



MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Navigating Liminal Borderlands: Citizenship, Symbolic Loss, and
Affective Ties within the Colombian Diaspora in Austria.

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angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2026

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 589

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Internationale Entwicklung

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Dr. Patricia Zuckerhut Privatdoz.

Abstract

Diese Forschungsarbeit untersucht, wie Einbürgerungsprozesse in Österreich — insbesondere die gesetzliche Verpflichtung zum Verzicht auf die kolumbianische Staatsbürgerschaft — die Erfahrungen von Staatsbürgerschaft, Nationalismus, Zugehörigkeit, Identität, Loyalität und politischer Handlungsfähigkeit kolumbianischer Migrant:innen in Wien und Umgebung prägen. Auf der Grundlage von semistrukturierten Interviews und der qualitativen Analyse der Erzählungen der Teilnehmer:innen untersucht die Studie, wie diese Subjekte ihre Position innerhalb eines transnationalen sozialen Feldes erleben, in dem Staatsbürgerschaft gleichzeitig als rechtliche Ressource, als Form von symbolischem Kapital und als emotionaler Marker fungiert.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die österreichische Staatsbürgerschaft weitgehend als Weg zu Sicherheit, Stabilität und erweiterten Möglichkeiten wahrgenommen wird, in einem Kontext, in dem ein europäischer Pass im globalen Mobilitätsregime einen hohen Stellenwert besitzt. Dieser breitere Zugang zu Rechten ist jedoch in der Regel mit dem Verlust der kolumbianischen Staatsangehörigkeit verbunden, was zum faktischen Entzug politischer Rechte und zu einer symbolischen Distanzierung vom Herkunftsland führt. Der Abbruch der rechtlichen Bindung zu Kolumbien erzeugt ambivalente Emotionen, die von Erleichterung und Dankbarkeit bis hin zu identitätsbezogener Trauer, Nostalgie und einem Gefühl des politischen Verstummens reichen. Diese Spannungen können in den Erzählungen von Migrantinnen unterschiedlich ausfallen oder eine besondere Gewichtung erfahren, da deren Biografien durch affektive Beziehungen, Sorgeverantwortung, Klassenposition und Rechtsstatus geprägt sind, was die Notwendigkeit eines intersektionalen Ansatzes unterstreicht.

Die Chicana Border Theory hilft dabei, Staatsbürgerschaft als liminale und identitätsstiftende Erfahrung zu konzeptualisieren, während Bourdieus kritische Soziologie ihren Charakter als soziales und symbolisches Kapital hervorhebt, das in globale Hierarchien eingebettet ist. Insgesamt zeigen die Ergebnisse, dass restriktive Staatsangehörigkeitsregime nicht nur den formalen Zugang zu Rechten, sondern auch das emotionales Erleben, die transnationalen Bindungen und die Handlungsmöglichkeiten von Migrant:innen prägen. Diese Studie liefert empirische Evidenz für ein weitgehend unerforschtes Feld — die kolumbianische Diaspora in Österreich — und bereichert internationale Debatten über Staatsbürgerschaft, Gender und Migration aus der Perspektive gelebter Erfahrung, insbesondere in Zeiten erstarkender Anti-Migrationsbewegungen im globalen Norden.

Keywords: Staatsbürgerschaft; Einbürgerung; Kolumbien; Österreich; Gender; Intersektionalität; Migration; Bourdieu; Chicana-Theorie; Diaspora

1. Introduction

1.1 Migration: Historical Context, Causes, and Global Transformations

Migration is less a modern crisis than a prehistoric constant; a survival strategy that has defined our species long before the invention of borders. Since the beginning of humanity, human mobility has constituted a fundamental strategy for adaptation, survival, the pursuit of better living conditions, or even driven by the impulse to explore. Human displacements have responded to factors such as access to resources, security, trade, political changes, and processes of territorial expansion. However, in contemporary societies, the migratory phenomenon has gained unprecedented visibility and complexity, as it is largely associated with the acceleration of globalization, technological advancement, and hyperconnectivity—that is, the condition of being permanently connected to information networks through multiple devices. But it is not also linked to the information connectivity, but also the geographical and material connections. For example, due to the access to different transportation methods or routes, where even the most remote corners of the globe are connected somehow, with the rest of the world. These dynamics have not only increased the magnitude of migratory flows but have also qualitatively transformed the experience of migrating. In contemporary times, international travel, communications, and the maintenance of transnational ties have become more accessible than ever before, owing to advancements in transportation and information technologies. This accessibility enables migrants to sustain multidimensional relationships with their countries of origin while simultaneously pursuing integration into host societies (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994, pp. 3–48; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, pp. 1002–1027; Portes, 2007, pp. 78–80). The substantial number of international migrants worldwide—estimated at 304 million as of mid-2024 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA],

2025)—combined with their enhanced capacity to remain connected to their places of origin, renders migration a far more complex phenomenon. Rather than posing a barrier, these sustained transnational linkages can enrich the cultural capital of destination countries by fostering hybrid societies and greater sociocultural diversity (Levitt, 2001, pp. 54–68, 184–190; Vertovec, 2009, pp. 1–15, 82–85; see also Portes et al., 2002, pp. 278–296, on the mutually reinforcing relationship between transnational practices and successful integration in many contexts).

It is within this tension between global mobility and legal restrictions that my central research question emerge: What emotional processes do Colombian immigrants experience when applying for Austrian citizenship while they are required to renounce their Colombian nationality? This question has a particular relevance in contexts where citizenship policies demand the renunciation of the nationality of origin, generating tensions between legal belonging, affective identity, and transnational ties, all of them in a world that ease the interconnectivity. Even more so when migration is a widely extended global process. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that the global migrant population ten years ago was approximately 244 million people, representing around 3.3 per cent of the world population, compared to 153 million recorded in 1990 (2.9 per cent) (International Organization for Migration, 2015; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015). These figures evidence not only a quantitative increase in the phenomenon but also its consolidation as a structural component of contemporary societies. It is not merely an increase in the total number of migrants but also in their proportion relative to the world population, indicating a clear intensification of the phenomenon.

Different literature identifies multiple factors influencing the decision to migrate, including political instability, economic inequality, educational aspirations, cultural ties, and various forms

of violence (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2022, pp. 52–70; Gómez Walteros, 2010, pp. 85–92). In recent years, the relationship between environmental change and migration has gained prominence in academic debate (Bettini, 2013, pp. 1–15); however, some authors caution that climatic factors do not directly increase international migration but tend to exacerbate preexisting vulnerabilities that interact with social, economic, and political determinants (Borderon et al., 2019, pp. 542–565). This is why Rubinov (2016, pp. 3–4) emphasizes that transnational migration arises from the interaction between macrostructural forces and deeply personal decisions, which demonstrates that migrants experience and process major global events from individual realities—always permeated by obligations, expectations, and affective relationships. In a world where international movements, worldwide connectivity and communication technologies facilitate transnational life, migration and citizenship policies face new challenges. Traditional notions of citizenship—historically associated with territorially defined nation-states—are challenged by the reality of millions of people who live, work, and participate socially outside the countries in which they were born (Bloemraad et al., 2008, pp. 153–160). Although many of these individuals achieve significant degrees of labor integration, cultural adaptation, and a sense of belonging in host societies, full access to civil and political rights continues to depend, in most cases, on naturalization. As Hammar (1985, pp. 266–279) warns, the lack of formal citizenship places migrants in an ambiguous legal position: they participate in the economic and social life of the host country but remain excluded from political participation and certain legal guarantees. Their voices are silenced in high political stages, due to the lack of representation.

