignoring Colombia's racial diversity and rich multiculturalism. Finally, the only specific traits that associate the films with Colombia are the national flag and emblem (Chincangana Bayona & Barreiro Posada, 2013). The example is evidence that Latinamericanism discourses, and precisely the views of Latin America as an amorphous mass, affect stories about Colombia in the media. Now that we have discussed the problems with panethnicity as a form of representation, we will delve into the discussion of the construction of whiteness in creating Colombian identities in the media.

#### **2.4.2. Constructing the Antagonist to the 'White Hero'**

Narratives that reproduce whiteness use binary opposites that relate whiteness (or the US) with positive adjectives and attributes associated with development, rationality, strength, technological development and solid democracies. In contrast, Colombia is assigned negative traits such as uncivilised, exotic, primitive, corrupted and violent (Chincangana Bayona & Barreiro Posada, 2013).

The creation of the antagonist 'other' is inherent in constructing the white hero. White hero discourses paint the image of an American character that embodies "North American Values" such as bravery, honorability and willingness to sacrifice himself for the country's well-being; the white hero is the response to an apparent threat to the nation (Smith & Huber, 2018). Hence, films that follow the narratives of the white hero present Colombia as a nation with a weak government, where corruption and its inefficient leaders can not handle the nation's problems (Chincangana Bayona & Barreiro Posada, 2013). In this narrative, Colombian characters are presented in roles associated with criminal and primitive behaviour (Smith & Huber, 2018). This representation stigmatises the community, leading to negative perceptions and discriminating attitudes towards Colombians (Bovenkerk et al., 2003). Furthermore, the focus on violence and crime perpetuates a one-dimensional narrative, overshadowing the country's rich culture, history and intent to solve the problems with gang violence and drug trafficking.

### **2.4.3. Machism and Hypersexuality: Colombian Masculinity and Femininity**

To finalise the themes of representation of Colombia in the US media, we will talk about the creation of masculine and feminine Colombian identities. Studying masculinity and femininity from an intersectional perspective is crucial; gender identities are pivotal in shaping cultural perceptions and reinforcing stereotypes. (Liberato et al., 2019). The portrayal of Colombian men follows hypermasculine narratives that associate them with violence and drug-related activities. Colombian men are also associated with marginality accentuating a relationship between their ethnicity and deviant behaviour (Liberato et al., 2019).

These discourses follow a racial ideology that constructs Colombian and Latino male characters in juxtaposition to the white characters, who are presented as dominant and with positive attributes (Smith and Huber). In the representation of Colombian men, their individual experiences and the complexity of their social environment and emotions are often overlooked (Liberato et al., 2019). Moreover, according to Guzman and Valdivia (2004), the sexuality of Latinos is used as a form of othering by using gendered aspects of tropicalism. These aspects associate Colombian men with aesthetic stereotypes such as having a moustache, dark hair, and a Latino 'macho' lover attitude (Guzman & Valdivia, 2004), whereas women are associated with aesthetics that promote sexual availability and desire; the use of red-coloured lips, bright and seductive clothing, curvy hips and breasts, long brunette hair and a loud and extravagant attitude (Guzman & Valdivia, 2004).

Colombian women are represented as objects of desire, to the service of men, dependent on their male counterparts, in supportive roles and without a voice. Women's beauty and sexuality have been the central theme of representation in international media (Negrón-Muntaner, 2017). These representations are limited and create not only stereotypical beauty norms of what Colombian women look like but also limit their behaviour and do not offer a comprehensive perspective of the roles that women have in Colombian society beyond their relationship with men, beauty and sex (Porrás Contreras, 2017)

### **2.4.4. Why are these representations problematic?**

The problem with media products about Colombia focused on violence and the drug trade is that they often lack the social context surrounding the problem of drug trafficking in Colombia. Cabañas (2014) argues that the reality of the drug trade is far more complex as it has an immense influence in diverse sectors of social life. Narratives that use these themes and move between fiction and reality turn significant social conflicts and historical events into commodified popular culture

products that glamorise violence and sell a limited view of Colombia as a nation (Cabañas, 2014).

Moreover, the association of Colombians with the drug trade has influenced the country's reputation in the global arena. According to Bovenkerk, Siegel and Zaitch (2013), this bad image results from producing short-sighted media products. Consequently, the government's efforts to change the country's negative image in the world have been focused on creating national branding campaigns like "Colombia is Passion" and "Colombia, the Only Risk is Wanting to Stay" (Sanin, 2016). These campaigns focus on enhancing the country's natural, racial, and cultural diversity, the friendliness and warmth of its people, and pretending to project a new, positive image to the world of Colombia (Muñiz Martínez, 2019). However, some scholars are sceptical about the success of these campaigns as long as large corporations in the news and the entertainment industry remain creating media products rooted in negative stereotypes about Colombia (Bovenkerk et al., 2013). As far as media conglomerates and the entertainment industry creates products based on stereotypes about Colombian reality, the country's effort to challenge the images of the nation abroad will be limited; however, local media producers now have an opportunity to challenge those narratives with the arrival of Netflix and the diversification of content, that brings a new alternative to export different perspectives of the nation in the global media landscape. Now that we have discussed the impact of media conglomerates on Colombia's image abroad, it is essential to explore how the image of Colombia is constructed within the national landscape.

## **2.5. Looking Forward: Colombia's National Identity, a National Perspective**

In this section, we will explore the origins of Colombia's national identity; followed by the strategies of nation-building in Colombia; the use of traditional media like television for national building projects; the importance of telenovelas as a medium to reinforce national values, the phenomenon of the narconovelas and its effects in Colombia's national identity; furthermore, we will finish the segment with the familiar narratives about Colombia in national TV productions.

### **2.5.1. The Origins of the Colombian Nation**

The roots of the Colombian National identity can be traced back to the 15th century. According to Serrano (2016), the colonial history of Colombia and its links with the Spanish Conquest shaped the society's national values. Moreover, religion plays a significant role in the formation of the Colombian identity; the Spanish Inquisition and its obsession with the "purity of blood" led to the definite migration of new Christians to the conquered territories in the Americas to earn acceptance from the Church by spreading Catholicism in the new world (Serrano, 2016). The

Catholic Church significantly influenced several aspects of social life, like territorial organisation, access to education, collective values and gender roles (Serrano, 2016). However, the country's territorial organisation is heavily influenced by its geography, which results in regional idiosyncrasies and regionalism. Colombia has a history of harsh regionalism; these tensions among regions are present in everyday speech in the country (Porrás Contreras, 2017).

Moreover, the cleanliness of blood defined the possibility of marriage, the definition of professions and ecclesiastical projection (Serrano, 2016). Another trait of the country that can be traced back to the XV century is the concept of whitening; during the Spanish Conquest, the low level of racial mixing and endogamic endeavours showcased more significant power dynamics and racial hierarchies that supported the creation of Colombian elites and explained the country's levels of social inequality. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (2022), Colombia has four social classes: high 3,9%, media 44%, vulnerable 24,5% and poor 27,6%. These statistics reflect an incredible level of social inequality beyond differences in income; they demonstrate immense inequality in access to education, job market prospects and life quality. The main problem with regionalism, racial hierarchies and social inequalities is that the country's national identity has been fractured (Green, 2000). The project of the nation has been driven by the elite's aspirations of "whitening Colombia". Race played a significant role in the disputes over Colombia's national identity. While the left-liberal national identity, the elites' aspiration of the nation was a "white Colombia", the left-liberal political party served as a place for those who did not fit the concept of whiteness in the nation. Mestizaje became a concept that allowed most Colombians to be part of the idea of the nation (Green, 2000).

### **2.5.2. The Project of the Colombian Modern Nation**

Martin Barbero (1993) identifies two crucial moments of media use in national building projects in Latin America. The first (from 1930 until 1950) focused on the State's strategic use of mass media to construct a sense of national identity, and the second (around 1930) was characterised by political populism and the rise of the concept of the people (Barbero, 1993). For instance, in Colombia, the radio served as a mediator between the State and the people to create a sense of belonging. One of the more significant reasons the radio was more successful in constructing the nation than the print media was the low literacy levels in Colombia (García Ramírez & Barbosa, 2016). The print media was associated with the elites, which, as we mentioned before, were the ones that had access to education and, as a result, were literate.

In Colombia, the elites led the national project to transform Colombia into a modern nation (Uribe Sánchez, 2004). The mass campaign started in the 1930s, using the radio and

cinematography to communicate with the masses. The radio was one of the most successful elements in connecting the State with rural areas, and the cinematography and television became a tool for popular education, serving the States agenda in fostering nationalism and a connection among regions (Uribe Sánchez, 2004). The combination of moving images and sound facilitated by the cinema allowed people to experience the distant realities of the nation; a sense of collective past and social order was internalised.

The use of mass media as a strategic tool for political control is evident in the history of the media in Colombia; for instance, the inauguration of television took place as part of the commemoration of the first year of the government of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1954 (Uribe Sanchez, 2004). However, the project of cultural diffusion through television and cinematography faced various changes. The arrival of a conservative government shifted to disseminating and promoting moral and religious norms. Additionally, the government, due to the projects' limited production, lack of an adequate infrastructure and budget constraints, decided to grant spaces to the commercial television company (TVC), formed by directors of Caracol and the Radio Cadena Nacional (RCN) to produce programs with commercial sponsorship. At first, the intention was to ensure the continuance of the State's cultural programming, but they soon lost most of the spaces to commercial television (Uribe Sánchez, 2004).

### **2.5.3. Telenovelas: A Place to Find the Colombian Nation**

According to Erlick (2018), television is a powerful instrument to narrate the past, and the telenovela phenomenon has been studied as a space to understand Latin America's nations' experiences. The telenovela is an instrument of cohesion in Latin America; they evoke daily life and are embedded with local stories. They are the place where Latin Americans can see themselves, their problems, contexts, challenges and identities (Erlick, 2018). Telenovelas are distinct forms of soap operas that originated in Latin America and refer to issues of class, race, violence and sexual identity; besides, they show forms of expression, social norms, family and collective relationships.

However, according to Erlick (2018), telenovelas have different personalities. For instance, Mexican telenovelas focus on romance and melodrama, whereas Colombian telenovelas are known to have stories full of comedy. According to Rincon (2009), Colombia is presented as a musical nation that laughs about its problems. However, in the last decade, Colombia's contribution to the world of telenovelas is a genre born from the stories about violence and the drug trade in Colombia, known as the narconovelas (Miller et al., 2019). In this genre, the country acknowledges the influences of the drug trade on the nation, its aesthetics, its values and the consequences overall on Colombian society (Rincon, 2009).

The main themes of representation focus on the absence of state authorities and people's hyperfocus on making money to get out of poverty no matter what, not even the consequences. The lack of opportunities and the State's inefficiency in providing financial and labour security drives people to be involved in criminality (Arias et al., 2008). Criminal activities do not happen in a vacuum; they have a socio-political context, resulting from the characters' desperation in front of their life challenges. Thus, the nation in narconovelas carries narratives that anything is valid to escape poverty (Arias et al., 2008), from corruption to involvement in the drug trade and guerrillas, to the commodification of female bodies as a form to achieve social upward mobility and escape poverty (Rincon, 2009).

Narratives about Colombia in the telenovelas locate the collective life, especially the family unit, as the nation's core (Arias et al., 2008). The stories are about the importance of Family in Colombian society; moreover, they also assign specific gender roles to men and women within the family context. Women are assigned roles as supportive and caring wives, and their roles as mothers are honoured and respected (Muñoz Rodríguez, 2016). However, women are also in positions of submissiveness, as sexual toys, objects of pleasure to the service of the men (Cabañas, 2014). A clear example of this is seen in "Sin Tetas No Hay Paraiso", which plot mainly focuses on how women modify their bodies through aesthetic surgeries to enhance their breasts to gain value by being owned by a Drug Lord and achieve social mobility (Cabañas, 2014) Power relationships are visible between men and women. Whilst the Colombian telenovela tends to tell stories from a feminine perspective, their characters are supportive or to the service of a male dominant figure (Muñoz Rodríguez, 2016). Alongside the construction of female identities, men are portrayed as dominant masculine, with a tendency to be violent and aggressive, misogynistic and hypersexual (Cabañas, 2014).

Lastly, racial hierarchies are also present in the stories about Colombia. Historically, Colombian television has portrayed discriminating images of Afro characters; they are often associated with low-social, vulnerable, as maids, janitors or criminals; they are often portrayed in supportive roles or assigned stereotypical characteristics associated with intellectual deficiency, clumsiness and laziness (Nieves, 2018). For Nieves (2018), the national discourses of mestizaje are only a way to place Afro identities in places of marginality and inferiority.

In conclusion, studying Colombian telenovelas is a powerful reflection on the country's complex political and social realities providing a platform for critical self-reflection and societal discourses about the Colombian nation (Rincon, 2009). The phenomenon of the narconovelas showcases an intent of confrontation with Colombia's historical complexities and the reality of the

effects of the Drug trade in Colombia's society. In the quest for Colombia's national identity, the media, particularly the telenovelas, have become a powerful vehicle of storytelling and collective introspection.



## Methodology

The conceptual framework provided explains the role of representation in the creation of national identity. It discussed how media had been used to create the nation, from the role of othering discourses to the diverse themes of representation of Colombia in the US media. Furthermore, we outlined the historical and social context in which Colombia's national identity is rooted to explain further the use of television to construct Colombia as a modern nation. Finally, we discussed the portrayals of Colombia in narconovelas. Now we turn our attention to the methodological approach that guided the study. This chapter provides a detailed description of the method and analysis process to answer the following research question: How do television series about Pablo Escobar, specifically Netflix's *Narcos* (2015) and *Escobar: The Drug Lord* (2012), contribute to building Colombia's national identity among international audiences?

Using a qualitative approach is helpful in providing an in-depth explanation of the construction of Colombia's national identity in entertainment products because it allows the researcher to connect observations from the data with relevant theoretical concepts. According to Babbie (2017), qualitative research "involves a continuing interplay between data collection and theory" (p. 391). Additionally, qualitative research fits the needs of this investigation because it offers us the methodological tools for studying language and its role in the construction of reality (Gray, 2003). Visual representation has become the preferred method for constructing meaning in the modern world (Hall, 1997). For instance, films and television are an example of the various ways in which the media creates images of real-life events. Films are multimodal texts; they use multiple semiotic resources, such as language, sounds, visuals, music, and gestures, to construct meaning (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

According to Machin and Mayr (2012), the best methodological approach to deconstructing the image of Colombia in the media is critical discourse analysis (CDA), "a process of analysis of the linguistic elements of a text that helps to reveal connections between language, power and ideology" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 6). However, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) argue that to study multimodal texts such as television series, we need to engage in a methodological approach that observes the construction of meaning through different layers of signification. They argue that when studying multimodal texts, we should not only focus on linguistic elements; instead, we should study how each semiotic mode (sound, visuals, music etc.) is related to others in creating meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). For instance, in the study of television programs, we aim to not only study transcripts of the scenes but also to note the visual and audio elements that

compose the scene in order to acquire a more nuanced understanding of the potential meaning of the episodes analysed (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

Furthermore, using MCDA enables us to delve beyond the mere construction of visual and linguistic narratives to identify deeper intentions and ideologically charged implications on media products (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Thus, by using MCDA, we seek to denaturalise Colombia's representation in these media products. This method helps us to uncover how film represents Colombia because it allows us to critically assess the discourses, ideologies and power relations embedded within the television series narratives.

Nonetheless, we need to consider that when analysing any text, including images, it is essential to consider the historical context in which the media pieces were created. (Machin & Mayr, 2012) For instance, in MCDA, an accurate examination of films and television series is done within their entire production context, encompassing phases of design, production, distribution and reception (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). While this research study has time and scope limitations, elements of production, distribution, and reception of the studied television products will be briefly mentioned to enhance our understanding of the larger context in which the television series have been produced.

### **3.1. Information About the Series**

After exploring the literature review about the representation of Colombia in television series, the researcher identified that even though a vast number of researchers have approached the study of this specific series, there is a gap in cross-comparative research with a focus not only on the representation of Colombia in international products but also on the country's representation in national produced media products. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) argue that the production phase is one of the most critical phases of constructing meaning in multimodal texts. Hence, cultural and national identity becomes relevant for the study of discourses about the representation of Colombia. By examining two series with entirely different sociocultural, political, and economic contexts, we can identify the unique characteristics and contextual factors that shape perceptions of Colombia in the media. Therefore, this research study analyses the series *Narcos* (2015) and *Escobar the Drug Lord* (2012).

*Narcos* (2015) is a series produced and distributed by the streaming platform Netflix, created by Chris Brancato, Carlo Bernard, and Doug Miro, that portrays the rise and fall of the empire of Pablo Escobar's cocaine business. The series has three seasons. However, only seasons one and two refer to the story of Pablo Escobar, while the third season focuses on the stories of the

Cali Cartel drug leaders. For the *Narcos* production, Netflix worked with Dynamo Productions and the series was designed for a transnational audience (Forster, 2020). *Narcos* was released in 2015 and, in October 2017, was ranked among the five best tv shows on the platform IMDb (Rufi & Marin, 2017). Today, the series has an audience score of 8.8/10, rated by approximately 447 thousand users of the IMDb platform. The series' success was due to the audience's expectation of a series that centred around the prominent figure of Pablo Escobar and was distributed to at least thirty-three countries (Arredondo Espinosa & Barrera Lopez, 2019).