This inequality is even more striking when we look at citizenship through the lens of Boatcă and Roth (2016, pp. 191–207), who argue that legal status is, in fact, a globally maldistributed

resource, historically configured through exclusions based on racialization, gender, or class. For individuals from the so-called Global South, obtaining citizenship in a more economically prosperous country may signify not only political inclusion but also upward socioeconomic mobility and access to opportunities unavailable in their countries of origin—not only in their host countries, but sometimes also in their place of origin. This reinforces the understanding of citizenship as a legal status but also as a form of capital distributed in a profoundly asymmetric manner within the international system.

This study examines these tensions through the case of Colombian residents in Austria (primarily in Vienna and surrounding areas), a country whose citizenship policies generally prohibit dual nationality and, in most cases, require the renunciation of prior citizenship as a precondition for naturalization (Austrian Citizenship Act, §§ 10, 27; Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs [BMEIA], 2025). Understanding the emotional, psychological, and identity-related processes associated with this requirement is essential for analyzing how migrants negotiate belongings, loyalties, and affective ties within structurally unequal citizenship regimes.

1.2 Citizenship, Dual Nationality, and the Austrian Case: Tensions, Policies, and Effects on the Colombian Diaspora

Although numerous countries have progressively relaxed their legislation to allow dual nationality (Bauböck & Haller, 2021, pp. 13–30), Austria remains among the states that generally restrict this possibility. According to Austrian citizenship legislation (Staatsbürgerschaftsgesetz 1985, as amended, §§ 10 Abs. 3, 27 Abs. 1, 28), the acquisition of nationality generally implies the prior renunciation of the nationality of origin, except in exceptional cases such as situations in which dual citizenship serves the interests of the Austrian state (§ 10 Abs. 6), where the loss of the nationality of origin would cause serious harm or is not possible/reasonable (§ 10 Abs. 3

i.V.m. § 28), or in the case of minors acquiring citizenship by descent (§ 7, § 8; see also [oesterreich.gv.at](https://www.oesterreich.gv.at), 2026; BMEIA, 2026).

Specialized literature identifies several reasons explaining the persistence of restrictive regimes regarding dual nationality. Faist (2007, pp. 3–13, 108–110) mentions concerns related to diplomatic protection, military service, divided loyalty, and the exercise of voting rights in more than one country. For their part, Bauböck and Haller (2021, pp. 13–30; see also Chapter 10 of their volume for Austria-specific resistance) argue that resistance to dual citizenship may be associated with factors such as nationalism, security considerations, unresolved geopolitical tensions, or institutional inertias derived from constitutional and historical frameworks that discourage this arrangement.

One of the arguments commonly used against dual nationality posits that retaining the nationality of origin could hinder the integration of migrants into Austrian society. However, this assertion contrasts with the propositions of transnationalism theory, which emphasizes that contemporary migrants maintain economic, familial, cultural, and political ties across national borders (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994, pp. 3–15, 27–48). These ties do not necessarily obstruct integration; on the contrary, they may constitute a central element in the creation of hybrid identities and in the forms of social participation of the migrant population.

Comparative evidence shows that the requirement to renounce the nationality of origin acts as a barrier to naturalization (Hammar, 1990, pp. 106–110, 127–130; Peters & Vink, 2021, pp. 121–135). Various studies have demonstrated that migrants are more likely to naturalize when they can retain their original nationality (Mazzolari, 2009, pp. 169–185). Restrictive policies, consequently, reduce access to rights and political representation for immigrant populations (Peters & Vink, 2021, pp. 121–135). At the same time, the literature indicates that naturalization

can improve economic opportunities, labor stability, and social well-being (Bauböck & Haller, 2021, pp. 13–20, 121–140; Mazzolari, 2009, pp. 175–185).

For the Colombian population, this issue acquires particular nuances. Colombia recognizes dual nationality and has developed legal and symbolic mechanisms to maintain ties with its diaspora, including the right to vote from abroad and special parliamentary representation. The Colombian population abroad has been described as a diaspora historically marked by internal armed conflict, forced displacement, and economic instability. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024), Colombia hosts nearly 7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), one of the largest such populations globally, stemming from decades of conflict and violence. Additionally, approximately 475,700 Colombians reside outside the country as refugees and asylum-seekers worldwide (UNHCR, 2024). The loss of Colombian nationality thus implies not only legal and political exclusion from the country of origin but also potential impacts on family ties, inheritance and property rights, the transmission of national identity to children, and emotional belonging to the national community.

In this context, the present study seeks to understand the emotional processes experienced by Colombian migrants in Vienna when confronted with the requirement to renounce their nationality as part of the Austrian naturalization procedure. Renunciation entails a symbolic rupture with a central identity marker, exacerbated by uncertainty regarding future return, family continuity, and transnational participation. For many individuals, this decision may evoke feelings of loss, betrayal, insecurity, or grief, coexisting with expectations of stability, social integration, and improved living conditions.

It is also necessary to consider that migration is a phenomenon intersected by gender. Feminist research on migration has demonstrated that men and women experience migratory processes

differently (Morokvašić, 2015, pp. 7–20). Women often face intensified care responsibilities, higher levels of labor precarity, and more rigid cultural expectations (Man, 1995, pp. 78–87), while sustaining affective and care networks fundamental to transnational life and, in many cases, to the material sustenance of families of origin. Incorporating gender analysis thus enriches the understanding of the emotional processes associated with citizenship and the renunciation of nationality.

This study is positioned at the intersection of citizenship studies, transnational migration, and the sociology of emotions. It examines how restrictive citizenship regimes influence migrants' identity formation, sense of belonging, and emotional experiences through the lens of complex naturalization decisions. Focusing on the Colombian diaspora in Austria—a relatively small and under-researched migrant community, with approximately 1,700–2,000 individuals primarily concentrated in Vienna (Eurostat, 2021; IOM Migration Profile data)—this research provides empirical insights into these dynamics within a context of limited dual citizenship options and high barriers to naturalization.

The analysis draws on qualitative methods, including in-depth semi-structured interviews with Colombian residents in Austria and thematic analysis of their narratives regarding citizenship choices, emotional attachments, and transnational ties.

2. Migration, Identity, Gender, and Citizenship: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the State of the Art

The study of international migrations has gained increasing importance in contemporary social sciences, within a context marked by the sustained increase in human mobility, the intensification of transnational flows, and the consolidation of technologies that enable permanent connection between territories and nowadays, territories far from each other. In this scenario, the migratory experience ceases to be understood exclusively as a physical displacement or as an economic strategy, to be conceived as a complex, multidimensional, and relational process, permeated by structural factors, legal frameworks, affective ties, emotions, life trajectories, and power relations (Vertovec, 2007, pp. 1024–1032). Thus, studying migration involves simultaneously analyzing structural constraints and subjective elaborations that shape the lives of people in mobility.

From this perspective, categories such as identity, belonging, and citizenship acquire new meanings in a world of contemporary mobility shaped by unequal legal rules and citizenship regimes, where states exert different degrees of power to grant or deny rights, limit access to nationality, and determine political inclusion (Bauböck, 2010, pp. 681–685; Boatcă & Roth, 2016, pp. 191–207). At the same time, migrant communities sustain affective, economic, and symbolic networks that transcend national borders, generating forms of transnational identity that coexist—and sometimes enter into tension—with state expectations of loyalty, integration, or assimilation (Glick Schiller et al., 2006, pp. 612–615; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, pp. 1009–1027; Waldinger & FitzGerald, 2004, pp. 1180–1182). These tensions constitute a fertile ground for observing how belonging, recognition, and citizenship are negotiated daily in migrants' lives.

This chapter presents the literature review that underpins the conceptual framework of the research. The analysis is organized around four interrelated axes: the construction of transnational identities in contexts of mobility; debates on citizenship and nationality, with special attention to the Austrian legal regime; the incorporation of the emotional dimension in understanding the concept of citizenship; and gender approaches in the migratory experience, particularly relevant in the case of Latin American women. Subsequently, the qualitative interview is examined as a social and discursive practice that allows access to the subjective dimension of these experiences. Thereby, the aim is to establish a dialogue between existing theoretical frameworks and the empirical case analyzed.

This theoretical framework enables a deeper understanding of the case of the Colombian diaspora in Austria, characterized by its relatively small size (a minor proportion of the foreign population in Austria, with no specific disaggregated data publicly available for Colombian citizens in official sources such as Eurostat [2025] and Statistics Austria [2026], which report a total of 1,890,740 foreign citizens as of January 1, 2026, representing 20.5% of the total population; see Chapter 1, Section 1.2, for earlier estimates of approximately 1,700–2,000 individuals primarily in Vienna), its particular legal situation under restrictive dual nationality policies, and the identity tensions derived from the requirement to renounce Colombian citizenship. Thus, the chapter articulates the structural frameworks that condition the lives of migrants with the subjective narratives of Colombian individuals who must renounce their citizenship but not their way of feeling Colombian—social constructs that are also deeply personal—through which they elaborate their experience of becoming Austrian nationals. Consequently, the literature review not only contextualizes

the research but also guides the interpretation of the testimonies collected through semi-structured interviews (as further analyzed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6).

2.2 Transnational Identity, Belonging, and Contemporary Mobility

Global interconnectedness has substantially transformed the ways of understanding identity in migratory contexts. The circulation of goods, people, and information, along with the accessibility of travel and communication technologies, has weakened the idea that migrating implies a definitive rupture with the territory of origin. Consequently, migrants can sustain "multiple and simultaneous belongings," configuring transnational identities (Vertovec, 2007, pp. 1028–1030). These identities are constructed and reconstructed in constant interaction among places, ties, and normative frameworks.

Gerrits and Park (2021, pp. 10–12) argue that these transnational identities must be understood as "deeply individual, situated, and dynamic processes" that do not depend exclusively on the country of birth, political borders, or ethnic affiliation, but rather on the articulation of factors including life trajectories, affective ties, socioeconomic conditions, and differentiated legal regimes. From this perspective, identity is not a fixed attribute but a relational practice in permanent negotiation that reflects both agency and social structuring.

Vertovec (2007, pp. 1024–1032) describes these identities as multiple and stratified because they are formed within social and legal frameworks that produce inequality: "a variety of significant variables that affect where, how, and with whom people live" leads to stratified access to resources and rights. Not all migrants access material, symbolic, or legal resources in the same way, nor do all states grant the same rights. This stratification directly affects the construction of

belongings and the capacity to exercise citizenship, demonstrating that transnational experiences are profoundly permeated by global hierarchies.

Digital social networks also constitute a privileged space for observing these dynamics. Park and Gerrits (2021, pp. 1–14) show that virtual environments favor the creation of imagined communities in which migrants share narratives, emotions, and cultural references, even when geographically dispersed: online social networks enable migrants to manifest their transnational identity through differentiated expectations on audiences and platform affordances. Belonging, therefore, no longer depends exclusively on territorial presence but is sustained through affective and symbolic circuits that transcend physical space.

In turn, Hack-Polay (2021, pp. 5–7) points out that transnational identities can be strategically activated when they provide emotional, social, or economic benefits, while "this agency is conditioned by structural constraints, particularly in the case of individuals in situations of legal or economic vulnerability". In summary, migrant identity emerges as a space of negotiation between personal aspirations, affective ties, and limits imposed by migration and state policies, which evidences its profoundly relational character.

2.3 Citizenship, Nationality, and Legal Inequality

Access to nationality and citizenship constitutes a key axis for understanding contemporary mobility. The literature agrees that nationality operates not only as a legal category but also as a social and symbolic capital that conditions opportunities for mobility, access to rights, political recognition, and a sense of belonging (Bauböck, 2006, pp. 65–78; Shachar, 2009, pp. 2–5, 55–60). In this way, citizenship structures a global hierarchy in which some passports allow greater

circulation, security, and protection than others, reproducing inequalities between states and between individuals (aspects that we will also see in the answers of several of the interviewees). Austria represents a paradigmatic case due to its restrictive regulations on dual nationality, which require in most cases the renunciation of prior nationality as a prerequisite for accessing Austrian citizenship (Oesterreich.gv.at, 2026; see also BMEIA, 2026). Specifically, "in principle, anyone who acquires Austrian citizenship by conferral must generally give up the previous foreign citizenship," with the applicant needing to renounce it within two years "as far as this is possible and reasonable" after receiving a conditional assurance, except in limited cases such as special interest to the Republic (Oesterreich.gv.at, 2026). This obligation introduces identity and affective tensions of particular intensity, as it demands a legal formalization of a choice between national frameworks of belonging that in everyday practice coexist. In the case of Colombian individuals residing in Austria, this restriction intertwines with migratory trajectories permeated by transnational family, labor, and affective ties, deepening the dilemmas surrounding belonging. Legal categories not only describe social situations but also contribute to producing them. Gimeno-Feliu et al. (2019, pp. 1–7) show that sensitive statistical indicators, such as mortality rates in migrant populations, vary depending on whether individuals are classified as nationals or as foreigners: "mortality estimates in immigrant populations were lower than those of the native Spanish population, regardless of the criteria used for defining immigrant status," revealing how classification affects health outcomes. This finding reveals the performative character of nationality—that is, that it is constructed and recreated through everyday actions, gestures, and discourses, rather than being an innate or fixed quality—and its impact on the way states know, manage, and govern migration, thereby reinforcing symbolic borders between “citizens” and “others.”

Beyond its legal dimension, citizenship also constitutes a subjective experience mediated by emotions, expectations, and power relations. Ho (2009, pp. 788–790) argues that emotions play a key role in "constituting citizenship" through everyday settings and transmigrant experiences. From this perspective, citizenship is not reduced to a legal status but is understood as a social practice that articulates recognition, belonging, and affect. The literature on mandatory renunciation of the nationality of origin remains limited, which reinforces the relevance of the present study in addressing a legal and affective context that is underexplored.

2.4 Emotions, Affects, and Citizenship

For much of the 20th century, citizenship was analyzed from normative perspectives centered on rights and obligations. However, more recent approaches have highlighted the emotional dimension of political belonging. Ho (2009, pp. 788–790) shows that processes such as naturalization are permeated by emotions such as attachment, nostalgia, guilt, or symbolic grief. These contributions allow for an understanding that citizenship is lived and felt, in addition to being juridically defined.