*Escobar The Drug Lord* (Pablo Escobar: El Patrón del Mal, original title) is a telenovela that focuses on the life of Pablo Escobar and the effects of his cocaine empire in the Colombian nation. The series was produced and distributed by the private television network Caracol Television. The series producer is Camilo Cano, one of the five sons of Guillermo Cano, editor-in-chief of the famous Colombian newspaper *El Espectador*, who was assassinated under Escobar's orders. Another producer is Juana Uribe, the vice president of Caracol Television; her mother, Maruja Pachón, was kidnapped by Escobar's men; and she was the niece of Luis Carlos Galán, one of the biggest political opponents of Escobar, who was assassinated during a rally of his campaign for the presidency of Colombia in August of 1989 (Erlick, 2018). The series was released in 2012 and was one of the most popular productions of the television network; 11 million Colombians watched the first episode aired; close to 62.7% of the television audience at that time was watching the telenovela (Naef, 2018). It is considered one of the biggest successes in the history of Colombian television. The show's success quickly extended beyond Colombia, and the series has been distributed to at least 15 countries and dubbed into more than five languages (Erlick, 2018). Today, the series has an audience score of 8.5/10 on the IMDb platform (Appendix A).

### **3.2. Sampling method**

The television productions described above were selected because they belong to the same genre, and their storyline follows the same story: the making of the drug empire of Pablo Escobar in Colombia. Both series were chosen because of their popularity with national and international audiences and as a result of the fascination of media entertainment with stories about drug lords and drug trafficking stories (Forster, 2020). The researcher used a non-probability sampling method known as purposive sampling, which implies that the researcher's sampling decisions are based on her judgement about which specific units of analysis are more useful for the research study (Babbie, 2017). Thus, the episodes selected followed the criteria outlined here:

- a) Episodes must contain at least one depiction of an important historical event in Colombia, e.g., the murder of the presidential candidate Galán; the murder of Rodrigo Lara; bombings in Colombia; the capture of Pablo Escobar.
- b) Episodes must have at least one symbol of the nation, e.g., the national flag, the anthem, and national institutions such as government buildings or law enforcement.
- c) Episodes show social settings or cultural traditions and customs, e.g., family settings, social gatherings, and celebrations.
- d) The episode locates the viewer in a specific place in Colombia, e.g., Bogota, Cali, Medellin.
- e) The pilot episode because it is the audience's first impression of the series' storyline.
- f) The last episode because it is the story's closure that the audience has been following.

Additionally, the researcher selected scenes by focusing on the portrayal of specific historical events and situations, such as the assassination of Galán, the attack on Guillermo Cano, the war among cartels, and Escobar's assassination, among others. By doing this, the researcher aims to establish a starting point for comparing both series and identify similarities or differences in how historical events are represented from a local and an international perspective. After careful evaluation, nineteen episodes were selected. Accordingly, five episodes of the first season of *Narcos* and four from the second season; in contrast, ten episodes of *Escobar the Drug Lord* (2012) were selected. The table of the selected episodes with their respective plots and identification is presented below:

Table 3.1. List of episodes selected from *Narcos* (2015) and *Escobar the Drug Lord* (2012)

Narcos			Escobar the Drug Lord	
#	ID	Plot	ID	Plot
1	S01 E01	Chilean drug chemist 'cockroach brings his product to Colombian smuggler Pablo Escobar. DEA agent Steve Murphy joins the war on drugs in Bogota	S01 E01	Even as a child Pablo had a head for business. When he grows up, he begins working with 'El Alguacil' and is introduced to the drug trade
2	S01 E03	Murphy encounters the depths of government corruption when he and Peña try to derail Escobar's political ambitions by proving he is a narco.	S01 E04	Using the planes, he purchased, Pablo ships drugs to Miami where Graciela handles distribution. Pablo gives his brother an unforgettable gift
3	S01 E04	Despite a new extradition treaty, the US puts more money into fighting communism, creating new challenges for Murphy and Peña in the hunt for Pablo.	S01 E05	Pablo builds Hacienda Nápoles. The news of an extradition treaty between Colombia and the United States puts him on high alert.
4	S01 E05	Pablo's extreme methods put the narcos on the brink of war with Carrillo and the government. Peña tries to protect his witness, Elisa.	S01 E10	Pablo takes office. Rodrigo Lara is appointed secretary of justice and uses the opportunity to make a statement against drug trafficking.

5	S01 E08	A tragic mistake forces the government to change tactics in the fight against Pablo. Nevertheless, Pablo faces bigger threats from inside his empire.	S01 E26	The Medellín cartel assassinates the editor of El Espectador, and Marcos celebrates the news.
6	S02 E05	The Search Bloc gets a new leader. Javier loses faith in the system. Pablo brings Tata's brother Carlos down from Miami to cheer her up.	S01 E36	Pablo's family suffers the consequences of the Cali cartel's attack. Pablo's men kill Col. Pedregal and make an attempt on Maj. Aristides's life.
7	S02 E06	The newly formed Los Pepes want to destroy Pablo and his empire. Tata's brother urges her to leave and seek safety with her children.	S01 E44	Pablo tells Gonzalo that he tried to negotiate with the government, but he did not get anything, so now he plans to kill its leaders.
8	S02 E07	As the danger intensifies for the Escobar's, Pablo sends his family to another country. Gaviria weighs the opportunity to use them as leverage.	S01 E56	Pablo's reward for every dead police officer generates a wave of terror. Presidential candidate Bernardo Jaramillo meets his fate.
9	S02 E10	Javier deals with the repercussions from Judy's interview. Tata tries to convince Pablo to surrender for the sake of his children.	S01 E61	Pablo continues his war against the government, planting several bombs in Bogotá. César Gaviria takes office as the new president of Colombia.
10			S01 E74	Pablo's family is turned away from Germany and returned to Colombia. A search squadron traces a phone call that Pablo makes to his family.

Note: Information extracted from Netflix.

### 3.2.1. Data Collection

The collection process was performed after selecting the episodes that build the data set. The researcher conducted a Google search for the transcripts for the episodes selected; however, the search did not produce positive results. Thus, the researcher used a software tool to convert the Netflix subtitles into text and created her transcripts for the analysis. The transcripts were stored in an Atlas. ti folder. Another stage for data collection was done through a trial viewing of the episodes to subtract screenshots relevant to the visual analysis. The researcher created a Word document per episode with the respective screenshots. To select specific scenes for the analysis, the researcher focused on cultural symbols, depictions of social relationships, power dynamics, specific gender portrayals, references to Colombia, historical characters, events, and archive footage use. Finally, a third document was produced with a table with the transcripts divided into specific scenes for conducting Critical Discourse Analysis.

### 3.2.2. Operationalisation

In order to answer the research question proposed, we must outline the concepts necessary for a nuanced understanding of the construction of Colombia's nationality in the media. For this study, *national identity* is defined as the collective sense of belonging and shared cultural, historical, and social characteristics that unite people around the idea of a nation (Smith, 1989). To explore

the factors that constitute national identity, this research proposes the following sub-question:

- a. What cultural and historical elements of Colombia are used in the series to create a notion of Colombia's national identity?

This question is relevant for the study because it delves into the different aspects of Colombia portrayed in the television series and seeks to identify the cultural practices, social dynamics, and historical events in both series. The concepts to measure thus are cultural practices, social dynamics, and historical events.

*Cultural practices:* The researcher assesses the presence of Colombian cultural elements such as music, dance, celebrations, rites and traditions.

*Social dynamics:* The researcher analyses social interactions, class structures, gender roles, and family relationships.

*Historical events:* The researcher identifies how significant historical events and characters are depicted in the series. This element pretends to study how historical context is used as a persuasion strategy to convey a narrative.

Additionally, because the purpose of the research is to identify underlying narratives and themes in the series, a second sub-question is proposed:

- b. What discourses are embedded in the series, and how do they relate to the representation of Colombia in the international arena?

This question delves into the series's broad socio-political and ideological messages that contribute to shaping Colombia's national identity. For this question, the relevant concepts are Discourse, representation and Latinamericanism.

*Discourse:* In this research, we understand Discourse as the frameworks of knowledge that supply specific ways of talking about Colombia (Hall, 1997). The study of Discourse serves as a foundation for understanding power relations and social dynamics in television series.

*Representation:* is the process of production of meaning through the use of language (Hall, 1997). For Hall, representation is not a mere reflection of reality but an active construction of knowledge shaped by power dynamics, ideologies and discourses that organise the social world (Hall, 1997).

*Latinamericanism:* is a set of stereotypical representations of Latin America that are present in Anglo-American and European media that reinforce the ideas of the primitive and exotic South (Helmbrecht, 2016). Through Critical Discourse Analysis, the researcher can identify underlying discourses that frame a specific narrative of Colombia in tv audiences. The researcher created a conceptual framework of discourses about Colombia, which explains how specific forms

of representation are related to different discursive elements of Latinamericanism (Appendix B).

### **3.3. Method of Analysis**

To examine the discourses related to the construction of Colombia's national identity in television series, it becomes essential to grasp the significance of both language and visual components in conveying this discourse.

#### **3.3.1. Language: Critical Discourse Analysis**

This research follows a social constructivist approach that understands language as the centre of creation and interpretation of meaning; in cultural studies, "language shapes and is shaped by society" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p.4). In Critical Discourse Analysis, we are not interested in the mere use of language but in how cultural processes and power structures influence how language shapes the social world (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Critical discourse analysis is the "study of implicit and indirect meanings of a text" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p.30). When we talk about implicit meanings, we refer to the underlying beliefs embedded in the texts we study; this means looking at linguistic choices and unspoken sociocultural and political purposes. This study aims to understand how specific discourses of power, dominance and social inequality have shaped the image of Colombia in media entertainment productions. Critical Discourse Analysis in this research deconstructs the communicative strategies used to conceal discourses that dictate how Colombia has been perceived in the world of nations.

Hence, in pursuit of discovering the discourses about Colombia in the television series, this research study adopted Machin and Mayr's (2012) analytical tools for a methodological approach to linguistic analysis, which entails the identification of word connotations, overlexicalisation, suppression, structural opposition, and lexical choices.

*Word connotations:* Producers select specific words linked to frameworks of reference or discourses (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In this step, the researcher looks at the basic use of words in a text, checks for the predominance of some words, and identifies if the word has any specific negative or positive connotation. During the analysis, the researcher looked at the words used in the scene and identified negative or positive connotations to refer to a specific character or the country itself.

*Overlexicalisation:* In this step, the researcher focuses on the excessive repetition of specific words and their synonyms. Overlexicalisation is crucial for creating a sense of over-persuasion; the deliberate use of specific words and their repetition can indicate an underlying discursive agenda

(Machin & Mayr, 2012). In the analysis, I focused on words associated with Colombian characters or Colombia in general that were used as markers of difference; for instance, words that relate Colombians with the criminal world and the drug trade.

*Suppression*: Also known as lexical absence, is the deliberate suppression of a point of view (Machin & Mayr, 2012). When analysing a scene, the researcher noted the deliberate omission of positive or nuanced word connotations related to Colombia's cultural and historical traits and the suppression of the impact of Escobar's actions in Colombian society, among others.

*Structural Opposition*: It analyses the opposition of concepts within the text (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Structural opposition is a handy tool to study discourses of otherhood; to identify narratives of "us vs them" as they imply a direct opposition that can reinforce national identity sentiments. For instance, in the discourses of the construction of whiteness, binary oppositions construct the image of the other through recurring structural oppositions of "the good vs the bad". The researcher focused on using this strategy to create the Colombian "other".

*Lexical choices*: Producers use specific lexical choices to establish authority over the audience (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The researcher focused on the deliberate use of imperatives, proverbs, and colloquial and everyday language that construct the understanding of Colombia's national identity.

### **3.3.2. Visual Analysis**

When doing Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, the analysis of visual communication is as important as the study of language. An audiovisual production is, by nature, a combination of what is being said (text) and what is being shown (visual elements) and what is being heard (music and sounds). Following Machin and Mayr's (2012) toolkit to study visual elements, we introduce the concepts of iconography (denotation and connotation), attributes, settings, and salience.

First, we look at the concrete depiction of an image; *denotation* is the direct description of an image, whereas the abstract idea, the underlying meaning of an image, is its *connotation* (Machin & Mayr, 2012). For instance, in this step, I described who is depicted, genre, attire, accessories, location, what their bodies are doing, are the characters smiling, are they angry, touching each other, fighting, talking. I provided a description fully in detail of the image. Because such a detailed description of an image is necessary to understand the connotation, attention should be given to the *attributes* before describing the image's meaning. For Machin and Mayr (2012), objects can carry ideas or values; thus, looking at objects in the image is part of the image's description.

Additionally, the authors argue that we need to look at the *settings*; where is the event,



character or situation located? This description of the overall scene setting can provide a context for a more nuanced understanding of the meaning potential of the image. Furthermore, we look at the *salience*, features that stand out or invite the audience to focus on a specific character or element (Machin & Mayr, 2012). For instance, in the study of Colombian national identity, looking at potential cultural symbols associated with the nation is relevant to identify specific meanings related to Colombia itself. Finally, when all these elements are described, and we are familiar with the image, the *meaning potential* (connotation) is described.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

#### **3.4.1. Pilot Phase**

The pilot phase, or trial analysis, is a term used to refer to a small-scale version of the Analysis that enables testing the research instrument (Babbie, 2014). In this research, the trial phase functioned as a form for testing the framework of codes generated from the theory and simultaneously, to detect emerging codes from the data. During this trial phase, an initial viewing of the selected episodes was done to confirm that the episodes contained criteria signalled previously in the sampling method. Moreover, during the trial phase, the researcher took screenshots for visual Analysis keeping in mind the depiction of national elements of Colombia, such as national institutions, the flag, the national emblem, nature, social settings, and gender relations, among others. Additionally, this viewing allowed the specific selection of the relevant scenes for the Analysis.

Furthermore, from the initial viewing of the episodes, the researcher took notes of the first thoughts about the data; three of the most significant elements found were the lack of female characters, the lack of Afro characters, and an inconsistency in the accents of some characters supposed to depict Colombian citizens. Based on Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), we know that looking into the production elements of the series is relevant to draw more nuanced results; thus, the researcher looked at the casting distribution to assert a more accurate judgment about these initial thoughts. The table cast distribution was created with the help of IMDb and Google search, composed by name, role, number of episodes, nationality, gender and racial features. A pivot table with the most relevant information on the cast distribution is presented in Appendix C. Finally, a pilot analysis of the elements of CDA was conducted in the transcript of the first episode of both series; this was done with the expectation of getting to know the data and to draw the first codes that were tested in the following phases of the Analysis. Based on this trial viewing, the codes

created by the first encounter with the data were contrasted with the proposed conceptual framework and a final codebook was produced.

### **3.4.2. Analysis**

The Analysis was conducted through four phases. In the first phase, scripts and screenshots were analysed separately following Machin and Mayr's (2012) CDA and VDA frameworks. Visual Analysis was initially performed in Word, but the researcher used Atlas ti to code the most representative visual features of the scene (Appendix D). The second phase, Critical Discourse Analysis, was done in a Word document in a table explicitly created to highlight the elements of CDA (Word connotations, overlexicalisation, suppression, structural opposition and lexical choices) and to write the text's respective interpretations and meaning potential. Following the CDA interpretation and scene transcripts were coded using Atlas. ti (Appendix E). The third phase consisted of compiling the codes into more significant categories related to Colombia's national identity: Colombia's collective life, challenges and efforts, customs and traditions, national narratives, social stratification, national traits, violence and crime. Furthermore, I also compiled the interpretations into larger discourses of Latinamericanism, such as the construction of whiteness, white saviour narratives, 'Us vs Them' discourses, and women objectification. In the final phase, I focused on comparing and identifying patterns within each framework produced. However, it is important to notice that the researcher coded visual elements and text in two different Atlas ti projects; therefore, there are two codebooks produced because some items that can be relevant in the visual analysis are not present in the analysis of the text such as aesthetics, and colour, among others. An overview of the categories, frames, and codes can be found in Appendix F.

### **3.4.2. Ethical Concerns and Limitations**

The subsequent step is to think about the ethical concerns of the research (Norris, 2019). As the research was conducted using ready-made content on Netflix, Norris (2019) considers it relevant to discuss the fair use of copyrighted content. Netflix has strict copyright rules that don't specify the use of this type of content for research. The platform allows a one-time screening for educational purposes of certain curated content (Netflix, 2022). Thus, following rules of fair use, every screenshot that will be used to illustrate findings or a step of the research process is only made to achieve transparency in the research process.