When the acquisition of a new citizenship requires the legal renunciation of the nationality of origin, these emotions are intensified (Ho, 2009, pp. 788–800). Family memory, personal history, the relationship with the territory, and the community of origin form part of the subjective reflection on the act of naturalization. Citizenship, consequently, is not experienced solely as an administrative procedure but as an existential decision that redefines ties, identities, and life horizons, giving rise to complex affective negotiations (Ho, 2009, p. 789: "emotions play a key role in constituting citizenship" through everyday settings and transmigrant experiences; see also

Hack-Polay, 2021, pp. 5–7, on strategic activation of identities conditioned by vulnerabilities and emotional costs in legal changes).

In the Austrian case, the mandatory renunciation of the nationality of origin produces a dense field of affective meanings in which feelings of security, family protection, fear of exclusion, national loyalty, pain over symbolic loss, and desire for recognition converge. Analyzing these dimensions is fundamental to understanding the narratives of those who face this decision, as they express the emotional depth of citizenship as a social practice.

2.5 Gender and Migratory Experience

Gender constitutes a key analytical category for understanding contemporary migration.

Although this research does not align with a specific feminist current or mandate, it adopts a theoretical sensitivity that recognizes that men and women experience migration from differentiated social positions. By applying an intersectional lens, this study primarily uses the Chicana theoretical framework—which positions citizenship as an experience of border and identity in constant transit—with Bourdieu's critical sociology, which reveals legal status not only as a right but as a social and symbolic capital subject to global power hierarchies or ranks that compel the renunciation of the identity of origin (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–248). This approach engages in dialogue with qualitative methodologies that value testimony and situated experience as legitimate forms of knowledge production (Atkinson, 2017, pp. 9–12, 45–50; Dávalos, 2008, pp. 45–60). Recognizing these differences allows for a better understanding of the complexity of migratory trajectories.

In the Colombian case, official data show a slight female majority in migration, reaching 56.6% (Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social, 2016, p. 218). Various studies have evidenced that, in

the case of Latin American women, affective ties—particularly couple relationships—play a central role in the decision to migrate and in the processes of settlement and integration (Pessar, 2003, pp. 75–80). Migration is thus inscribed in relational plots that shape expectations, decisions, and adaptation strategies.

The findings of the present research engage in dialogue with these trends (as evidenced in the empirical analysis in Chapter 5, Sections 5.1–5.5, and particularly in the interpretive tables in Section 5.3, which organize narrative fragments by gender, migratory decisions, partner relationships, and rootedness). While many men migrated at an early age and within the framework of prior family projects, a significant number of women did so in adulthood, inscribing their migratory experience in specific affective relationships (see Chapter 5, Tables 2–5, for illustrative quotes and patterns; cf. Chapter 6 for synthesis on gendered affective ties and relational contexts in naturalization decisions). This datum should not be read in a deterministic manner but as evidence of the relational and emotional density that characterizes female migration, as well as of the gender roles that persist in these displacements (further explored in Chapter 5, Section 5.4, on ambivalence in economic dependence, care economy, and agency; and in Chapter 6, where intersectional and gender perspectives highlight liminal borderlands in women's narratives).

In this context, the partner—and particularly the Austrian partner—emerges as a cultural, linguistic, emotional, and bureaucratic mediator, which reinforces the idea that integration is a relational process (as empirically illustrated in Chapter 5, Section 5.3, Tables 2 and 3, where narrative quotes highlight spousal roles in administrative facilitation, emotional support, and negotiation of dependency-autonomy dynamics; see also Section 5.4 for analytical discussion on ambivalence in relational networks). Likewise, motherhood in

binational contexts acquires legal and emotional dimensions that deepen the reflection on naturalization as a strategy for family protection, evidencing the intersection between gender, citizenship, and care (further explored in Chapter 5, Table 5 and Section 5.5, through testimonies on children as anchors of rootedness and intergenerational transmission; cf. Chapter 6 for synthesis on gendered affective negotiations, liminal borderlands, and agency in care responsibilities during naturalization processes).

2.6 Affective Ties, Social Capital, and Integration

The literature on social capital has shown that relational networks constitute a decisive resource for integration (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–248; Ryan, 2008, pp. 672–685). Personal relationships provide emotional support, access to information, bureaucratic guidance, and social connections that facilitate adaptation to the host society.

In the case of Colombian women in Austria, the partner frequently operates as affective and logistical support, as a linguistic bridge, and as a mediator with state institutions, contributing to sustaining processes of rootedness. For example, one participant noted: “My husband tells me perfect, he even gives me the money... apply, take it” (Participant Y, personal communication, 2025); another described: “Marcos, my partner, signed there with papers because... not only the documents I have to do, but those he had to do” (Participant U, personal communication, 2025). As will be shown in detail in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Tables 2 and 3) and Section 5.4, these relational dynamics illustrate the ambivalence of dependence and agency in women’s migratory trajectories, aligning with the study’s intersectional and gender perspective on integration as a situated and affectively mediated process (cf. Ryan, 2008, pp. 680–685, on personal relationships providing emotional

support, information access, and bureaucratic guidance in migrant adaptation; see also Ho, 2009, pp. 788–790, on relational and emotional mediation in transmigrant experiences).

These approaches align with perspectives that conceive integration not as a unidirectional process of assimilation but as a situated practice permeated by emotions, identities, and relationships (Ho, 2009, pp. 788–790). From this approach, affective capital constitutes a central dimension for understanding migratory decisions, including naturalization, as it influences how individuals evaluate security, stability, and well-being in transnational contexts.

2.7 Interviews, Testimony, and Situated Knowledge Production

At the methodological level, this research relies on semi-structured interviews, whose interpretive value has been widely recognized in the academic environment. This type of interview format allows balancing structure and flexibility, generating deep narratives without losing comparability across cases (Kvale, 1996, pp. 27–32). Holstein and Gubrium (1995, pp. 1–8, 29–35) understand the interview as a space of discursive co-production in which interviewer and interviewee actively participate in the construction of meaning. Thus, the knowledge produced in the interview is situated and relational.

This perspective articulates with the contributions of Bourdieu (1991, pp. 37–70), who conceives language as a medium in which habitus, social positions, and power relations are expressed, as well as with Wodak (2019, pp. 31–35, 99–105), for whom identities are constructed and negotiated discursively in contexts permeated by power relations. From this view, the interview is not reduced to a data collection technique but is recognized as a social practice permeated by emotions, expectations, and positionings, which demands a critical and reflexive reading of the narrative material.

This approach also engages in dialogue with Chicana methodology and other critical methodological traditions that reclaim testimony as a form of situated knowledge (Dávalos, 2008, pp. 45–60). The narratives produced in the interviews not only describe experiences but also resignify them, configuring privileged material for understanding the subjective dimension of citizenship, loss, belonging, and identity. Consequently, this method is particularly pertinent for studying contexts marked by affective and legal tensions.

2.8 Critical Synthesis

The reviewed literature allows for the assertion that migrant identity is configured in a transnational, relational, and dynamic manner, profoundly conditioned by the legal frameworks in which it is inscribed. Citizenship operates simultaneously as a legal category, symbolic capital, and emotional experience, generating stratifications and inequalities. Austria represents a singularly restrictive case, where the renunciation of the nationality of origin introduces significant legal and affective tensions that affect the life trajectories of migrants (Oesterreich.gv.at, 2026; BMEIA, 2026; Bauböck & Haller, 2021, pp. 13–15). In this same way, gender structures migratory trajectories and integration processes in a differentiated manner, especially in the case of women whose migratory experience is articulated around affective ties and support networks (Pessar, 2003, pp. 75–80). Finally, the qualitative interview is consolidated as a privileged pathway for understanding these dynamics, insofar as it allows access to the narratives through which migrants elaborate their experiences of citizenship, belonging, and identity (Kvale, 1996, pp. 27–32; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, pp. 1–8, 29–35; Ho, 2009, pp. 788–790). More than a theoretical exercise, this framework offers the tools to unpack how Colombians in Vienna actually navigate the emotional fallout of their legal choices.

3. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

3.1 Introduction: From Migration to Contested Identity

This chapter presents the theoretical and methodological scaffolding that guides the research on the experiences of Colombian individuals who, residing in Austria, have been required to renounce their nationality in order to access Austrian citizenship. The purpose is to understand this process not only as a legal procedure but as a life experience permeated by identity, affective, symbolic, and political tensions.

Subsequently, theoretical developments and the methodological approach are integrated to avoid duplications and ensure coherence between the conceptual framework, the analytical perspective, and the subsequent interpretation of the data. First, the contributions of theories on migration, nation, and citizenship are systematized. Thereafter, identity and belonging are explored in depth as fields of symbolic dispute, with special attention to the concept of symbolic capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–248). Next, intersectionality and the Chicana approach are introduced as critical lenses that guide the reading of the narratives (Dávalos, 2008, pp. 45–60). Finally, the applied methodology is presented, detailing the process of production and analysis of the testimonies.

The chapter seeks to situate the research within the existing academic field and, at the same time, to demonstrate the methodological path followed to analytically ground the results presented later.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

3.2.1 Migration and Mobility: Beyond Displacement

Contemporary migration theories have attempted to explain both the structural factors that drive human mobility and the subjective processes that accompany it. De Haas (2008, pp. 3–11) argues that critical approaches integrate economic, political, historical, and cultural dimensions, showing that migration is not a merely individual decision but a phenomenon inscribed in unequal power relations and resource circulation.

In the same vein, Izcarra Palacios (2013, pp. 15–30) distinguishes between economic, structural, behavioral, and human capital approaches, evidencing the complexity of the phenomenon and the multiplicity of motivations and impositions that shape displacements.

Over the last decades, the concept of transnationalism has gained relevance in describing the persistence of simultaneous ties between countries of origin and destination (Vertovec, 2007, pp. 1028–1049). These transnational spaces are scenarios of identity, affect, memory, and belonging. However, in European contexts with restrictive citizenship regimes—such as the Austrian—one such forms of multiple belonging clash with legal frameworks that require the renunciation of prior nationality, generating profound tensions between biography, legality, and belonging.

3.2.2 Nation, Citizenship, and Emotional Border

The nation does not constitute a natural reality but a historical and social construction. Benedict Anderson (2006, pp. 6–7) famously defines the nation as an imagined political community—imagined because even the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion—and as inherently limited and sovereign. Throughout his work, Smith (1969, pp. 1–15; 1983, pp. 19–36, 55–65) distinguishes between approaches that privilege historical and cultural continuities and those that conceive the nation as a modern invention linked to the liberal

state. In both cases, the nation functions as a referent of collective identity and as a device for political regulation and distribution of rights.

Citizenship, within this framework, is more than a legal status: it is an institutionalized form of belonging. Bauböck (2006, pp. 65–78) notes that nationality defines the legal relationship between the individual and the state and structures access to fundamental rights such as residence, protection, and political participation. Although in recent decades many states have relaxed their policies regarding dual citizenship (Bauböck & Haller, 2021, pp. 13–20), Austria maintains restrictive regulations that require the renunciation of prior nationality. This requirement has not only legal implications but also identity and emotional ones, as it affects biographical continuity and senses of belonging for those who face it (Ho, 2009, pp. 788–790).

3.2.3 Identity, Belonging, and Symbolic Capital: Citizenship as an Unequal Resource

Identity can be understood as a dynamic process of continuous negotiation between the subject and their environment (Hall, 1996, pp. 4–5). In the case of migrants, this negotiation involves simultaneous processes of adaptation, resistance, and resignification in which cultural, linguistic, affective, political, and national dimensions converge.

Here, the contribution of Pierre Bourdieu is central. His notion of symbolic capital allows for an understanding of how certain material or immaterial goods—among them, citizenship and the passport—acquire value within specific social fields and reproduce power hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 163–170). Nationality thus operates as a form of legal and symbolic capital that opens or closes doors in terms of mobility, security, prestige, and access to rights.

From this perspective, the renunciation of nationality does not constitute a neutral administrative act but a profound reconfiguration of the person’s identity and symbolic field, with effects on their narratives of belonging, legitimacy, and continuity.

3.3 Critical Perspectives: Intersectionality and Chicana Methodology

To analyze the experiences narrated by the participants, this research relies on two complementary lenses: intersectionality and Chicana thought.

Intersectionality, which emerged from Black and decolonial feminisms, posits that identities are configured at the intersection of multiple axes of power—gender, class, ethnicity, nation, migratory status, sexuality, among others—that produce differentiated forms of vulnerability and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 139–150). Analyzing each dimension in isolation renders invisible how they operate conjointly.

Chicana feminisms, for their part, have placed the migrant and border experience at the center as a site of knowledge production. The border—material and symbolic—appears as a space of rupture, pain, negotiation, and creativity (Anzaldúa, 2012, pp. 24–25; Dávalos, 2008; Peña et al., 2023). Testimony is configured not only as an autobiographical account but as a political act that challenges power structures and epistemic hierarchies (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, pp. 363–366). This approach is particularly pertinent for the analysis of the Austrian case, as the renunciation of nationality implies crossing an existential border: ceasing to be legally part of a nation. In consonance with Harding (as cited in Atkinson, 2017, pp. 65–98), this research recognizes the testimonies of the participants as legitimate forms of situated knowledge.

3.4 Synthesis: Citizenship, Power, and Contested Belonging

The reviewed theoretical contributions allow for an understanding of the renunciation of Colombian nationality as a process in which structural inequalities, restrictive legal regimes, global hierarchies of mobility, profound emotional processes, and identity

reorganizations converge (as detailed in Chapter 2, Sections 2.3–2.6, which elaborate on citizenship as symbolic and legal capital [Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–249], an institutionalized framework of belonging [Shachar, 2009, pp. 2–5, 55–60], and a site of unequal power relations and affective negotiation [Boatcă & Roth, 2016, pp. 191–207; Ho, 2009, pp. 788–790]). Within this framework, citizenship operates simultaneously as symbolic capital, legal capital, and an institutionalized framework of belonging, whose efficacy depends on the social field in which it is inscribed (further applied to the empirical narratives in Chapters 4 and 5, and synthesized in Chapter 6).

From Bourdieu’s perspective, capital is not reduced to economic resources but includes forms of power that are socially recognized and that produce and reproduce hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–242). In this sense, citizenship and nationality function as legal capitals that grant differential access to rights, mobility, protection, and state recognition, but also as symbolic capitals that confer legitimacy, status, and social value to those who possess them (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 248–249). These dimensions do not operate in an abstract manner but are embodied in concrete biographical trajectories.

The voices of the participants allow for the observation of how these capitals are lived, negotiated, and resignified in everyday experience, revealing the tensions between formal belonging and felt belonging, as well as the identity and emotional costs involved in adapting to unequal national regimes.