Moreover, another relevant ethical concern is the data collection limitations. For instance, even though the researcher had access to the content through a Netflix account, the access to the

production scripts, which are relevant to the analysis process, was limited. Thus, the transcription process was made by using a software tool that converts the episode's subtitles into text that can be downloaded from the streaming platform directly. However, it is relevant to mention that the full transcripts do not have timestamps because of the time constraints of the study. Additional visual features and music are included manually. After this process, the transcript is ready for analysis.

### **3.4.3. Credibility and Reliability**

According to Norris (2019), the researcher's place is the last item to reflect on. For this study, in particular, the researcher's place is relevant. The investigation focuses on the representation of the Colombian nationality; the researcher is Colombian, which can present an ethical concern because of possible bias, closeness to the topic and emotional impact. However, the researcher is aware of her closeness with the reality of Colombia outside of these media representations. Yet, this knowledge can serve as a relevant critical tool for detecting cues only a Colombian person can detect, such as cultural traits, national institutions, language use, and accents. At the same time, the researcher's nationality and knowledge of the language, and more specifically knowledge of the Spanish modes of language particular to Colombia, can make the analysis more nuanced, allowing the detection of linguistic cues that might be lost because of the English translation but that are relevant to the construction of that image of the country.

Nevertheless, despite the advantages of knowing the story and being part of the culture studied, the researcher maintained a systematic research process to provide credibility and obtain reliable results. According to Machin and Mayr (2012), in qualitative research, because of its interpretative nature, the researcher must be consistent and rigorous and provide enough information to the reader so the study can be judged and transferable. Therefore, the study has outlined every step taken, providing specific examples of how the analysis was conducted and ensuring that the process is outlined as transparently as possible.

## Results and Discussion

The following chapter showcases the results obtained from examining the two series. Quotations used throughout the chapter will be identified using specific abbreviations. For instance, references to episode one of season one of *Narcos* (2015) will be marked as N, S1E1, while quotes from Pablo Escobar el Patrón del Mal (2012) will be identified as EPDM, 1. The chapter is organised into four distinct sections: The first section explores how the two tv series represent Colombia's national identity. In this section, we explore national symbols, cultural practices (such as religion and traditions), love and family dynamics that contribute to creating a cohesive image of Colombia as a nation. The second section discusses the common themes in the series; it talks about the construction of traditional gender roles, toxic masculinity and female objectification. Moreover, the third section delves into the differences in narrative and discourse between the two series. The first part touches upon the narratives of EPDM (2012). In this section, we find the construction of the series narrative: drug trafficking's societal impact, the challenges, the victims and the nation's resilience. The second theme untangles the discursive construction of Colombia in *Narcos* (2015). In this part, we talk about the use of exoticism discourses, the construction of whiteness and the Colombian nation through binary oppositions, the reinforcement of white hero narratives and US interventionism in Colombia's political affairs and the portrayal of Colombia as the antagonist 'other'.

### 4.1. Exploring Colombia's National Identity

The analysis of the two series reveals a deliberate effort to contextualise the narratives within the unique Colombian setting; this is achieved through the utilisation of national symbols, the portrayal of governmental institutions, depictions of cultural practices, religious beliefs, social life and relationships. In this section, we witness the multiple ways the audiences have a glance at Colombia's identity.

#### 4.1.1. National Symbols

Primary, one of the forms of representation involves a continuous introduction of national symbols. For instance, the presence of the Colombian flag is used as a symbolic object that consistently sets the narrative within the broader national context in which the events occur.

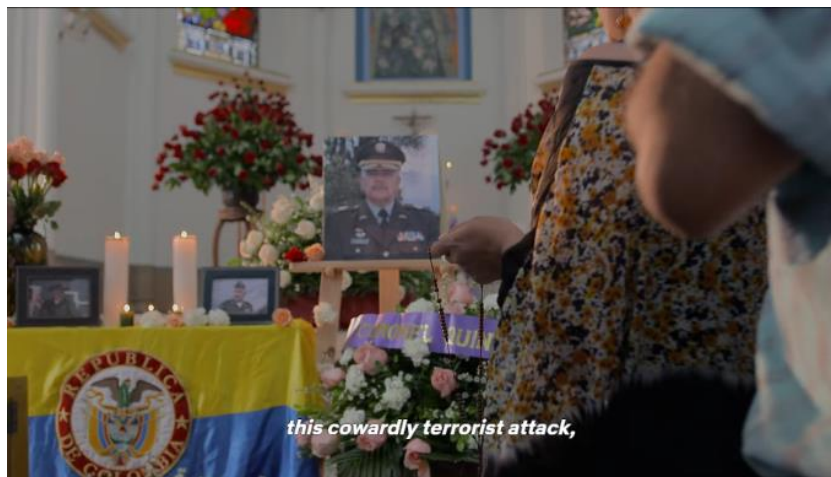


Figure 2. Screenshot taken by the author from EPDM, 44

For example, in the image presented above, we observe the funeral of a police commander who has fallen victim to the bullets of Escobar's cartel. The image above centres on the victim's figure, depicted in three separate picture frames arranged on an altar within a Catholic church. It is relevant to notice that all the pictures show this person wearing the police uniform, which promotes his involvement in law enforcement. This connotation is further emphasised by the placement of the Colombian flag, which in this scene symbolises those who have fallen for the nation due to terrorism. Placing the Colombian flag highlights the victim's death's significance to the country and the importance of honouring his sacrifice. This example illustrates the mundane reproduction of the nation, which emerges through the intersection of national symbols, institutions and religion. This relation of symbols is an example of how everyday rituals of the nation, such as funerals, can serve as reminders of the nation (Billig, 1995).

Furthermore, during the analysis, we identified a consistent approach employed by both series in introducing Colombia to the audience. They rely heavily on national symbols as the primary means of identifying Colombia on screen. Nevertheless, this representation extends beyond the simple utilisation of the national flag and encompasses the portrayal of governmental organisations and national institutions. To illustrate, in (N, S1E3), a scene unfolds between Fernando Duque and the Minister of Justice, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla. This particular scene juxtaposes two contrasting characters: Duque, a lobbyist that Pablo has bribed to secure a position within the Liberal Party, and Lara, a representation of integrity and morality renowned for his stance against political corruption. The setting takes place in Lara's office, adorned with symbols of the nation; however, one figure stands out: Simon Bolivar. Bolivar embodies the revolution and the quest for liberty from the Spanish Crown; his figure represents the birth of the Colombian nation, becoming

one of the nation's most significant and respected symbols. The presence of Bolivar's image in this scene illustrates the entanglement between drug trafficking funds in political campaigns. Additionally, the scene concludes with the phrase "and just like that... an honest man blinked"; this assertion underscores Lara's moral integrity and questions his authority figure, reinforcing the perception of inefficient leaders and corrupted institutions.

Moreover, this perception is further amplified in another scene that uses a potent national symbol: the national anthem. In (N, S1E3), we observe Pablo Escobar celebrating alongside his family and friends in light of his successful political campaign that secured him a seat in the Colombian Congress. After a political campaign that dominated the nation's streets, where Pablo showcased his power and influence, the scene in which he triumphantly sings the national anthem carries profound connotations. This scene accentuates Pablo's influence and authority and encapsulates a pivotal juncture in Colombia's history characterised by the entanglement of politicians with illicit businesses and the pinnacle of corruption. The anthem becomes a grim reflection of the nation's downfall, marking the beginning of one of the most challenging decades of Colombia's society.

#### **4.1.2. Natural Diversity**

Beyond the use of national political symbols, another significant element through which Colombia is consistently portrayed in the media is the lens of tropicalism, accentuating its natural diversity (Chincangana Bayona & Barreiro Posada, 2013). The expectation of facing representations of nature within narratives about Colombia is rooted in its geographical location and reinforced by Colombia's government branding strategies, highlighting the nation's rich natural diversity (Muñiz Martínez, 2019). Consequently, the analysis revealed that nature is an inherent symbol of the nation's identity. For instance, it was evidenced that the shared use of Colombian locations in the production shapes a typical depiction of the nation's aesthetics. However, some distinctions are relevant to point out. For example, the primary difference is a distinctive image quality, which can be attributed to disparities in production expertise and budgets within the television industry. Moreover, while the narrative setting of *Narcos* is located in diverse Colombian cities such as Bogotá, Cali and Medellín, EPDM paints an extensive canvas encompassing a diverse spectrum of Colombian local narratives, ranging from cities like Manizales to small towns such as Turbo. This inclusion of broader local settings offers depth to its portrayal of the nation by offering a glimpse into the lives and landscapes that constitute Colombia's identity.

Furthermore, the series deliberately select specific images to represent the nation, images that alone could signify this relationship with nature. However, an extra layer of signification is

added when the images are analysed together with the script. For instance, in the first episode of *Narcos* (N, S1E1), the producers aim to introduce the birth of Escobar's business in a scene where the narrator talks about the transition of Pablo's illicit activities, specifically cocaine production; he says: "in the middle of the jungle, under the canopy cover of the Colombian rainforest, he could expand his production capability indefinitely without anybody noticing it". In this text, nature takes a negative connotation, as it emphasises using nature as a cover-up for illicit activities; nature becomes a place of isolation, secrecy and crime. In Chincangana Bayona and Barreiro Posada's (2013) work, this representation is associated with exoticism discourses that position Colombia as a country where criminal activities are expected to arise because of its tangled geography. In contrast, in *EPDM*, nature is not solely associated with illicit endeavours but is intertwined with everyday life. It manifests in urban and rural streets, palm-fringed views, mountainous thoroughfares and green landscapes that live harmoniously with the inhabitants.

#### **4.1.3. Religion and cultural traditions**

Religious symbols and ceremonies play a significant role throughout the narrative. Catholic symbols, churches, and even cemeteries where funeral rites follow the Catholic tradition underscore the importance of faith in the nation. Nevertheless, in *Narcos*, the role of religion is less prominent compared to the portrayal of *EPDM*. In the Colombian series, from the beginning until the end, religious symbols are a crucial part of the narrative; this is evident in the first episode, which depicts Pablo's childhood in the Aburra Valley. In a scene, we observe a devout Catholic procession on the streets of the rural town where Pablo and his family participate. The scene showcases a cross-generational devotion to the Catholic faith, emphasising its relevance in collective life. Moreover, the series regularly highlights Catholic symbols, such as the Crucifix, the Virgin Mary and the Child of Atocha, alluded to as sources of protection and guidance.

Thus, religion weaves into Colombia's cultural fabric, intertwined with daily life and national institutions. For instance, in episode ten of *EPDM*, Pablo assumes his role in the Colombian Congress, and the ceremonial oath states: "We invoke the protection of God. Do you solemnly swear to abide by the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Colombia and to faithfully perform your duties?" This text references God as a higher moral guide for the nation, positioning divine guidance with fundamental national principles. This juxtaposition of political life and religion showcases the relevance of Catholicism in Colombia.

Moreover, another cultural tradition that can be seen represented is the Christmas Day celebration, which is portrayed as a social collective act that enhances an image of the sense of togetherness of Colombians and the relevance of the family unit. In episode four of *EPDM*, the

series depicts the celebration of Christmas in his neighbourhood, where he uses his money to buy gifts and offer a big Christmas celebration for his neighbours, who are mainly low-income citizens. In this scene, we observe Pablo gifting money and exchanging hugs and affection towards the people he encounters; his interactions symbolise his role within the vulnerable community and the respect and influence he gained with his altruistic acts. However, during this scene, the complexity of Colombia's society, specifically class differences, becomes more apparent. The narrative juxtaposes the celebration of the "poor" that dance on the street with each other with the celebration of the "new rich" (the narcos), who are in a luxurious bigger location with a large swimming pool, live music and fireworks. This representation aligns seamlessly with the concept of narcoculture as described by Rincon (2009), illustrating a culture marked by excess, exhibitionism and opulence.

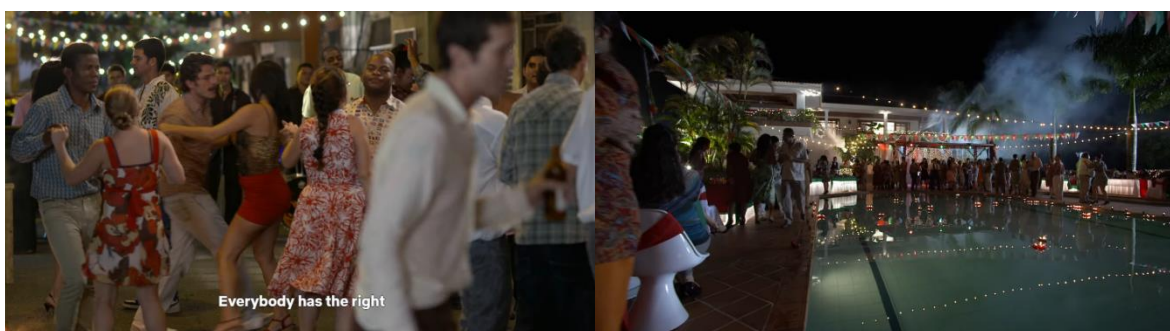


Figure 3. Screenshots taken by the author from EPDM, 4

#### 4.1.4. Love relationships and family

Love is a constant theme in EPDM; we witness Escobar's pursuit of Patricia's love in the Colombian series. In a scene in the first episode, he engages in a romantic encounter with Patricia where he says: "I could wait for you... my whole life", showcasing his commitment to having Patricia in his life. Likewise, in the first episode of *Narcos*, the narrator asserts: "Pablo loved his young bride Tata, and she loved him. He was a family man till the end". When looking at love and relationships, one can understand how the fabric of social life is constructed; moreover, in EPDM portrayal, we see an association of love relationships with romanticism and a quest for conquering Patricia's heart, whereas, in *Narcos*, it highlights his role as a family man.

In Colombia's fictional narratives, family life sits at the nation's heart (Arias et al., 2018). Family life is overly represented; almost every male character is presented in light with his romantic partner. In EPDM primarily, the series depicts, to a greater extent, family life in diverse settings; we get to see Galán's relationship with his wife and the family unit of law enforcement leaders, hitmen and drug lords, and even supportive characters. Family is a space of debate on the morals and



values of society. However, it is also a source of intense emotions that evoke protection, loyalty and even revenge: “You threaten a man's family, and you find out what he's made of” (N, S2E7). The family unit becomes an object of inducing fear and intimidation “I'm rather capable of destroying even the dog's house if someone even dares to mess with any member of my family” (EPDM, 1). When looking at these social relationships, it is relevant to notice that all relationships depicted in the series are heterosexual, sometimes reinforcing traditional gender roles.

#### **4.2. Traditional Gender Roles and Societal Disparities**

One of the most prominent themes of representation found in both series is the reinforcement of traditional gender roles alongside the construction of toxic masculinity and the sexual objectification of women. This segment will discuss these three topics by highlighting specific examples. Overall the portrayal of women in both series aligns with previous research by Guzman and Valdivia (2014), associating them with roles as wives, caregivers, mistresses, temptresses and sexual workers. However, this analysis uncovers additional roles that position women as journalists, healthcare workers, maids, reporters, and even ambassadors of the United States in the first season of *Narcos*. While including these diverse roles may suggest an attempt to challenge traditional representations of women, specific key observations are noteworthy.

Despite being placed in more varied roles, these women’s appearances primarily revolve around their interactions and relationships with male characters, as illustrated below:



*Figure 4.* Screenshot taken by the author from N, S1E8

The provided image depicts a meeting between Ambassador Noonan and DEA agents discussing the political situation and drug trafficking in Colombia. The setting of the meeting appears to be the ambassador's office, as can be evidenced in the United States emblem. Noonan is

portrayed seated, attentively listening to an off-screen individual while holding her hands while listening attentively to someone out of the frame while holding her hands. Located beside her is Javier Peña, a DEA agent responsible for Escobar's investigation. Peña, a significant character in the series, exudes confidence and authority. Despite Noonan's higher title within the institution, her body language depicts her as seemingly small and powerless, unlike Peña's authoritative presence. This power dynamic is emphasised further by Peña's proximity to the Colombian flag, symbolically linking him to the issue at hand—Colombia's drug problem.



*Figure 5. Screenshot taken by the author from N, S2E5*

In numerous instances, female representation aligns with themes found in previous research, such as Arias et al. (2008), wherein women are predominantly depicted within household settings, assuming supportive roles as caring wives and nurturing mothers. For example, the illustration presents Tata, Escobar's wife in *Narcos*, gracefully preparing an elaborate family meal while dancing to the rhythms of salsa music. While she appears content in her role, we are offered limited insight into Tata's character beyond her supportive role to her husband. Her fears and challenges remain unexplored, and her presence is largely confined to domestic settings. In contrast, Patricia, Escobar's wife in *EPDM*, exhibits a more vocal and versatile presence in scenarios extending beyond the household. However, even Patricia's interactions and conversations primarily concern her husband, reinforcing women's dependence on male characters. Notably, an encounter involving one of Escobar's hitmen and his sister reflects the intricate complexity of female characters within the series' narratives:

Patricia: Do you know who I am?