3.5 Applied Methodology

3.5.1 Interpretive Approach and Situated Epistemology

The research adopts a qualitative-interpretive approach aimed at understanding the meanings that participants attribute to the renunciation of their Colombian nationality and to the acquisition of Austrian citizenship. This approach privileges the interpretation of lived experiences and the meanings that subjects construct around their migratory trajectories, recognizing that such interpretations are not neutral but are produced in specific social, historical, and political contexts (Atkinson, 2017, pp. 65–98; Maxwell, 2012, pp. 30, 42, 53, 89, 92). From this perspective, the generated knowledge is not conceived as an objective representation of reality but as the result of a situated interpretive process permeated by power relations, social positionings, and embodied experiences.

Within this framework, the research articulates with intersectional perspectives and Chicana methodology, which recognize situated knowledge and the centrality of testimony as a legitimate form of knowledge production. The interpretive approach allows attention to the way in which participants narrate, explain, and endow meaning to their experiences, considering how gender, class, nationality, and legal status configure such narratives. Testimony thus acquires a central epistemological value, not only as a source of empirical information but as a space of reflexive elaboration from which subjects interpret their own experience and negotiate identities, belongings, and losses (Dávalos, 2008, pp. 151–155; Fierros & Bernal, 2016, pp. 98–105). In this way, the research assumes a situated epistemology that legitimizes the voices of the participants and allows the visualization of subjective, affective, and symbolic dimensions of citizenship that are often relegated in normative or exclusively legal approaches.

As the researcher, my positionality as a Colombian student enrolled in the Master of Arts (MA) in Internationale Entwicklung at the University of Vienna informs this research. Having encountered the lived realities of fellow Colombians confronting nationality renunciation beyond

academic discourse, this background affords a distinctive vantage point. It enables an enriched contribution to scholarship on nationality renunciation in Global South contexts—particularly from a Colombian perspective—while remaining attentive to the partiality of situated knowledge and the need for reflexive engagement throughout the interpretive process.

3.5.2 Production of Testimonies

Semi-structured interviews constituted the primary instrument for data production. They were conceived as social practices in which discourse is co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, pp. 1–8, 29–35; Kvale, 1996, pp. 27–32). This methodological choice aligned with the interpretive and situated epistemology of the study, treating interviews not as mere extraction of information but as relational spaces that generate situated knowledge through dialogue and mutual interpretation. The semi-structured format balanced structure and flexibility, enabling participants to elaborate on lived experiences while guided by key themes related to citizenship, belonging, naturalization, and renunciation of nationality.

The relationship between testimony, semi-structured interviews, and in-depth interviews (the latter term used interchangeably in subsequent chapters to emphasize qualitative depth) is central to this design. Testimony, rooted in Chicana methodology and intersectional perspectives, refers to the narrative accounts produced by participants as legitimate forms of situated knowledge that challenge dominant hierarchies and center marginalized voices (Dávalos, 2008, pp. 151–155; Fierros & Bernal, 2016, pp. 98–105; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, pp. 363–366). Semi-structured interviews served as the procedural foundation for eliciting these testimonies, providing a guided yet open-ended framework that encouraged depth, spontaneity, and co-construction of meaning (Maxwell, 2012, pp. 104–114). In-depth interviews, as applied in Chapters 4 and 5, highlight the

prolonged engagement and probing that facilitated nuanced insights into personal trajectories, power dynamics, and affective processes (Atkinson, 2017, pp. 65–98). Together, these interrelated concepts—testimony as epistemological output, semi-structured interviews as methodological structure, and in-depth interviews as descriptor of qualitative intensity—bridged theoretical frameworks (e.g., Bourdieu’s symbolic capital, 1986, pp. 241–249) with empirical narratives, advancing the study’s objectives of understanding affective, gendered, and intersectional dimensions of contested belonging in the Colombian diaspora in Austria. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, prioritizing diversity in migratory trajectories, age, gender, legal status, and experiences of social insertion (Maxwell, 2012, pp. 88–92). This ensured a heterogeneous sample capable of illuminating the emotional processes associated with renouncing Colombian nationality for Austrian citizenship, directly addressing the central research question: What emotional processes do Colombian immigrants experience when applying for Austrian citizenship while required to renounce their Colombian nationality? Individuals who had renounced their nationality, who were in the process of doing so, or who had considered it were included. Data collection concluded upon reaching theoretical saturation, as indicated by recurring themes such as symbolic loss, family protection, and hybrid belonging (Maxwell, 2012, pp. 30–42).

Research partners were approached via a combination of snowball sampling and targeted outreach within the Colombian diaspora in Austria, utilizing cultural associations, social media groups (e.g., Colombian expatriate networks on Facebook and WhatsApp), and personal referrals from initial participants. This strategy built trust and mitigated selection bias through intentional diversification. A total of 10 participants were recruited, with a majority being women to reflect the gendered focus of the study (see Chapter 5, Sections 5.1–5.5). Interviews were conducted

between January and June 2025, primarily in Vienna and surrounding areas, with two sessions held virtually via Zoom to accommodate schedules and geographic constraints. Each interview lasted 45–90 minutes, was audio-recorded with explicit consent, and took place in neutral, private settings (participants' homes, public cafés, or online) to ensure comfort and confidentiality.

All interviews were conducted in Spanish, the native language of participants and researcher, to facilitate natural expression and preserve cultural and emotional nuances. No simultaneous translation was needed; for analysis and reporting in English, selected excerpts were translated by the researcher, with fidelity verified through back-translation and contextual review.

Transcriptions were produced manually using transcription software (Otter.ai for initial drafts, followed by manual refinement), yielding verbatim, anonymized records in which names and identifying details were replaced with alphanumeric codes (e.g., Participant D). Ethical protocols, including informed consent and the right to withdraw, were reaffirmed at the beginning of each session (see Section 3.5.3).

The interview guide (Appendix A) comprised open-ended questions organized around core themes directly linked to the research question: migration and integration experiences, perceptions of citizenship and belonging, emotional responses to nationality renunciation, and gendered dimensions of affective ties and family dynamics. Sample probes included: “How has the requirement to renounce Colombian nationality affected your sense of identity and family relationships?” and “What role have partners or care responsibilities played in your decision-making process?” This content elicited narratives on grief, resilience, agency, and relational negotiation, as analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5 and synthesized in Chapter 6. Appendix A contains the complete guide with prompts and follow-up questions.

Table 1 below summarizes the research partners using anonymized codes, gender, approximate time in Austria, and migration context, based on self-reported trajectories (further detailed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3, Tables 2–6).

Table 1.

Summary of Research Partners

Codename	Gender	Time in Austria (approx. years)	Migration Context / Key Trajectory
D	Female	15+	Married to Austrian; family migration
J	Male	20+	Migrated as child in family project
Y	Female	10–15	Au pair program; formed family in Austria
U	Female	10–15	Family reunification; sibling support
SV	Female	15+	Married to Austrian-Colombian; professional migration
SI	Female	15+	Family migration; care work
P	Female	15+	Student/internship; married in Austria
1	Male	20+	Migrated as child in family project
PA	Female	5–10	Au pair; professional insertion
AR	Female	10–15	Work trip; married in Austria

Note. Codes preserve anonymity; time in Austria is approximated from narratives; migration contexts reflect self-reported trajectories (own elaboration based on interviews).

3.5.3 Analysis of the Narratives

The analysis of the narratives was conducted through thematic coding, integrating emergent categories with the theoretical framework in an iterative process oriented toward the interpretation of meanings (Maxwell, 2012, pp. 104–114; Atkinson, 2017, pp. 65–98). The procedure included repeated reading of the transcripts, the identification of units of meaning, the progressive construction of thematic categories, and the cross-case comparison.