Mireya: You're a refined woman. I can see it pretty easily.

Patricia: I'm Pablo Escobar's wife.

Mireya: My brother's boss. I know him.

Patricia: Are you his mistress?

Mireya: Oh, Jesus. I'm sure you are buying Chili's lies. That is your problem.

Do you think a wealthy man like your husband would want a whore like me?

(EPDM,5)

Seeking answers about her husband's fidelity, Patricia embarks on a quest to uncover his potential mistress. The exchange with Mireya underscores a distinct power dynamic between these characters. Patricia emanates a higher social class, sophistication, and respect, while Mireya occupies a vulnerable position associated with her role as a sexual worker. This interaction accentuates marked social class differences, which persist in this conversation and depictions of common scenarios. The prominent portrayal of women underlines the societal disparity between genders. Male characters, whether part of law enforcement, government institutions, or criminal networks, share standard settings, thus emphasising their dominance.

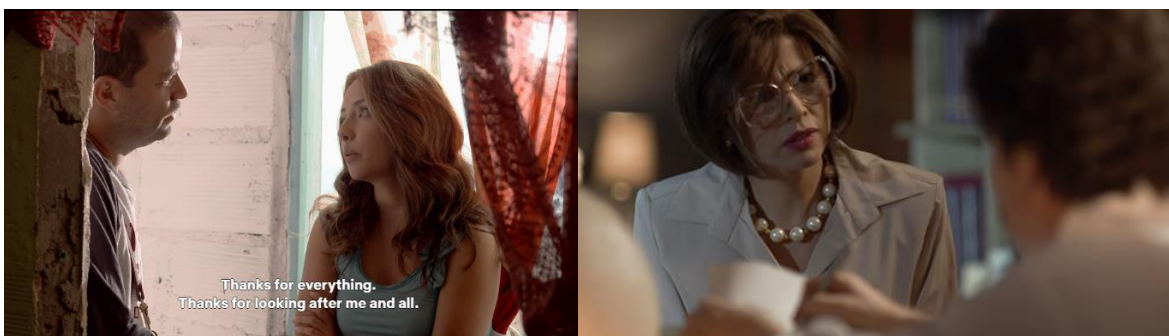


Figure 6. Screenshot taken from EPDM, 26 (left) and 10 (right)

In a notable contrast, as shown in the image (on the right), Galan's wife occupies a markedly different social context. Elegantly adorned in a suit and a substantial pearl necklace, she converses with Galan in a well-furnished, tastefully decorated home. Her sophisticated demeanour presents her as an influential and refined woman. This juxtaposition highlights the intricate web of social stratification in Colombia. While characters like Yessenia (on the left) find themselves in situations of poverty and vulnerability, others, like Galan's wife, enjoy privileged positions of influence and affluence. This visual representation encapsulates power dynamics between social classes, further underscoring the patriarchal nature of society.

As discussed earlier, social dynamics often revolve around themes of love and family relationships. In EPDM, such scenes take centre stage, showcasing characters in social contexts unrelated to drug trafficking. For instance, a softer side of Marino, one of Escobar's hitmen, is

revealed through his romantic involvement with a young woman named Yesenia. An exciting dichotomy emerges as Yessenia, residing in an incomplete, modest dwelling with inexpensive furnishings and attire, demonstrates vulnerability and dependence on Marino. This representation underscores the power dynamics between men and women, revealing the latter's reliance on male figures for social mobility (Cabañas, 2014). Conversely, Gloria Pachón, a political figure's wife, occupies a different stratum of society, symbolised by her elegance, voice, and active support in her husband's pursuit of social justice.

#### **4.2.1. Female Beauty, Objectification and Domination**

Beyond the mere representation of women in supportive roles, the series sheds light on intricate power dynamics within relationships between men and women, often manifesting an intense fixation on female beauty and their portrayal as objects of desire and possession. There are several examples of the objectification of women that depicts them as entities meant to be owned. For instance, in the first episode of EPDM, a young Pablo engages in a conversation with his friends, discussing his life aspirations: "Friend: All you do is talk about money and women. Money and women. That is all you care about. Pablo: You are right after my mother; money and women are the most important things to me" (EPDM, 1). This conversation establishes a significant connection between wealth and women; both hold a similar significance level. This link that intertwines women with financial aspirations becomes more evident in another instance where the characters remark: "Do not worry about money because you will bring a lot back to Medellín and can invite all the girls you want" (EPDM, 56). This narrative raises concerns because it hints that female attention can be obtained through access to money, which reinforces a problematic stereotypical representation of Colombian women as gold diggers. The objectification of women within the narrative is concerning as it delegates women to passive roles in which they have no agency and are seemingly controlled by the will of wealthy men. Their objectification is further present in a scene involving Poison, a drug dealer, that during a conversation over a satellite phone about a night out with his men, includes the phrase "it is gonna be raining women" (N, S1E1). This scene contributes to the portrayal of women as decorative objects and accentuates their subordinate status within society (Cabañas, 2014)



Figure 7. Screenshot taken by the author from NS1E1

Women's sexualisation is also prominent in the series' depiction of female characters. This trend is notably absent when examining characters like Connie or American women in *Narcos*, as the sexualisation seems exclusively related to Latin American women. A clear example of this can be seen in a scene in the first episode of *Narcos* where Gustavo discusses obtaining Brazilian women for their pleasure with another trafficker. Here, women are portrayed primarily for their appearance, reduced to their sexual value in the eyes of the men.

This depiction is intensified by the scene's context, set in a jungle laboratory, further emphasising their vulnerability and positioning them as objects of sexual amusement. Such representation aligns with narratives that associate Latinas with sexual availability, often found in narratives of tropicalism (Guzman & Valdivia, 2014). The overlexicalisation of their national identity as Brazilians carries strong connotations that treat these women as commodities, available for purchase, and objects for male gratification and entertainment, reinforcing stereotypes of Latino Women and contributing to depicting male characters' toxic masculinity.



Figure 8. Screenshot taken by the author from NS1E5 (left) and EPDM, 1 (right)

The scene depicted on the right depicts a consensual sexual encounter between Marina and Gustavo in which the scene focuses on her nudity and sensuality that starts passionate but quickly escalates into aggressiveness and violence. In the image, Gustavo is positioned above Marina's naked body and aggressively holds her by the neck to assert his dominance. The scene depicts a violent act in which Marina is positioned in a place of vulnerability while being controlled by Gustavo. However, aggression and intimidation towards women are not associated only with sexual acts; in the scene depicted on the right, Patricia is fighting with her brother, who comes aggressively to demand that she goes home; his controlling behaviour is further exerted in the image where we see his body leaning over Patricia asserting an authoritarian role and domination over his sister. On the other hand, Patricia succumbs to her brother's demeanour and appears small and threatened by the situation. This depiction showcases the power dynamics of Patricia's relationship with her brother, illustrating power imbalance and gender hierarchies.

#### **4.3. Underlying Discourses: Different Perspectives of the Colombian Nation**

This segment aims to discuss the narratives of each series in three distinctive segments. In the first segment, we delve into getting to know the Colombian nation through the lens of 'Escobar, the Drug Lord'. In the second segment, we explore the discursive strategies employed by 'Narcos' to construct the image of the Other – the Colombian nation. In the last segment, we explore the use of archive footage and historical events to reinforce the discursive strategies of the series.

##### **4.3.1. The collective act of remembering the nation**

One of the most prominent discourses evident in the narratives of Escobar the Drug Lord is exemplified in the opening sequence, specifically through the lyrics of the recurring opening song. The song "The Last Bullet" by Yury Buenaventura was intentionally created for use in the series. The opening sequence uses images to complement the song lyrics, highlighting Escobar's profound impact on Colombia's society. This impact is further emphasised by depicting visually his acts of terrorism that shattered the nation's social fabric. These acts unite the Colombian people under a shared sorrow and grief for the victims of Escobar's terrorism, transcending social class boundaries. The series' opening offers a swift overview of the key events and historical figures tied to the nation's history. In addition, it also underscores the importance of learning from the past to avoid repeating the tragic story that plagued Colombia in the decade of the eighties. This assertion is prominently displayed at the start of every episode on a dark screen with bold capital letters that read: "Whoever does not know his story is doomed to repeat it" The text reflects on the pivotal role of the series narrative in providing a venue for the nation to confront Escobar's story and learn

from it. Moreover, the song by Yuri Buenaventura emotionally states, “May it not be erased from your mind, in honour of our fallen ones, who were vilely taken”. The song hits the series' aspiration to serve as a source of collective remembrance and as a form of paying tribute to the victims, showcasing the nation's resilience and togetherness.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) argue that we must consider production elements and context to understand multimodal texts such as films. Notably, being aware that the series was produced by family members directly affected by Escobar’s actions enables us to grasp the producer's intentions behind the series. Escobar, the Drug Lord, extensively features depictions of Guillermo Cano, Rodrigo Lara and Luis Carlos Galán. Their portrayals, including their tragic deaths, are contextualised within a broader socio-political framework. Their families' grief and influence on the nation offer a deeper understanding of their historical significance.

Moreover, while the series underscores the roles of law enforcement institutions and challenges posed by the lack of trustworthy authorities and inefficient corrupted leaders, it notably accentuates the role of journalism, mainly through the lens of El Espectador newspaper, which investigations collaborate to uncover the layers of corruption embedded in Colombian politics and which journalists served as agents that questioned the governmental authorities in light of their institutional absence and inefficiency in managing the situation with Pablo Escobar. Furthermore, the series portrays an alternative facet of media portrayal, elucidating the impact of coverage surrounding the bombings that plagued Colombia in the 1980s. This portrayal humanises the media's role and underscores the indirect victims of this conflict.



*Figure 9. Screenshot taken by the author from EPDM Episode 61*

Escobar the Drug Lord (2012) delivers a compelling narrative of events in that situated

Colombia's struggles with Escobar's drug empire within a broader socio-political context. The series' perspective offers a nuanced view of the challenges and consequences of the war against Escobar and its inherent impact on the nation. The series becomes a platform for Colombians to witness their historical struggles and identities (Erlick, 2018); the series intends to confront Colombia's with its historical past and becomes the powerful vehicle of Colombia's side of the story in a media landscape dominated by stereotypical and limited narratives of the nation.

#### 4.3.2. Constructing the white hero alongside the antagonist, other

In the case of narcos, one of the most prominent discursive constructions aligns with previous research (Smith and Huber, 2018) in the construction of whiteness through the use of binary opposites to mark the difference between the white hero and the criminal other (Colombia). For instance, in the first episode of the series, there is an explicit contrast between Colombia's underdevelopment and the high technological capacity of United States technologies. Another example of the marking of difference is the distinction between solid and efficient authorities and the inefficiency of Colombia's government. To illustrate, when Murphy talks about the inefficiency and corruption of Colombia's prison system, where men have benefits and comfort due to the inefficient nature of Colombia's government, whereas in contrast, the United States prisons are presented as strict dark places where the identities of the criminals are confused with the shadows, where they are behind bars in an environment of discomfort from which money would not matter because the system is neither permissive nor corrupt.

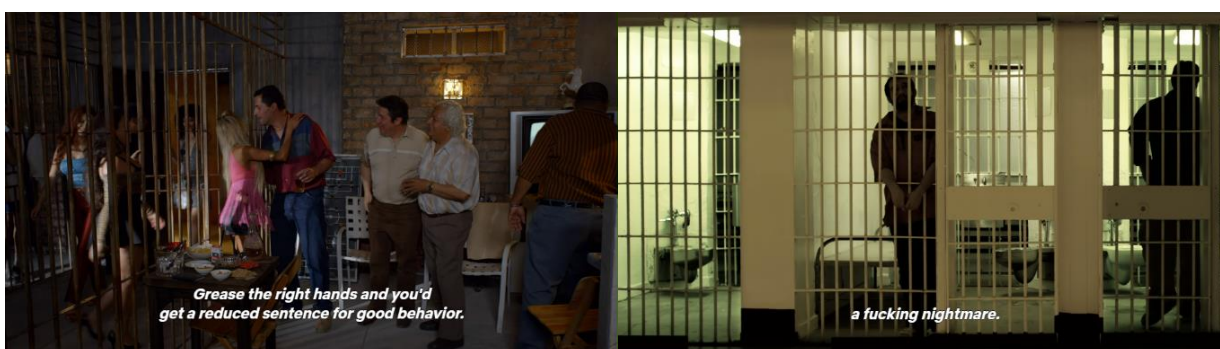


Figure 10. Screenshots taken by the author from N, S1E4

Moreover, Narcos strategically uses video archive footage to set the story to the American audience by connecting the story of Escobar with the United States historical context. Footage usage of Colombia focuses on the trail of death and destruction in the country, highlighting the country's violence which contributes to the construction of Colombia as a threat to the American nation and further reinforces North America's intervention in Colombia's political affairs. Likewise, narratives



constantly construct the narrative of the good vs the bad guys, assigning the label of bad guys to Colombian characters as part of the discursive criminalization of Colombia as a source of violence and the antagonist figure to the white hero. For instance, archival footage of Ronald Reagan's address announcing the war on drugs is incorporated. The utilisation of these archival visuals provides an initial indication of the overarching narrative the series seeks to pursue—a narrative encompassing U.S. intervention in Colombian affairs and the role of the United States in this conflict. Notably, this depiction reiterates the perspective wherein Murphy perceives this endeavour as his duty, thereby appropriating and marginalising the role of Colombian law enforcement agents; despite their inclusion in military operations and raids, Colombians characters are portrayed as supporting characters to the white hero, personified by the DEA Steven Murphy, who is in charge of narrating the story throughout the series; which showcases that the story follows his particular perspective of the events.



*Figure 11.* Screenshot taken by the author from N, S1E1

The depiction of the American hero archetype is exemplified in the character of Murphy, who serves as the central focal point of the series. Despite the series primarily revolving around Escobar's narrative, Murphy indeed occupies the principal character role. Murphy is portrayed as he embarks on a journey to Colombia alongside his wife. His demeanour exudes confidence as he maintains a resolute countenance, articulating his sense of duty and commitment to his battle. Positioned adjacent to Murphy, his wife is subtly portrayed in a secondary role, appearing to follow in his wake. Murphy's persona emanates an aura of imposing authority, juxtaposed with his wife's portrayal as a supportive presence. Furthermore, in the sequence depicting the pursuit of Escobar, Murphy is portrayed as confident and positioned at the forefront of the raid, assuming the role of

the mission leader despite the fact that a Colombian character conceived the mission itself. His prominence is underscored by the camera's focused tracking of his actions, with other characters assuming a supportive stance in their collective endeavour to apprehend Escobar. Trujillo, the African-American police officer, is similarly overshadowed by his white counterparts, a spatial arrangement that reflects the limited representation of Black characters within the narrative.

However, in order for the white hero to exist, there is a need for an antihero, for the criminal other. The series presents an ambivalence of morals in which the white hero's actions are justified as a means to achieve the greater good. For instance, in some episodes, the discursive construction of the antagonist follows strategies that dehumanise the other, justifying violence: "Hard to feel sorry for a bunch of drug dealers getting whacked, right?" (N, S2E5). This construction lacks empathy for the subjects and presents them as deserving harm because of their role as criminals. This narrative can also be found in a discussion between Murphy and his wife: Steve: Did he forget to tell you the kid was 17? Connie: He sells drugs, right? Steve: Yeah. Connie: Yeah, then fuck him (N, S1E1). In this conversation, the fact that the kid Murphy killed during a raid was underage does not seem to bother Connie because he is a criminal that sells drugs. This justification of the kid's death aligns with the dehumanisation of the antagonist characters, whereas when a white character such as Murphy engages in a vile act such as killing an underage is not questioned; instead, it is justified. This dynamic reflects higher power dynamics that assume moral superiority to the white character that presents himself as part of the "good guys that sometimes have to do bad things".

Moreover, a last example of the suppression of Colombians' humanity is reflected in this statement: The Miami coroner said Colombians were like Dixie cups. Use them once, then throw them away (N, S1E1). This phrase is covered by negative connotations that associate Colombians with disposable products, denying diminishing their value and legitimising their demise. These discourses that seek to justify the white hero's actions are problematic because they not only contribute to reinforcing the association of Colombians with the criminal world, but the suppression of their humanity and derogative references can fuel discourses of discrimination against Colombians in general. When the series is constantly addressing Colombia with phrases like "best smugglers of the world were in Colombia" (N, S1E1); "a land with a race of evil men" (N, S1E5); "a country that became a living hell some time ago" (N, S1E8); and "what is newsworthy about a few dead sicarios in the murder capital of the world?" (N, S2E5), a specific image of the nation as a morally corrupted land filled with evil and death is being spread over millions of screens constantly reinforcing a limited view of the country that problematically justifies its people

discrimination and their tragic demise (Forster, 2020).

#### 4.3.3. Archive Footage and Re-enactment of historical events

One of the most significant elements of the series production is the use of archive footage and the re-enactment of historical events because they are curated production decisions that contribute to the more extensive reinforcement of the series narratives. Both series analysed utilise archive footage and the re-enactment of events as a production strategy. In this segment, we will list some of the cases found in the analysis.

Historical events assert historical accuracy in *Narcos*, yet the series leaves behind the socio-political context in which the story is rooted. For instance, when presenting characters such as Lara and Galán, their representation is attached to conversations and encounters with other white American characters; this can reflect the producer's reliance on the DEA agent's version of the story to guide the script. Consequently, *Narcos* fails to show the importance of Galán's political figure; his impact on Colombia's society is briefly mentioned; the series mentions the impact of his death on Colombia's society, but his demise is attributed to his support for the extradition treaty and overshadowed by the figure of Cesar Gaviria.

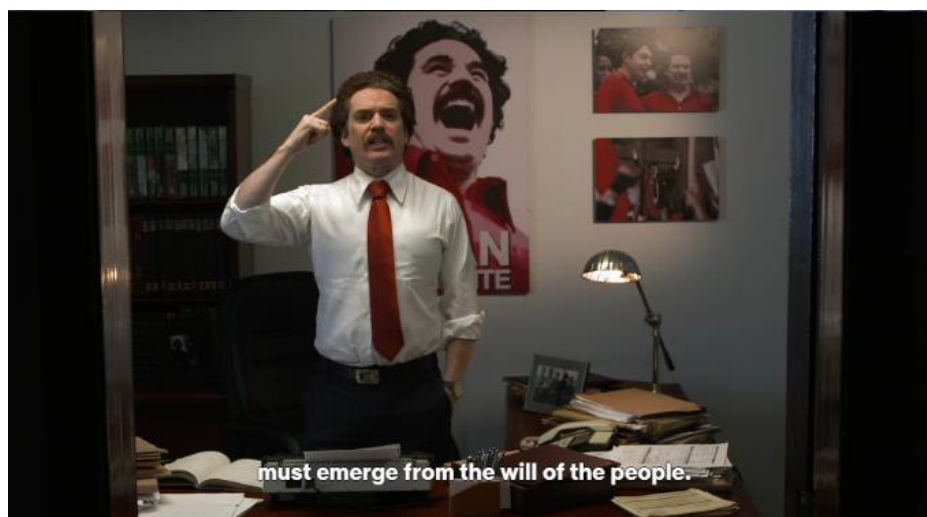


Figure 12. Screenshot taken by the author from EPDM Episode 44

In contrast, *Escobar the Drug Lord* emphasises the depiction of the broad social context in which the events take place. For instance, the victim's stories are unfolded beyond their fate as victims of the conflict. In EPDM, we are offered a more nuanced vision of Galán's story, his interest in unveiling

government corruption, his struggle to represent the people and the charismatic nature of his figure that gained the hearts of millions of followers. Nonetheless, we see Galán not only in his political quest but we witness his relationship with his family. In the Colombian series, Galán is the protagonist of many episodes before his fatal demise.

Another difference can be seen in *Narcos*'s depiction of Cesar Gaviria when he announces his pursuit as a presidential candidate to carry the flags of Liberalism after Galán's death (N, S1E5). In his acceptance speech that announces his candidacy for Colombia's presidency, he addresses the nation in English. This scene is, in particular, conflicting because it has no sense that a presidential candidate of a Spanish-speaking country would address the nation in a foreign language at such a critical historical moment for the nation. Consequently, the lines between fiction and reality become more evident when we observe Pablo Escobar and his men (who are lower-class citizens) watching the speech in English and reacting to what Gaviria is announcing. Furthermore, in this scene, a discursive construction of Colombia in *Narcos* is made evident; Gaviria's discourse states: "Colombians say, God made our land so beautiful that it was unfair to the rest of the world. So to even the score... God populated the land with a race of evil men" (N, S1E5). This association of Colombia's "race" with maliciousness is further developed through the use of binary oppositions in the systematic construction of the white hero.



*Figure 13.* Screenshot taken by the author from EPDM Episode 36

Furthermore, another difference found is in the duality of Pablo's Escobar characterisation. While in "Narcos," we witness a portrayal of Escobar as a rude, cruel and arrogant character, in EPDM, we

are presented with a multifaceted depiction of Escobar that delves into various aspects of his character, including his vulnerabilities. In both series, Escobar's main weakness is his family. However, his emotional reaction in the scene of the attack of the Monaco building against his family, in EPDM, Escobar has a visceral emotional reaction, whereas, in Narcos, he is cold-blooded and silent while he sits planning his revenge. This remarkable difference showcases that in EPDM, the producers aim to humanise Escobar by depicting his challenges and grief. In contrast, in Narcos, this contrast underscores the producer's intent in EPDM to humanise the character by exposing his challenges and grief. In contrast, Narcos perpetuates the image of Escobar as inherently primitive, a criminal devoid of emotional responses even when his family faces danger.

## Conclusion

### 5.1. Major findings

This thesis aimed to answer the research question: How do television series about Pablo Escobar, specifically Netflix's *Narcos* (2015) and *Escobar: The Drug Lord* (2012), contribute to building Colombia's national identity among international audiences? Thanks to the tools offered by Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, we could not only answer the main question but to twelve into two specific questions to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the phenomena at hand. The questions that guided the analysis were: What cultural and historical elements of Colombia are used in the series to create a notion of Colombia's national identity? And What discourses are embedded in the series, and how do they relate to the representation of Colombia in the international arena?

These subquestions served as a crucial starting point to delve into the deconstruction of Colombia's national identity in television series. We found that the country's image is positioned in the series through the continuous use of national symbols such as the flag, historical characters, the national anthem and governmental institutions, which are embedded with meaning for the nation's identity but that also work as daily reminders of the nation (Billig, 1995). Furthermore, we identified the diverse representation of Colombia's social settings, religious beliefs and collective life in which the image of the nation is being constructed. We highlight the relevance of Catholic belief presence in *Escobar the Drug Lord* narratives, an expectation with the historical link of the nation with the Catholic tradition that comes from its colonial past (Serrano, 2016); moreover, social class and inequality are deeply embedded in the narratives presenting the complexity of Colombia's social and political landscape. Furthermore, in the analysis, we identified that the larger discursive frame of Latinamericanism is present in the US depictions of the Colombian nation reflected on the discursive constructs such as tropicalism, objectification and sexualisation of women, the use of binary oppositions to assert the difference between the Colombian other and the white hero.

The study reflected in the moral ambivalence of the representation of the white hero, whose violent acts are justified and understood, whereas the dehumanizing nature of *Narcos* narratives about Colombian characters and intrinsic association to the country to horror and maliciousness makes us question the producer's intentions on perpetuating a vicious image of Colombia for American audiences. Further, Colombia is presented as a land with inefficient and incapable leaders that legitimises the US interventions in the nation's political affairs but under the excuse of Colombia's incapability to handle its conflicts. This form of representation has raised

concerns among scholars in a political arena in which the US political candidates, such as Trump, use these methods of dehumanising and criminalising Latinos to convey an anti immigrant sentiment among Americans (Forster, 2020). *Narcos* (2015) accomplishes the task by associating Colombia with criminal businesses and the land of inherently evil men.

Scholars have criticised the tradition of international narratives about Colombia and their need for historical context. However, we find the introduction of national narratives locally produced, such as *Escobar the Drug Lord* (2012), an opportunity for compelling narratives in global audiences that challenge the constant narratives of violence. Although the series storyline focuses on the story of Pablo Escobar and illicit activities, the main theme does not solely focus on representing violence and terror. Indeed, *The Drug Lord* represents the horror and suffering brought along by Escobar's illicit activities in several scenes. Nevertheless, the series offers a broader context of other social actors historically relevant to the nation's history. *The Drug Lord* offers a glance into the challenges faced by the Colombian nation emphasising the country's efforts and resilience to overcome adversity which challenges the negative stereotypes of the nation. More significantly, it reflects on the victims' role, presents their tragic demise as a narrative strategy, and introduces the audiences to their families, personalities, and societal roles.

Nevertheless, both series show audiences a harmful construction of female identities worth mentioning. The representation of women in both series is seriously problematic, the series engages in the typical stereotypical negative representation of Colombian women's attachment to their beauty and sexual availability and objectification. The commodification of female bodies is a prominent theme that constructs the social fabric of the Colombian nation. Women are not only portrayed in supportive roles with limited screen time but are assigned positions of inferiority and depend on a male companion when presented on the screen. When I first noticed the imbalance of the female representation, I looked at the cast distribution of both series. In the cast distribution table, we observe that in *Escobar the Drug Lord's* cast, only 25 per cent are women; in contrast, in *Narcos's* cast, only 21, 57 per cent are women. This gender disparity is evident not only in the roles assigned to women but also in their involvement in the storyline and reflected in the lack of their stories. Furthermore, we identified an even more problematic imbalance: the lack of representation of racial minorities such as Afro and Indigenous tribes. This lack of racial diversity in Colombia's representation is problematic because the country praises its cultural and racial diversity in its national building campaigns. Yet, in the series *The Drug Lord*, only seven per cent of the cast are afro in *Narcos*, and only four per cent are black. This data only reinforces Nieves's (2018) research about erasing black identities in narratives about Colombia. While the only characters portrayed are

positioned in supportive roles or relation to inferiority, the denial of African ancestry in narratives of Colombia is a form of systematic racism that hides the Afro-Colombian identity under the representation of Mestizaje (Nieves, 2018). Moreover, we must discuss the lack of representation of non-heterosexual relationships alongside the denial of African ancestry in constructing Colombia's identity in these two series. Love relationships are mainly heterosexual, and the only hints we see in the narratives about non-binary identities are references to homophobic slang. I believe the lack of homosexual relationships lies in the heavy depiction of Catholic devotion. Reflecting on the absence of their stories in the narratives makes us question their invisibility.

#### **5.1.1. Limitations**

One of the main limitations of this study is that no matter how comprehensive and systematic the research has done, the interpretative nature of the study makes replication a challenge. Furthermore, when analysing two series, the process is slow and time-consuming. Additionally, studying national identities is a complex task for a master's student; within the scope of this thesis, we have a small glance at the leading narratives that are found in the analysis. However, many aspects were brushed over because it is impossible to maintain the word count if I address every significant element that was found. The hardest part was gathering the results into a meaningful storyline that referred to the main themes that were found in the analysis. I felt that in the process, I could have left out some information that might be relevant to the study. However, I constantly systematically revised the text to cover as much as possible within the word count.

#### **5.1.2. Socio-theoretical Implications**

The thesis took over the hard task of comparing two different narratives of the Colombian nation using a multimodal critical discourse approach. The cross-comparison of the series offers a rich vision of how narratives are constructed differently in two diverse social settings, which is something new to this field of research. The studies found in analysing these audiovisual pieces focused on content analysis. Still, we delved into a larger discussion of power relationships and discursive frameworks that contribute to the normalisation of the associations of Colombia with the criminal world and its potential consequences within the society at large. Thus, the analysis provides a starting point for further exploration of other TV productions about Colombia with distinct narratives beyond the genre of drug traffick. For instance, it would be interesting to see the new forms of representation of the country that have been recently created by filmmakers, like the case of *Encanto*, which could offer a distinctive vision of Colombia's national identity.



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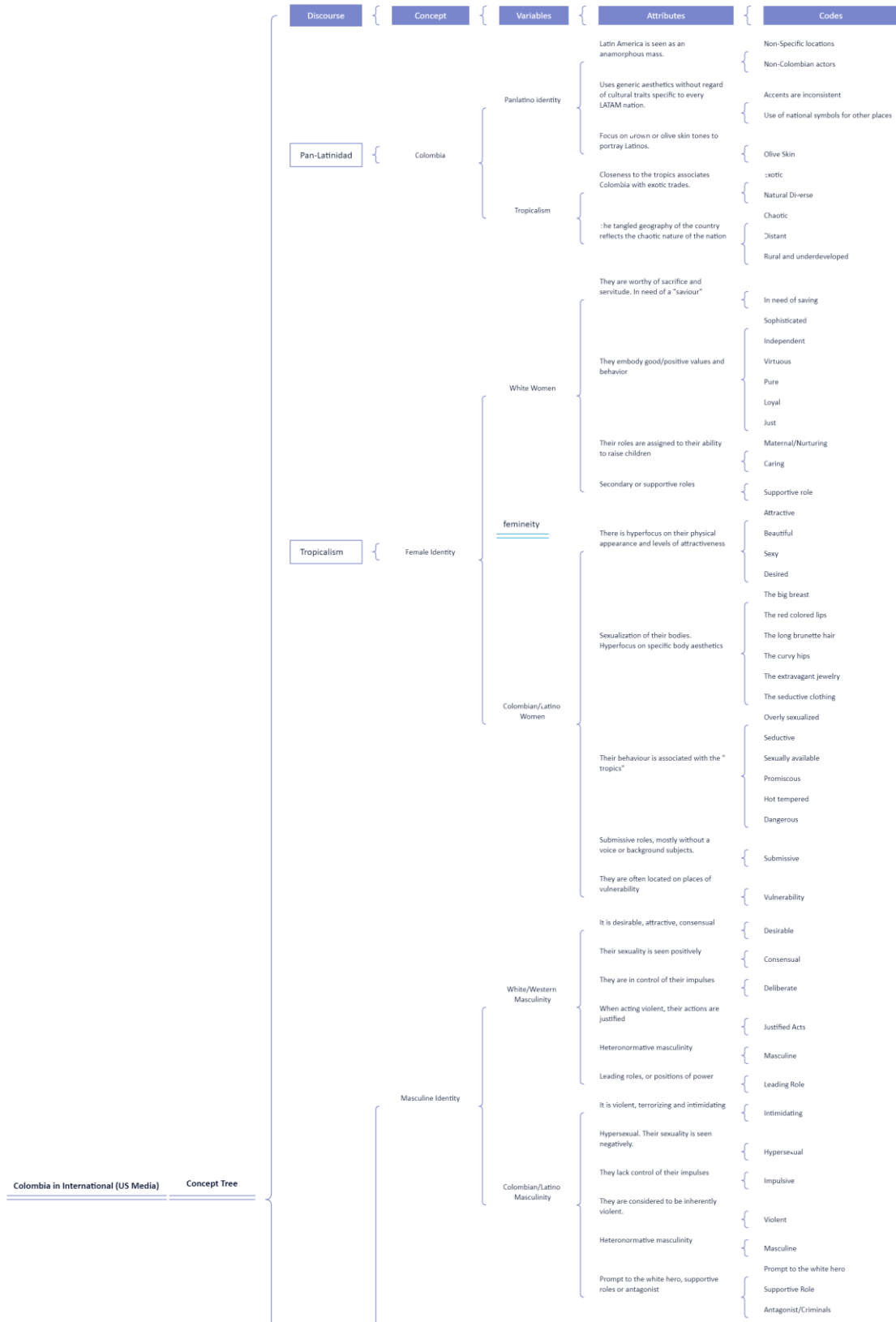
## Appendices

### Appendix A. Information about the series

Title	Narcos	Pablo Escobar el patrón del mal
<b>Release date</b>	August 28, 2015	May 28, 2012
<b>Number of seasons/ episodes</b>	3 seasons / 30 episodes	113 originally (74 adapted for international)
<b>Duration</b>	45 min – 50 min	60 min originally (45-50 adapted for Netflix)
<b>Genre</b>	Biography, crime, drama	Biography, crime, drama
<b>IMDb Popularity</b>	8,8/10	8,5/10
<b>Production Company</b>	Gaumont International Television	Caracol TV
<b>Distributor</b>	Netflix	Netflix, Caracol TV, Telemundo
<b>Director</b>	Andrés Baiz (12 episodes) Josef Kubota Wladyka (5 episodes) Fernando Coimbra (4 episodes) Gerardo Naranjo (3 episodes) Guillermo Navarro (2 episodes, 2015) José Padilha (2 episodes, 2015) Gabriel Ripstein (2 episodes, 2017)	Carlos Moreno (84 episodes) Laura Mora Ortega (83 episodes)
<b>Screenplay writer</b>	Carlo Bernard Chris Brancato Doug Miro	Camilo Cano (original idea) Juana Uribe (original idea) Juan Camilo Ferrand Alonso Salazar (novel)
<b>Executive Producer</b>	Chris Brancato Carlo Bernard Doug Miro Katie O'Connell Eric Newman José Padilha Elisa Todd Ellis	César Augusto Rodríguez Angélica Guerra Diego F. Ramírez Camilo Cano
<b>Cast</b>	Wagner Moura (Pablo Escobar) Pedro Pascal (Agente Peña) Boyd Holbrook (Agente Murphy)	Andrés Parra (Pablo Escobar) Christian Tappan (Gonzalo Gaviria) Vicky Hernández (Enelia Escobar) Cecilia Navia (Paty Escobar)
<b>Production locations</b>	Colombia United States	Colombia
<b>Synopsis</b>	The series narrates the story of the reign of Escobar and how his ambition made him control de production and distribution of cocaine in the late 1970s in Colombia. The story is narrated by the American DEA agent Steve Murphy who was part of the task force of the United States in Colombia in the War on Drugs.	The series narrates the story of the life of Pablo Escobar. It begins and ends with the scene when the Colombian Police shoot Escobar. It represents the origins since Escobar was a child and the development of his personality with a strong focus on his family life. We see an Escobar that grows into his ambition for power, making him the biggest drug lord in Colombia.