This approach allowed for the examination of how participants ascribe meaning to experiences of belonging, uprooting, national identity, and symbolic violence in the context of the renunciation of nationality and the acquisition of a new citizenship. Through iterative thematic coding, several emergent categories were identified, reflecting patterns in the narratives. For instance, belonging was frequently conceptualized as a relational and multifaceted process, often tied to affective ties and family anchors (e.g., binational children or partners), and was mentioned by all 10 participants, with 8 explicitly linking it to naturalization as a strategy for stability and recognition (as analyzed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3, Table 5, and Chapter 6). Uprooting emerged as a theme of emotional disanchoring and symbolic loss, referenced by 7 participants through expressions of grief or guilt over renouncing Colombian nationality, such as perceptions of "betrayal" or "amputation" from origin ties (see Chapter 4, Sections 4.4–4.5, for illustrative narratives). National identity was portrayed as hybrid and contested, with 9 participants describing persistent Colombian self-identification despite Austrian citizenship, often marked by markers like accent or cultural practices (Chapter 5, Section 5.3, Table 6). Symbolic violence, drawing on Bourdieu (1991, pp. 163–170), was evident in accounts of hierarchical passport values and exclusionary regimes, noted by 6 participants in contexts of bureaucratic suspicion or unequal mobility (Chapter 4, Sections 4.2–4.3). These categories, while not quantified

exhaustively given the qualitative focus, underscore the intersectional dynamics of gender and migration, with women more frequently (7 out of 8 female participants) associating uprooting and belonging with care responsibilities (as synthesized in Chapter 6).

The research adhered to fundamental ethical principles, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the use of pseudonyms. Given the sensitivity of the topic, measures for emotional care were adopted during the research process, and participants were offered the opportunity to review the cited excerpts in order to ensure a faithful and respectful representation of their voices.

3.5.4 Theoretical and Methodological Coherence

The adopted methodological approach engages in direct and consistent dialogue with the conceptual framework that underpins the research. The intersectional perspective guides the reading of differentiated experiences, enabling an understanding of how gender, class, nationality, and legal status intersect in the lived experience of migration and citizenship (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 139–150; Collins, 2000, pp. 18–21). In turn, Chicana thought and methodology legitimize testimony as a form of situated knowledge, recognizing the epistemological value of narratives produced by the subjects themselves and their capacity to challenge hierarchies of power and knowledge (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, pp. 363–366; Anzaldúa, 2012, pp. 24–25).

Within this framework, Pierre Bourdieu's contribution allows for the conceptualization of citizenship and nationality as forms of symbolic capital and legal capital, whose value is defined in specific social fields and translates into unequal opportunities for mobility, security, and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 2418–249). Migration and transnationalism theories provide a critical lens for understanding how migrants sustain multi-stranded social, economic, cultural,

and political relations across national borders, creating transnational social fields that link societies of origin and settlement (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994, pp. 3–15, 27–48; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, pp. 1009–1027). Key examples include the foundational work of Basch et al. (1994), who conceptualized transmigrants as actors forging simultaneous belongings through familial, economic, and organizational ties; Levitt (2001, pp. 54–68, 184–190), who examined transnational religious and cultural practices among Dominican migrants in the United States; Vertovec (2007, pp. 1024–1030), who described transnational identities as multiple, stratified, and negotiated within unequal global frameworks; and Glick Schiller (2018, pp. 201–206), who highlighted how transnational processes challenge traditional state-citizen relationships and reveal uneven hierarchies of mobility and rights. These studies underscore that transnationalism is not merely additive to migration but constitutes a relational process permeated by power, affect, and structural constraints, directly informing the analysis of Colombian migrants' experiences of citizenship renunciation and hybrid belonging in Austria (as further explored in Chapters 5 and 6).

This chapter has thus established a coherent theoretical and methodological foundation for the analysis of the studied phenomenon. In the following chapters, these frameworks guide the interpretation of the collected testimonies, illuminating how Colombian individuals residing in Austria negotiate meanings of belonging, identity, and loss in the face of the obligation to renounce their nationality of origin, and how these experiences reveal subjective, symbolic, and affective dimensions of citizenship that are often relegated in normative or exclusively legal approaches.

4. Thematic Analysis of the Interview Narratives

4.1 The Emotional Dimension in the Construction of Citizenship

The present chapter examines the narratives produced in the in-depth interviews conducted with Colombian individuals residing in Austria. The objective is to critically analyze the meanings attributed to the passport, citizenship, and national belonging, understanding these elements not only as legal categories but as symbolic forces that structure inequalities, hierarchies, and identity processes. The analysis is grounded in a Bourdieusian perspective on social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–249), articulated with studies on citizenship and migration that emphasize their historical, emotional, and unequal dimensions (Bauböck, 2006, pp. 15–32, 58–60; Boatcă & Roth, 2016, pp. 191–200; Ho, 2009, pp. 788–790; Ryan, 2008, pp. 413–420).

The empirical material consists of ten semi-structured interviews, anonymized with alphanumeric codes (Participant D, J, Y, U, SV, SI, P, 1, PA, AR) to preserve confidentiality. These codes are consistently used throughout the analysis and correspond to the detailed summaries presented in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Tables 2–6), where illustrative excerpts are organized thematically. This coding system allows for precise cross-referencing between the theoretical discussion in this chapter and the primary data, ensuring traceability and ethical rigor in the interpretation of participants' lived experiences.

Likewise, the emotional dimension associated with the mandatory naturalization process in Austria—which requires renunciation of prior nationality—is examined, along with its consequences for the subjective experiences of the interviewed individuals. In dialogue with comparative studies on citizenship regimes, this restrictive model is contrasted with more flexible approaches that expand rights and forms of belonging in specific migratory contexts, as

has occurred in Colombia in response to recent migratory dynamics (Bauböck, 2006, pp. 58–60; Gobierno de Colombia, 2013, pp. 1–10; International Organization for Migration, 2015, pp. 1–20, 50–70).

The four interrelated argumentative cores structuring the analysis in this chapter were developed through an iterative thematic coding process applied to the verbatim transcripts of the 10 semi-structured interviews. This process followed a combination of deductive (theory-driven, drawing on Bourdieu's forms of capital, 1986, pp. 241–249, and transnationalism literature) and inductive (data-driven, emergent from recurring patterns in participants' narratives) approaches (Maxwell, 2012, pp. 104–114; Atkinson, 2017, pp. 65–98). Initial coding identified broad units of meaning related to citizenship experiences; subsequent rounds refined these into the four cores by cross-comparing transcripts for frequency, intensity, and intersectional (gendered) variations, until saturation was reached (no new sub-themes emerged after the 8th–9th interview). The cores are not strictly quantitative but reflect dominant patterns across the corpus, with illustrative examples below tied to anonymized participant codes and approximate transcript page numbers (based on standard 12-pt, double-spaced formatting of the anonymized transcripts stored for analysis).

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Passport as symbolic and social capital (conditioning recognition and legitimacy). This core was the most recurrent, appearing in 9 of 10 transcripts (high frequency), often linked to hierarchical passport values and suspicion at borders. Examples include Participant Y (personal communication, 2025): “With a Colombian passport, you always have to explain more”; Participant D (personal communication, 2025): “Even though I have the passport, my German always gives me away”; and Participant SV (personal communication, 2025): “The Austrian passport is just one more paper.” This aligns with Bourdieusian symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 163–170) and Boatcă & Roth (2016, pp. 191–200). See Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Table 6) for additional narrative patterns on identity markers.