Note: Information was collected from the *IMDb* and *Wikipedia* pages of the movies.

# Appendix B. Conceptual Framework: Latinamericanism



Colombia in International (US Media) Concept Tree



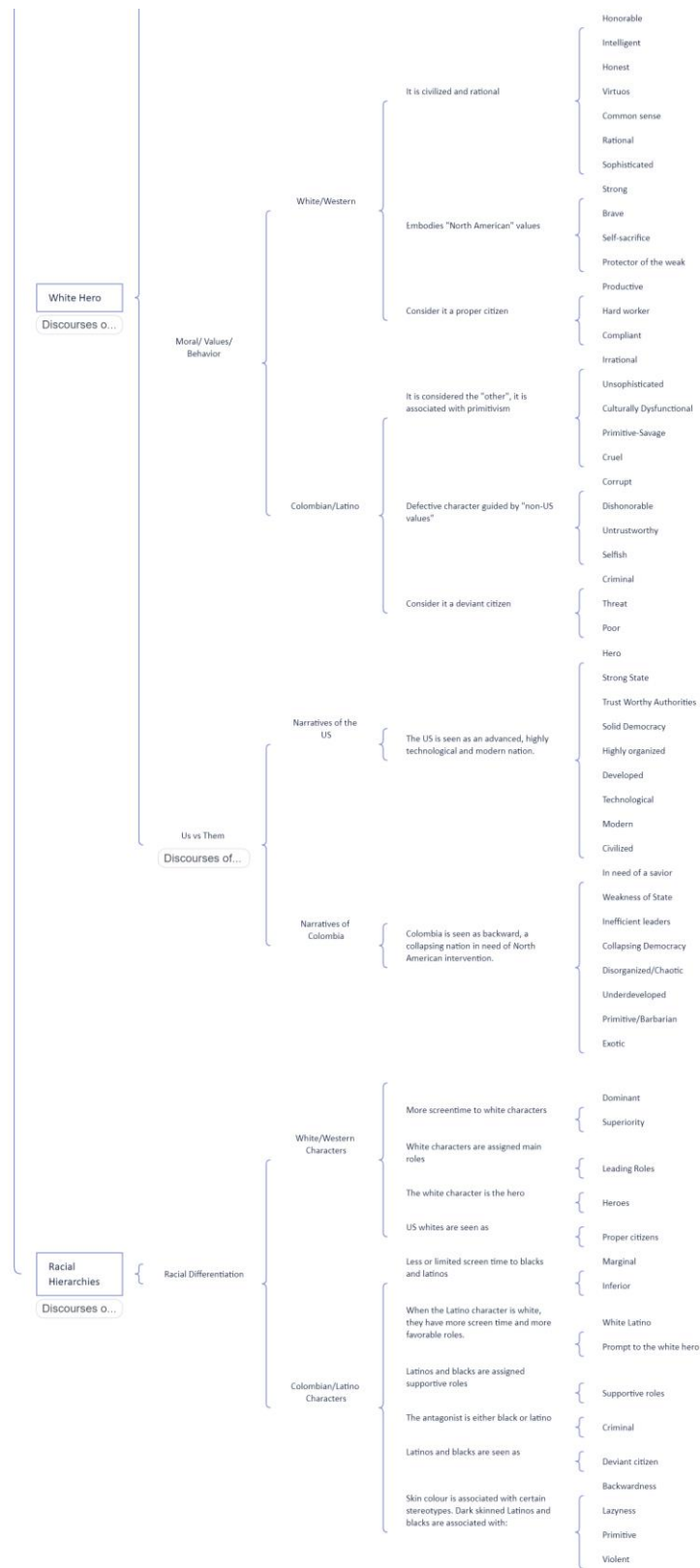


Figure 14. Discursive elements of Latinamericanism. Forms of representation of Colombia in the U.S.

## Appendix C. Cast Distribution

Pablo Escobar: El Patron del Mal			Narcos		
Main Cast	Gender Distribution	Percentage	Main Cast	Gender Distribution	Percentage
Females	25	25,00%	Females	11	21,57%
Males	75	75,00%	Males	40	78,43%
Grand Total	100	100,00%	Grand Total	51	100,00%
Entire cast	Gender Distribution	Percentage	Entire cast	Gender Distribution	Percentage
Females	57	24,26%	Females	92	21,65%
Males	178	75,74%	Males	333	78,35%
Grand Total	235	100,00%	Grand Total	425	100,00%
Race	Racial Distribution	Percentage	Race	Racial Distribution	Percentage
Afro	7	7,00%	Afro	4	7,84%
Mestizo	22	22,00%	White	30	58,82%
White	71	71,00%	White-Latino	13	25,49%
			Mestizo	4	7,84%
Nationality	Nationality Distribution	Percentage	Nationality	Nationality Distribution	Percentage
Canadian	1	1,00%	American	9	17,65%
Colombian	96	96,00%	Argentinan	1	1,96%
Colombian-British	1	1,00%	Brazilian	2	3,92%
Colombian-French	1	1,00%	British	1	1,96%
Mexican-Colombian	1	1,00%	Canadian	1	1,96%
			Chilean	3	5,88%
			Colombian	16	31,37%
			Costa Rican	1	1,96%
			Guatemalan	1	1,96%
			Irish	1	1,96%
			Mexican	8	15,69%
			New Zealander	1	1,96%
			Portuguese	1	1,96%
			Puerto Rican	1	1,96%
			Swedish	1	1,96%
			Unknown	2	3,92%
			Venezuelan	1	1,96%

Note: The Cast information was taken manually using as a source the website IMDb.

## Appendix D. Illustration Visual Analysis - Word






Serie	Screenshot		
Escobar, the Drug Lord (2012)	 <p data-bbox="646 792 1142 853"><b>Today you're going to be with a holy man and to get even you will have to confess.</b></p>		
<p><b>Denotation (Description):</b> A man lies in bed with two women. The man has dark skin and a beard, wearing only black underwear and a crucifix on his neck. He seems relaxed and comfortable. The woman on the left is blond and has curly hair; she has a golden watch and is wearing back fishnet tights. We cannot see her face, but she is placing her hand over the shoulder and arm of the man. The woman on the right has black hair and big earrings. She is also wearing fishnet tights and a red bra with black ornaments. She has a big golden ring on her index finger. She leans over the man's shoulder while she touches his chest. The three characters are lying on a big leather bed with a red cover. They are in a room, likely in a house, where there is privacy. There are objects on the table and religious symbols on the windowsill. Their clothes lay on the table. The lamp on the bedside table is turned on.</p>			
<b>Connotation (Meaning Potential)</b>			
Attributes	Settings	Saliency	Features
Undergarments , fishnet tights, a religious necklace, a wooden table with four chairs, a bed, red bed linen, a lamp, a bedside table, religious statues and a clock.	The scene occurs during the day inside a bedroom. The main characters of the image are placed on a bed. The room is likely situated in a house. The three characters seem playful and ready to have intercourse.	A crucifix and a statue of the virgin. Fishnet tights	<b>Cultural Symbols</b>
		The majority of the image centres on the three characters and in the bed.	<b>Size</b>
		Overall the picture has red tonalities that are associated with passion and love.	<b>Colour/Tone</b>
		The image focuses on the people that lay on the bed.	<b>Focus</b>
		The most salient character is the man lying on the bed. He seems the dominant figure of the group. He is in the middle of the two women who seem to be "to his service".	<b>Foregrounding</b>
		The subtitles overlap the image.	<b>Overlapping</b>
<p><b>Thoughts:</b> In this image, we can deduce that the characters anticipate sexual activity. The foregrounding of the male figure creates the notion of the main character for this image; the women seem to be serving him. Another form of power is expressed in how he spreads his legs to take over more space while the women are curled into themselves and closer to him, indicating a special interest in him. The tones of the image suggest lust and desire. The juxtaposition of the religious elements creates a notion of double morality. The subtitles give an extra layer of significance to the power dynamics of this picture. In the phrase: "Today you are going to be with a holy man, and to get even you will have to confess". The man positions himself in a higher moral position because of his religious beliefs and conditions the women's participation in sexual activity to their state of devotion. It also questions their worthiness of being able to be with him, as he considers himself a figure of authority and moral superiority. Additionally, the fact that two women are presented with fishnet tights in a scene of lust in which the dominating figure is a male conveys a notion of the objectification of women as objects of sexual pleasure to the desires of men.</p>			

Illustration Visual Analysis – Coding Atlas. ti

Narcos (2015)		
		<p>207</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colour: Yellow: Madness, illness...</li> <li>• Historical character: César Gavi...</li> <li>• Historical character: Pablo Esco...</li> <li>• Negative Attributes: Political A...</li> <li>• Object: Drugs</li> <li>• Political Instability and Violenc...</li> <li>• References to the Nation: Colo...</li> <li>• References to the Nation: Nati...</li> <li>• Wealthy/Superiority: Influential...</li> <li>• High Class-Proper Citizens</li> <li>• National Symbols</li> <li>• Negative Values and Behavior</li> </ul>
	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>There's one thing I've learned down here in Colombia,</i></p>	<p>167</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colour: Orange: Warmth, enth...</li> <li>• Family Unit: Family Life</li> <li>• Family Unit: Father Figure</li> <li>• Family Unit: Mother Figure</li> <li>• Female Behaviour: Maternal/N...</li> <li>• Female Roles: In the Household</li> <li>• References to the United Sta...</li> <li>• Social Relationship: Heteronor...</li> <li>• Female Roles/Identities</li> <li>• Positive Values and Behavior</li> <li>• The Western (White)</li> </ul>
Escobar The Drug Lord (2012)		
		<p>57</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aesthetics: Green and Natural...</li> <li>• Colombian Character: Antagon...</li> <li>• Colour: Green: Environment, i...</li> <li>• Historical character: Pablo Esco...</li> <li>• Narco (Criminal Actors): Hitme...</li> <li>• Object: Motorcycle</li> <li>• Criminal Businesses</li> <li>• Low Class-Deviant Citizens</li> <li>• Male Roles/Identities</li> <li>• Negative Values and Behavior</li> <li>• The New Rich (Narcos)</li> <li>• Underdevelopment/Exoticism</li> </ul>
	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I don't know. Because I'm still in love with your big eyes.</i></p>	<p>115</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colour: Red: Love, desire, lust...</li> <li>• Family Unit: Family Life</li> <li>• Female Actors: Loyal Wife</li> <li>• Female Behaviour: Maternal/N...</li> <li>• Historical character: Pablo Esco...</li> <li>• Scene Elements: Production El...</li> <li>• Scene Elements: Production El...</li> <li>• Social Relationship: Heteronor...</li> <li>• Female Roles/Identities</li> <li>• Positive Values and Behavior</li> </ul>

## Appendix E. Illustration of Critical Discourse Analysis

Word Connotation

Overlexication

Suppression

Structural Oppositions

Lexical Choices

### CDA Pablo Escobar: The Drug Lord (2012) - Episode 1

Scene	Scene Transcript	Word connotation	Overlexication	Suppression	Structural Opposition	Lexical Choices
1	<p><i>This phrase is repeated when every episode starts on big white capital letters on a dark screen.</i></p> <p>"Whoever doesn't know his story is doomed to repeat it".</p>	<p>The statement contains the word "doomed", which carries a negative connotation. It suggests a sense of imminent failure and catastrophic consequences.</p>			<p>A division is made between those who know their history and those who do not. The implication is that not knowing one's history has catastrophic consequences.</p>	<p>Lexical choices: In this statement, using words like "doomed" and repeat" conveys a sense of urgency of not repeating historical mistakes.</p>
2	<p><i>Last minutes alive</i></p> <p>Pablo: Never in my f***** life they're going to catch me. And I from the jungle will order them to kill you all. Because ultimately the ones losing will be them.</p> <p>Lara Bonilla: As the Minister of Justice I commit myself to unmask his dark and despicable intentions.</p> <p>Pablo: Wrong all wrong. Is that while... while the Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla remains as the minister everything will be wrong.</p> <p>(Tire squeal)</p> <p>LB: Domingo Domingo slow down!</p> <p>I don't see the escort. What's going on? (Gun shots)</p> <p><i>Assasination of Lara Bonilla</i></p> <p>Guillermo Cano: The authorities must guarantee the safety for the country's judges especially those who investigate the crimes</p>	<p>The text includes several instances in which the use of explicit and aggressive language used by Pablo Escobar, such as fuck, kill, losing and destroying, carry a negative connotation and contribute to constructing the image of a powerful and intimidating/threatening figure.</p> <p>Other words used by characters like Lara, Cano, and Galán in association with Escobar act as a dark, despicable mobster, and criminal power conveys a negative connotation related to Escobar and drug trafficking.</p> <p>Using words like "our homeland" directly associates with the adverse effects of drug trafficking on the nation's well-being.</p> <p>The word "distorts" has a negative connotation and suggests that the news agency in question is untrustworthy or might have biased.</p>		<p>In the text, those with opposing viewpoints or who dare to investigate Escobar's criminal activities are marginalised or silenced. Escobar, for instance, dismisses the Minister of Justice and the press and openly expresses his desire to eliminate those who criticise him or harm his family in any way.</p>	<p>There is evident opposition between Pablo Escobar and those who stand against him, particularly authorities and journalists investigating him and his crimes. The opposition made here highlights the struggle for power of different actors.</p>	<p>The use of profanity, threats and aggressive language is a strategic choice used by Escobar to assert dominance, intimidate and project a powerful image. On the other hand, statements made by Lara Bonilla, Cano, y Galán employ language that condemns Escobar's criminal activities and highlights the harm caused by drug trafficking in Colombian society.</p> <p>Lexical choices: The word "distorts" suggests</p>

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attributed to the  
mobster Pablo  
Escobar Gaviria.  
Pablo: Obviously the  
problem is "El  
Espectador" because  
it's the only  
newspaper that is  
bad-mouthing us.  
*At the site of the  
murder of Guillermo  
Cano*

(Gun shots) News  
reporter: We got here  
a few moments ago  
where it took place  
the attack against El  
Espectador's director.  
Pablo: Gonzalo those  
are the kind of people  
that are worthwhile  
that's why we have to  
kill them.

*At the site of Galán's  
assassination*  
Galan: To our  
homeland it came as  
it came to over  
countries of the world  
The dark and criminal  
power  
of drug trafficking.

(Gun shots, screams)  
Pablo: I'm rather  
capable of destroying  
even the dog's house  
if someone even  
dares to mess with  
any member of my  
family.

(Explosion, sirens and  
emergency  
newscasts)  
Pablo audio: A news  
agency that distorts  
the news...

At the side of  
different explosions of  
bomb:

Journalist: a blast just  
happened... ..an  
explosion or a fire. A  
truck filled with  
explosives was parked  
in front of the DAS  
building facilities  
which was totally  
destroyed along with  
the surrounding  
buildings...

Reporter: At exactly  
2:35 this afternoon a  
car bomb  
exploded...We can see

Using words like "blast,  
explosion, fire,  
destroyed, dead,  
wounded and debris"  
carries a negative  
connotation associated  
with the destructive  
nature of an event  
portrayed that involves  
material and human  
losses. The choice of the  
words conveys the  
gravity and severity of  
the event to the  
audience.

intentional  
manipulation,  
which affects  
the news  
agency's  
credibility.

many dead and wounded who urgently need ambulance services... There's a lot of debris. Right now the police is trying to establish the number of...

### CDA Pablo Escobar: The Drug Lord (2012) - Episode 10

Scene	Scene Transcript	Word connotation	Overlexication	Suppression	Structural Opposition	Lexical Choices
1	<p><i>Pablo goes to Congress</i></p> <p>Militar: May I know where are you going?  Pablo: I'm Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria, and I'm here to take office as member of the Chamber of Representatives of Colombia.  Militar: I'll let you in, but not like that.  Pablo: What do you mean?  Militar: Without a tie.  Pablo: Oh, no, but I don't...  Do you have a tie?  Man- A tie.  Pablo: Put it in here, Chili.  Chili, I need...  I need to look good.  Does it look right?  Chili: Yes, sir.  Pablo: The hair?  Chili: Excellent.  Pablo: Looks good?  Give it to me, thanks.  Ready?  Thank you very much, my friend</p>	<p>When the military personnel ask Pablo where he is going, it implies a sense of authority and control. Pablo's response of introducing himself with his full name, "Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria," carries connotations of power, influence, and recognition. The military personnel's statement, "I will let you in, but not like that," suggests a judgmental or disapproving connotation toward Pablo's appearance.</p>	<p>Focusing on the tie as an element that becomes the site of struggle can imply social class divisions and bureaucratic norms. Because Pablo comes from the "simple folk", it is implied that he would make a mistake in etiquette as simple as using a tie. This discussion creates social expectations and class norms.</p>	<p>When the military personnel states, "I will let you in, but not like that," it suppresses their judgment's specific reason or criteria. The military personnel do not explicitly mention why a tie is required or preferred.</p>	<p>There is an evident opposition here in which we see two forms of power. On one side, the army personnel try to assert power by allowing or denying Pablos's entrance to the Chamber of Representatives for not following the dress code. On the other hand, we have Pablo's power, which can quickly get a tie and solve the problem by only asking people around.</p>	<p>When Pablo asks the military personnel, "What do you mean?" He is seeking clarification about the requirement for a tie. The word "mean" indicates a desire to understand the intention behind the military personnel's statement. Pablo addresses his companion as "Chili," which may be a nickname or a term of endearment. This lexical choice adds a personal and informal touch to the conversation.</p>

### CDA Pablo Escobar: The Drug Lord (2012) - Episode 44

Scene	Scene Transcript	Word connotation	Overlexication	Suppression	Structural Opposition	Lexical Choices
4	<p><i>Galan practices a speech</i></p> <p>"The legitimacy of the Colombian authorities must emerge from the will of the people. That will be the best response to those who, through coercion, want to bend the faith</p>	<p>In Galan's speech, "through coercion" carries a negative connotation. The use of the word "coercion" implies that individuals are</p>	<p>Repeating words like "I am ready, or I have to go" indicates a sense of determination and commitment. This repetition highlights Galán's readiness and emphasises the importance of his presence or</p>	<p>There is an element of suppression in Galan's speech when he mentions "those who, through coercion, want to bend the faith of our nation." This</p>	<p>There is opposition between the legitimate Colombian authorities and those attempting to corrupt the nation. This opposition highlights a</p>	<p>Galan's wife's statement, "Do not let them take you in a truck without a roof", employs specific lexical choices to convey a sense of danger and vulnerability. The phrase</p>

<p>of our nation".</p> <p>Galan's Wife: Are you ready? Galan: I'm ready. I found time to visit my parents. They are worried too, but they agree that I have to go. Galan's Wife: How are you feeling? Galan: Good, relaxed. If everything is ready and if my safety is ensured, I don't know why I shouldn't go. Galan's Wife: Either way, we have to be careful. Don't let them take you in a truck without a roof. Stay near the bodyguards and don't let people carry you. - Please, Luis Carlos. Galan: Okay. I promise. Take care of the boys. Galan's Wife: You better take care of yourself tonight, Luis Carlos.</p>	<p>trying to manipulate or forcefully influence the faith or beliefs of the nation.</p>	<p>participation in the event, no matter the consequences.</p> <p>The constant focus on safety, like "They are worried, we have to be careful", indicates serious concerns and emphasis on Galán's safety.</p>	<p>statement suggests that specific actors are trying to manipulate or suppress the people's will, but those actors are not being identified or named.</p>	<p>conflict between the genuine authority that arises from the people's will and specific individuals' coercive actions.</p>	<p>suggests that Galan should avoid situations that could expose him to potential harm or danger, emphasising the need for caution and protection.</p>
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### CDA Narcos (2015) – Season 1 Episode 1

Scene	Scene Transcript	Word connotation	Overlexication	Suppression	Structural Opposition	Lexical Choices
9	<p>Steve's voice in off</p> <p>Pablo's coke flooded in. It didn't take long for Miami to get addicted. And I mean that. It was like the whole city was running around trying to get this shit. And with the money... came the violence. The hippies had been replaced by Colombians, and these guys didn't wear flip-flops. The Miami coroner said Colombians were like Dixie cups. Use 'em once, then throw 'em away. The Dade County morgue couldn't fit all the bodies from the drug war. They had to rent a refrigerated truck from a local company</p>	<p>The phrase "flooded in" suggests an overwhelming and uncontrollable influx of cocaine into Miami. The use of "addicted" emphasises the detrimental effects of drugs in Miami.</p> <p>The mention of violence and comparing Colombians to disposable Dixie cups conveys negative connotations, associating Colombians with disposal products that are easy to</p>	<p>The focus on "violence", "morgue", "bodies", and "corpses" reflects the intention of particular attention on the effects of the arrival of Cocaine to Miami. However, it is important to signal that the blame towards that violence is directly associated with the arrival of Colombians and Pablo's coke to the USA.</p>	<p>The scene suppresses details that can be relevant to understanding the problem of the drug trade. It focuses mainly on the violence and consequences of drugs arriving in the USA; however, it does not show underlying factors that can contribute to the problem of drug addiction. Moreover, the experiences of individuals involved in the drug trade</p>	<p>The scene presents a clear structural opposition between the "hippies" and the Colombians. This opposition highlights the contrast in the behaviour and characteristics of both groups. Presenting the American criminals as hippies emphasise characteristics like peaceful and carefree, while Colombians are presented as more violent, dangerous and disposable.</p>	<p>The comparison of Colombians to Dixie cups uses a metaphor to dehumanise and reduce their value, reinforcing negative stereotypes. The mention of the Miami coroner, refrigerated trucks, and extra corpses highlights the gravity of the situation and emphasises the high death toll resulting from the drug war.</p>



	to hold all the extra corpses. That was the first person I ever shot. A teenager not old enough to buy a six-pack.	throw away, which shows disregard for human lives.		business are also silenced.		
12	<i>Steve's voice in off</i>  My dad volunteered to fight in World War II because of Pearl Harbor. But you think he knew anybody in Hawaii? No way. He was a West Virginia farm boy, but these fuckers stepped on our soil. So he laced up his army boots and went to fight. It was his duty. Cocaine in Miami? Kilos from Colombia? This was my war. This was my duty. And I was ready to fight it. And my wife was ready to fight it with me, too. Your ticket, please. OK. We had no idea what we were in for. One year later... all that patriotic bullshit was right out the window.	The scene utilises words and phrases that carry specific connotations to evoke a sense of duty, sacrifice, and discouragement. Words like "volunteered," "fight," "stepped on our soil," "duty," "war," "patriotic bullshit," and "disillusionment" convey the speaker's commitment, the gravity of the situation, and the subsequent shift in perspective.	There is a particular focus on the word "fight" and the speaker's patriotic duty. The compromise with being a hero, the same as his father, is portrayed. The constant repetition of how they are ready to fight for their nation because it is "my war", makes it personal.	The scene suppresses specific details and perspectives that could provide a broader context or challenge the speaker's narrative.	The speaker contrasts the ideals of duty and sacrifice with the realities of the war on drugs, highlighting the disparity between expectations and his actual experience.	The mention of World War II and the speaker's father's involvement evokes a sense of historical duty and sacrifice. Terms like "patriotic bullshit" reflect the speaker's disillusionment and frustration with the prevailing narrative.

### CDA Narcos (2015) – Season 1 Episode 3

Scene	Scene Transcript	Word connotation	Overlexication	Suppression	Structural Opposition	Lexical Choices
2	<i>Bedroom- Valeria is handcuffed to a bed. She is dressed in lingerie.</i>  [speaking Spanish] Pablo: my name is everywhere. Newspapers... Magazines... Everyone is talking about The "paisa robin hood" Valeria: Pablito, I'm sorry. If i had known that... Pablo: you're going to have to pay for that, my love. Valeria: Anything you want, Pablito.	This scene uses words with connotations of power relationships with dynamics of control and manipulation. For instance, Pablo's statement that Valeria will "have to pay" for her actions implies a sense of punishment. The language used during their interaction, such as	The scene includes explicit sexual content and descriptions, which can be a form of overlexication. The focus on the physical and sexual interaction between Pablo and Valeria, including the use of handcuffs and the gun as a prop, contributes to the explicit and provocative	The elements of suppression are around Valeria's agency and consent. She is depicted as being handcuffed and submissive, implying a power imbalance between her and Pablo.	The scene portrays a clear opposition between the dominant, controlling figure of Pablo and the submissive, vulnerable position of Valeria.  This representation contributes to the sexual objectification of Colombian women.	The choice of language and dialogue, including using terms like "robin hood" and references to power (such as getting into Congress), reflects the characters' political ambition and desire for control, influence, and social status.

	<p><i>Pablo uses his gun and uses it to touch Valeria's body. They turn each other on in a sexual game while she is handcuffed to the bed.</i></p> <p>Pablo: Anything I want? Valeria: Yes, my love, whatever you want. Pablo: You sure? Valeria: uh-huh. [moans] Pablo: [whispers] Then... You're going to help me get into Congress. Valeria: Yes, Pablo. Yes. [moans, panting]</p>	<p>"anything you want" and "you are going to help me," suggests that they have a transactional and exploitative relationship.</p>	<p>nature of the scene. Additionally, the positioning of Valeria in a submissive position also contributes to the representation of power relationships between men-women.</p>			
12	<p><i>Pablo goes to Congress.</i></p> <p>[Steve voice in off] Imagine you were born in a poor family, in a poor city, in a poor country, and by the time you were 28 years old, you have so much money you can't even count it. [thunder continues] what do you do? [bells tolling in distance] - you make your dreams come true. [rain pattering] [thunder rumbles] problem is, nobody can control the dreams they have. Especially if you were pablo escobar. Especially if you grew up in colombia. There's a reason magical realism was born in colombia. It's a country where dreams and reality are conflated... Where, in their heads, people fly as high as icarus. But even magical realism has its limits. [speaking spanish]</p>	<p>The language used carries connotations related to wealth, power, and ambition. Terms like "so much money you cannot even count it," "make your dreams come true," and "fly as high as Icarus" evoke a sense of success and limitless possibilities.</p> <p>The mention of magical realism in relation to Colombia adds a sense of imagination and fantastical elements to the narrative.</p>	<p>The dialogue emphasises the poverty and the difficult upbringing that Pablo (and even Colombia's society) go through in life. They focus on these struggles to present the rise of Pablo from poverty to acquire upward social mobility to a level it seems difficult to believe.</p>	<p>The scene suppresses any critical or negative aspects of Pablo Escobar's character or actions. It focuses on his ambitions and the allure of his success without delving into the consequences or ethical implications of his actions.</p> <p>Another example of suppression is the lack of information on why it seems so unbelievable to grow up in Colombia and achieve that level of success. It does not show information about why it is so difficult or why it is special.</p>	<p>The scene opposes poverty and wealth, dreams and reality, and the idea of transcending limitations. It portrays Pablo Escobar as a figure who defies societal expectations and achieves extraordinary success, blurring the boundaries between dreams and reality.</p>	<p>Terms such as "magical realism," "dreams and reality," "flying as high as Icarus," and "make your dreams come true" contribute to a heightened, almost mythological narrative. The vocabulary emphasises using hyperbolic phrases to make a connection with the literary genre of magical realism, which is deeply connected to Colombia's popular culture.</p>

#### CDA Narcos (2015) – Season 1 Episode 4

Scene	Scene Transcript	Word connotation	Overlexication	Suppression	Structural Opposition	Lexical Choices
2	[Carrillo] Extradition doesn't mean anything unless you can catch him.	In the world, specific words have connotations	Overlexication emphasises the resources, strategies, and	The text showcases extradition as a victory, a final	There are two clear oppositions. On one side,	Terms such as "catch," "managed to stay one step

<p>[Murphy] - With our help, you will.</p> <p>[Carrillo] Oh, that's right. Gringos to the rescue.</p> <p>[Dry chuckle] [Steve] It's one fucking man against the United States of America.</p> <p>[Carrillo] One man with helicopters, aeroplanes, vehicles, planned escape routes, and a network of informants.</p> <p>[Peña] Our government will provide money, - men, weapons...</p> <p>[Carrillo] You make it sound so easy.</p> <p>But Escobar has always managed to stay one step ahead of us.</p> <p>[Murphy] Help us catch him.</p> <p>[Carrillo] I'll never be assigned to this. Jaramillo hates my guts.</p> <p>[Peña] Let me take care of that.</p> <p>[Carrillo] You think extradition's a victory.</p> <p>[Murphy] It is.</p> <p>[Carrillo] Escobar will not go lightly. He will make Colombia bleed.</p>	<p>that are linked to a sense of scepticism and sarcasm. For instance, Carrillo's remark about "Gringos to the rescue" implies a sarcastic tone, suggesting a lack of faith in the assistance of the United States; it also conveys a negative tone towards the saviour complex of the United States officials.</p> <p>The phrase "one fucking man against the United States of America" carries a negative connotation that assigns blame and portrays that single men as an enemy of the United States.</p>	<p>challenges of capturing Escobar. The phrase "helicopters, aeroplanes, vehicles, planned escape routes, and a network of informants" shows how complex is the task of catching Escobar due to his power and influence in Colombians society.</p>	<p>goal and a possible way to stop Escobar. Nonetheless, there is a suppression of the consequences that sit will have in Colombia's society. Carrillo mentions the consequences by emphasising the fact that "Escobar will make Colombia bleed", which implies the violence that could carry out with the police operations against Escobar, which victims would eventually be Colombian citizens.</p>	<p>the USA is presented as powerful, with resources and tactics that can aid Colombia in the fight against Escobar. On the other hand, we have Carrillo's disbelief and annoyance with the involvement of the DEA agents in Colombia's operations against drug traffic.</p> <p>The paternalistic tone of the DEA agents can be seen as a characteristic of white hero narratives. At the same time it conveys a sense that without the help of the USA, Colombia would not be capable of fixing the drug traffic problem themselves.</p>	<p>ahead," "make Colombia bleed," and "victory" carry specific connotations of persistence, evasion, violence, and the seriousness of the situation. The choice of these words reflect the complexity of the task of capturing Escobar.</p>
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## Appendix F. Codebook

### Codebook

#### ● Colombia: Challenges and Efforts

##### Law Enforcement and Government Response

- Colombia Laws and Regulations
- Government Surveillance
- Negotiation with Colombian Government
- Police and Military Operations
- Police Raids and Arrests
- Punishment methods: Prison
- Trustworthy Colombian Authority/Politician

#### ● Colombia: Collective Life

##### Social Settings: Family Centered

- Family Oriented
- Protective of the Family
- Social Actor: Children

##### Social Settings: Politics

- Social Life Settings: Political Campaign

##### Social Settings: Social Life

- Social Life Settings: Loyalty to Escobar
- Social Life Settings: Social Gatherings
- Social Relationship: Brotherhood
- Social Relationship: Friendly
- Social Relationship: Heteronormative (Love) Relationships
- Social Relationship: People Loyalty to Escobar

#### ● Colombia: Customs and Traditions

##### Cultural Practices: Celebrations

- Honours Military Ceremony
- Social Life Settings: Celebrations
- Social Life Settings: Drinking and Partying

##### Cultural Practices: Narco culture

- Colombian "Folk Art"
- Monetary-Driven Nature
- Moral and Ethnical Traits: Advantageous
- Moral and Ethnical Traits: Can't be Trusted
- Moral and Ethnical Traits: Cruel
- Moral and Ethnical Traits: Treacherous
- Moral and Ethnical Traits:: Culturally Dysfunctional

##### Cultural Practices: Narco culture (Visual Codes)

- Narco-Aesthetics
  - Big Celebrations
  - Extravagance
  - Money exhibitionism

##### Cultural Practices: Sports

- Social Life Settings: Football Game

##### Cultural Traditions: Rites and Religious Traditions

- Elements of Catholicism: Temples and Graveyards
- Religious Beliefs: Atocha Boy (Symbolic figure)
- Religious Beliefs: Superstition/Faith
- Social Life Settings: Funerals and Religious Ceremonies

##### Cultural Traditions: Rites and Religious Traditions (Visual Codes)

- Elements of Catholicism
  - Religious Attire

- Religious Symbols
- Temples and Graveyards
- Religious Actors
  - Atocha Boy (Symbolic figure)
  - Priest
- Traditional Clothing
  - Black (Mourning)
  - Colourful Clothing
  - Ruana (Poncho)
  - Sombrero (Hat)
- Traditions, Folklore and Celebrations
  - Folklore, Rites and Celebrations

#### **Culture and Literature**

- Magical Realism

#### ● **Colombia: National Narratives**

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##### **National Narratives: Effects on Society**

- Victims: Fear and Trauma
- Victims: Sadness and Grief
- Victims: Social Actor

##### **National Narratives: Patriotism**

- Patriotic Discourses/ Nationalism

##### **National Narratives: Remembering the Story**

- Appeal to Memory

##### **National Narratives: Resilience**

- Hopeful for the Future
- Resilient Nation

##### **National Narratives: Role of Colombian Media**

- Distrust on the media
- Media Attention

#### ● **Colombia: National Traits**

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##### **Colombia's National Identity**

- Colombian Exports
- Colombian National Symbols
- Language: Colombia (Spanish)
- Language: Parlache (Street Slang)
- Mentions Colombia

##### **Colombia's National Identity (Visual Codes)**

- Aesthetics
  - Cityscape
  - Colonial Structures
  - Food and Exportation Products
  - Green and Natural Landscapes
- Colombia-Specific Places
  - Aburrá Valley
  - Bogotá
  - Cali
  - Colombia
  - Envigado
  - Magdalena
  - Manizales
  - Medellín
  - Soacha
  - Turbo
- Diversity

- Natural Diversity
- References to the Nation
  - Colombian National Symbols
  - Mentions Colombia
  - National Institutions

#### ● Colombia: Social Inequality

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##### Colombia: Social Stratification

- Poverty and Vulnerability: Humble Lifestyle
- Poverty and Vulnerability: Poor and Vulnerable
- Poverty and Vulnerability: Powerless Person
- Poverty and Vulnerability: Rural Setting
- Social Inequality
- Wealth/Superiority: Elegant Clothing
- Wealth/Superiority: Influential Person
- Wealth/Superiority: Luxurious Lifestyle
- Wealth/Superiority: Rich and Powerful

##### Colombia: Social Stratification (Visual Codes)

- High Class Aesthetics
  - Clean Spaces
  - Educated and Formal
  - Elegant Clothing
- High Skilled: Occupations
  - Journalists
  - Politicians
- Low Class Aesthetics
  - Dirty Spaces
  - Relaxed Clothing
  - Unrefined
- Low Skilled Occupations
  - Manual Labour
- Narco (Criminal Actors)
  - Dealers
  - Drug Trafficker
  - Hitmen (Sicarios)
- Poverty and Vulnerability
  - Rural Setting
- Wealth/Superiority
  - Big Houses/Haciendas
  - Influential Person
  - Luxurious Lifestyle
  - Rich and Powerful
  - Urban Setting

#### ● Colombia: Violence and Crime

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##### Criminal Business

- Drug Trafficking operations: Cocaine Distribution
- Drug Trafficking operations: Cocaine Production
- Drug Trafficking operations: Criminal Businesses and Investments
- Drug Trafficking operations: Money Laundering
- Drug Trafficking Operations: Smuggling
- Violent Actions: Bombings
- Violent Actions: Kidnapping
- Violent Actions: Murder
- Violent Actions: Political Assassinations

##### Criminal Business (Visual Codes)

- Drug Trafficking operations
  - Cocaine Distribution
  - Cocaine Production
  - Criminal Businesses and Investments
  - Money Laundering
- Violent Actions
  - Bombings
  - Disputes for Territory
  - Kidnapping
  - Murder
  - Political Assassinations

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● **Latinamericanism: Construction of whiteness**

**Reference to the West**

- Reference to Western Nations: Germany
- Reference to Western Nations: The United States
- References to the U.S. Government
- References to the United States: Language: English

**U.S. Superiority (White Saviour)**

- U.S : Collaboration and Support
- U.S : Intervention in Colombian affairs
- U.S : Tensions between U.S. and Colombian Agencies
- U.S. Extradition Treaty

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● **Latinamericanism: Us Vs Them**

**Colombia's Inferiority**

- Narratives of Colombia: A Violent Place
- Narratives of Colombia: Dehumanize Criminals
- Narratives of Colombia: Underdeveloped/Exotic
- Narratives of the US: Solid Democracy/Strong State
- Narratives of the US: Technological
- Narratives of the US: Trust Worthy Authorities

**Consequences in U.S. society**

- Effects in the U.S: Drug Addiction

**Government Inefficiency and Corruption**

- Challenges and Limitations
- Collapsing Democracy
- Corrupted Politician/Authority
- Critical of the Authorities
- Disorganized/Chaotic
- Distrust on Government and Institutions
- Ineffective Tactics/Leaders
- Insecurity/ Fearful for Safety
- Weak State/ State Indifference

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● **Latinamericanism: White Hero**

**Latinamericanism: Us Vs Them**

- Good Guys Vs Bad Guys

**Male Behaviour/Attributes (Good Guys)**

- Colombian/Latino Men: Passionate/Romantic
- Male Actors: DEA agent
- White/Western Character: Brave
- White/Western Character: Honest
- White/Western Character: Proper Citizen
- White/Western Character: Rational
- White/Western Character: Savior/Hero
- White/Western Men: Attractive

- White/Western Men: Charismatic
- White/Western Men: Good guy
- White/Western Men: Justified Acts
- White/Western Men: Leading Role
- White/Western Men: Self Sacrificing
- White/Western Men: Shows Emotions

#### ● **Latinamericanism: White Hero (Antagonist)**

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##### **Male Behaviour/Attributes (Bad Guys)**

- Colombian/Latino Men: Bad guy
- Colombian/Latino Men: Hypersexual
- Colombian/Latino Men: Toxic Masculinity
- Control Tactics: Bribery
- Control Tactics: Money Gifting (Altruism)
- Control Tactics: Threatening/Intimidation
- Control Tactics: Violent
- Male Behaviours: Proud
- Male Behaviours: Superiority Complex
- Negative Attributes: Asshole
- Negative Attributes: Political Ambition
- Negative Behaviour: Anger
- Negative Behaviour: Controlling
- Negative Behaviour: Homophobic
- Negative Behaviour: Revenge

##### **Male Roles (Bad Guys)**

- Colombian Character: Antagonist/Criminals
- Criminal Actor: Communist/Guerrilla
- Criminal Actor: Drug Dealer
- Criminal Actor: Hitmen (Sicarios)

#### ● **Objectification and Sexualization of Women**

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##### **Objectification of women**

- Female Behaviour: Seductive
- Female Objectification: Female Beauty
- Female Objectification: Sexualization of women
- Female Objectification: Women as Objects
- Female Objectification: Women Dominated

#### ● **Production Elements**

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##### **Objectification of women (Visual Codes)**

- Scene Elements
  - Production Element: Female Nudity
  - Production Element: Sex scene

##### **Colour (Visual Codes)**

- Colour
  - Green: Environment, immaturity, corruption, ominous, threatening, darkness, envy
  - Orange: Warmth, enthusiasm, friendliness, happiness, vibrance
  - Purple: Fantasy, ethereal, erotic, royalty, mystical, power
  - Red: Love, desire, lust, violence, aggression, power
  - Yellow: Madness, illness, insecurity, obsessive, wisdom, betrayal

##### **Musicalization (Audio Visual Codes)**

- Music
  - Band
  - Latin soft guitar
  - Mariachi
  - Misterious
  - Salsa



- Slow guitar
- Slow rhythmic music

#### **Attributes/Objects (Visual Codes)**

- Object
  - Airplane
  - Animals
  - Billboard
  - Bridge
  - Broken satellite phone
  - Building
  - Containers
  - Drugs
  - Fireworks
  - Flowers
  - Military car
  - Money
  - Motorcycle
  - Red Elements (Liberal Party)
  - Small Boat
  - Swimming pool
  - Torches
  - Typewriter
  - Weapons

#### **Racial Features (Cast) (Visual Codes)**

- Race
  - Afroamerican character
  - Afrocolombian character
  - Indigenous
  - Mix-Raced Latino (Mestizo)
  - White american
  - White latino

#### **Sound Effects (Audio Visual Codes)**

- Sounds
  - Baby crying
  - Protestors
  - Rifles shooting
  - Street

#### **Media Use (Visual Codes)**

- Media
  - Advertisements (Posters)
  - Magazine
  - Newspaper
  - Radio
  - Television

#### **Historical Context (Archive) (Visual Codes)**

- Archive footage: Civil Unrest
- Archive footage: Colombian National symbols
- Archive footage: Escobar
- Archive footage: Escobar's Capture
- Archive footage: Galan Assassination
- Archive footage: Galán's Campaign
- Archive footage: Gaviria Speech
- Archive footage: Nixon
- Archive footage: The War on Drugs

- Archive footage: Violence and Destruction

#### **Historical Reference (Visual Codes)**

- Historical character: César Gaviria (Colombian President)
- Historical character: Guillermo Cano (Director El Espectador)
- Historical character: Javier Peña (DEA agent)
- Historical character: Luis Carlos Galán Sarmiento (Presidential Candidate)
- Historical character: Pablo Escobar (Drug Trafficker)
- Historical character: Rodrigo Lara Bonilla
- Historical character: Steve Murphy (DEA agent)
- Historical Context: Galán's Campaign
- Historical Context: War between Cartels
- Historical Event: Assassination Galán
- Historical Event: Assassination Guillermo Cano
- Historical Event: Assassination Lara Bonilla
- Historical Event: Assassination Pablo Escobar

#### **Historical Context (Visual Codes)**

- Timeline
  - 1950-1960
  - 1970-1980
  - 1980-1990
  - 1990+

#### **● Screen Time and Roles (Men)**

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##### **Power Dynamics: Gender Roles (Men)**

- Male Actors: Bodyguards
- Male Actors: Journalist/Editor
- Male Actors: Lawyers
- Male Actors: Police/Military
- Male Actors: Politician

##### **Power Dynamics: Supportive Roles (Men)**

- Colombian/Latino Men: Supportive Role

#### **● Screen Time and Roles (Women)**

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##### **Power Dynamics: Gender Roles (Women)**

- Female Actors: Ambassador
- Female Actors: Boss (Leader)
- Female Actors: Health Worker
- Female Actors: Journalist
- Female Actors: Mistresses
- Female Actors: Mother Figure
- Female Actors: Pregnant Women
- Female Actors: Sex Workers
- Female Behaviour: Authoritarian towards children
- Female Behaviour: Loyal Wife
- Female Behaviour: Submissive
- White/Western Women: Independent

##### **Power Dynamics: Supportive Roles (Women)**

- Female Roles: Supportive Roles

## Appendix G. Illustration Visual Comparison of specific scenes and events

	Narcos (2015)	Escobar The Drug Lord (2012)
Theme: Sexualization and objectification of women		
<b>Objectification of Women</b>		
Women submissiveness	<p>Women as objects of pleasure Nudity</p> <p>Overvalued female bodies Dominant male</p> <p>But his expensive lifestyle also made him perfect narco material.</p>	<p>Women as objects of pleasure Dominating figure of men "to be served"</p> <p>Dominant female bodies</p> <p>Today you're going to be with a holy man and to get even you will have to confess.</p>
	<p>Overvalued female bodies Dominant male</p>	<p>Dominant male</p>
<b>Abuse and Gender Violence</b>		
Women submissiveness - Sexualization	<p>Diminution and violence</p> <p>are very evil for such a young girl.</p>	<p>Sexual encounters with young women</p>
	<p>Violence and intimidation</p> <p>I didn't know. I didn't know, I swear. Limón lied to me.</p>	<p>Aggression and Dominance</p> <p>Submissive and Fearful</p> <p>- Get inside the house, now! - Hey!</p>

Narcos (2015)

Escobar The Drug Lord (2012)

Theme: Politics and Symbols of the nation



Archive Footage: Galán in Soacha



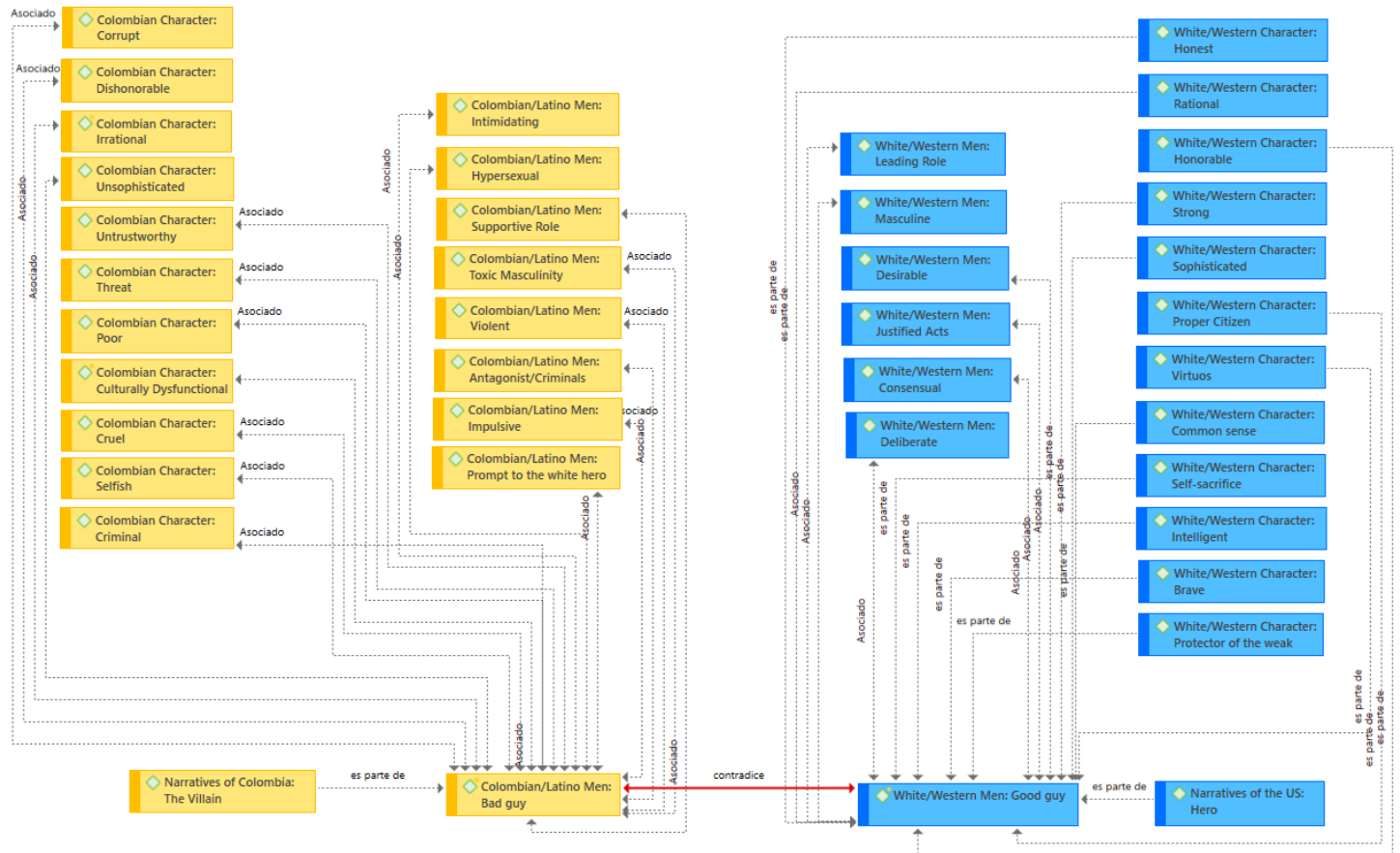
Archive Footage/Re-enactment: Galán Assassination



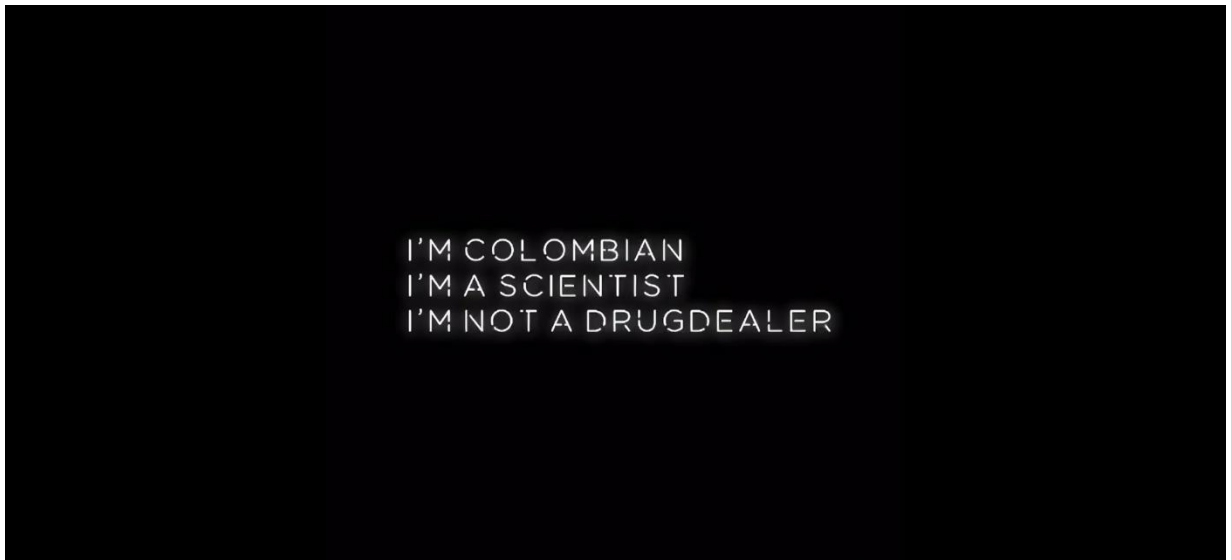
Archive Footage/Re-enactment: Gaviria's Speech



## Appendix H. Illustration: Construction of Masculinity in White Hero Discourses



## Appendix I. Artistical proposal to fight the Colombian stereotype by Andres Ribón



Note: The researcher asked the artist's permission to share his art in this thesis.