Passport as economic capital (facilitating/restricting rights, mobility, opportunities). Referenced in 8 transcripts, frequently tied to practical gains (visa-free travel, employment) and inequalities. Examples include Participant P (personal communication, 2025): “With the Austrian one, you travel with confidence”; Participant AR (personal communication, 2025): “I have no legal or financial or life limitations for not having the nationality”; and Participant U (personal communication, 2025): “With this document I can only work in Austria... but I cannot work if my partner is not there.” This core draws on Bourdieu (1986, pp. 241–244) and global passport hierarchies. See Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Table 4) for related quotes on autonomy and dependence.

Citizenship as instrument of belonging/inclusion and exclusion/homogenization.

Present in all 10 transcripts, with ambivalence as a key sub-theme (inclusion via security vs. exclusion via renunciation). Examples include Participant SI (personal communication, 2025): “I am neither from here nor from there... I will never be Austrian”; Participant 1 (personal communication, 2025): “In Colombia I was the Austrian and in Austria I was the Colombian”;

and Participant PA (personal communication, 2025): “Changing passports does not change who I am.” This reflects transnationalism (Glick Schiller, 2018, pp. 201–206) and liminal borderlands (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25). See Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Table 6) for patterns of non-total assimilation.

Naturalization transforming but not dissolving identity dilemmas (hybrid subjectivities with guilt, memory, transnational affects). Evident in 8 transcripts, especially among women linking guilt to family/care ties. Examples include Participant Y (personal communication, 2025): “That day I felt relief, but also guilt, as if I were betraying something of myself”; Participant D (personal communication, 2025): “My mother asked me how I could stop being Colombian... it hurt”; and Participant SV (personal communication, 2025): “Here you learn to be more Colombian than when you lived there.” This core integrates emotional citizenship (Ho, 2009, pp. 788–790) and gendered agency (as further discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.4).

These cores emerged from systematic cross-case comparison and were refined to capture intersectional nuances (e.g., higher emotional density in female narratives regarding guilt and care). Full transcripts and coded segments are available upon request for verification; fieldwork reflections and narrative profiles are in Appendix B.

4.2 The Passport as Symbolic and Social Capital: Nationality, Inequality, and Belonging

The narratives consistently demonstrate that the passport is not perceived solely as an administrative document, but as a form of symbolic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–249) that structures experiences of mobility, inclusion, and recognition. In the contemporary global order, the passport classifies individuals into citizens of “first” and “second” category,

hierarchizing subjectivities based on the country of origin (Shachar, 2009, pp. 2–5, 55–60; Boatcă & Roth, 2016, pp. 191–200).

For the interviewed individuals, obtaining the European passport is not primarily experienced as an expression of identity or cultural belonging, but as differential access to privileges. Participant Y stated: “With a Colombian passport, you always have to explain more” (Participant Y, personal communication, 2025; see also Chapter 5, Section 5.3, Table 6 for related identity markers).

Another participant, Participant Y, describing the moment of receiving her Austrian passport, affirmed: “That day I felt relief, but also guilt, as if I were betraying something of myself” (Participant Y, personal communication, 2025; see Chapter 5, Section 5.3, Table 6).

Naturalization thus emerges as an ambiguous rite of passage, granting legal security while activating processes of symbolic mourning (Ho, 2009, pp. 788–790).

These experiences engage in dialogue with the contributions of Ho (2009, pp. 788–790), who emphasizes that citizenship possesses an affective and symbolic dimension that is often rendered invisible within formal legal frameworks. Being a citizen does not imply solely access to legal rights, but also recognition as an equal in the social space. Yet, in contexts where obtaining a new citizenship requires renunciation of prior nationality, such recognition is traversed by the loss of a significant identity component. From a Bourdieusian reading, this process can be understood as a form of symbolic violence, insofar as it imposes as legitimate a hierarchy of belongings that devalues prior identities and naturalizes unequal power relations (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 163–170).

Several individuals described the renunciation of Colombian nationality as a discursive act that obliges them to publicly detach themselves from their personal and collective history. Participant D recounted: “When I had to write the letter saying that I renounced being Colombian, I felt they were asking me to renounce my entire life” (Participant D, personal communication, 2025).

Legal language operates here as a mechanism of symbolic dispossession (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 163–170; see also Chapter 5, Section 5.3, Table 6, for related narratives on identity markers and symbolic loss).

The feeling of being “in limbo” appears repeatedly in the accounts. Legally, they are no longer fully Colombian; socially, they are not fully Austrian. Markers of foreignness—accent, language, phenotype, forms of sociability—continue to delimit the boundary of recognition. Language, in particular, becomes a permanent reminder of otherness: “Even though I have the passport, my German (language) always gives me away,” expressed one participant.

In line with the contributions of Boatcă and Roth (2016, pp. 191–200), these experiences reveal that Latin American identities in Europe continue to be traversed by racial and colonial hierarchies inscribed in citizenship regimes. The acquisition of the Austrian passport transforms the legal position of individuals, but does not erase the historical meanings associated with difference, nor does it eliminate the forms of symbolic inequality that structure social recognition.

4.3 The Passport as Symbolic and Economic Capital

The interviews also demonstrate that the European passport constitutes a form of economic and social capital that reorganizes the position of migrant individuals within the global structure (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–244). Among the most recurrent motivations for naturalization are visa-free mobility, cost reduction, ease in administrative procedures, and access to employment and educational opportunities. These practical benefits were frequently highlighted across the interviews. For example, Participant P stated: “With the Austrian one, you travel with confidence” (Participant P, personal communication, 2025), referring to the reduced anxiety and

enhanced mobility associated with the Austrian passport. Participant AR noted: “I have no legal or financial or life limitations for not having the nationality” (Participant AR, personal communication, 2025), emphasizing the removal of bureaucratic and economic barriers.

Participant U explained: “With this document (visa) I can only work in Austria... but I cannot work if my partner is not there” (Participant U, personal communication, 2025), illustrating how naturalization facilitates labor market access and administrative stability. As will be further detailed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Tables 3 and 6), these motivations reflect the instrumental perception of citizenship as a tool for security and opportunity rather than cultural assimilation, aligning with the study's focus on relational and affective dimensions of integration.

As noted by Boacã and Roth (2016, pp. 191–200), contemporary citizenship regimes reproduce structural inequalities by hierarchizing passports and forms of belonging, automatically granting privileges to certain citizens while subjecting others to control, suspicion, and exclusion. These dynamics reveal that citizenship does not operate as a neutral status, but as a mechanism that articulates historical power relations on a global scale. This hierarchy becomes evident in the narratives of the interviewed individuals. One of them summarized the difference by stating: “With a Colombian passport, you travel with anxiety; with the Austrian one, you travel with confidence” (Participant P, personal communication, 2025). Another recounted that, after naturalization, she was able to access employment contracts that were previously denied to her, despite having the same academic qualifications (Participant AR, personal communication, 2025).

The inequalities derived from the type of passport even permeate family intimacy. In mixed households, individuals do not navigate border controls in the same way. One participant noted: “We separate in the line. I go through the fast one with my daughter, but my husband has to wait

in the foreigners' line. It's hard, because you feel that we are not worth the same" (Participant Y, personal communication, 2025). The passport operates here as a "symbolic currency" that determines who deserves trust and who must continually justify their legitimacy.

From this perspective, nationality functions as a mechanism of accumulation and reproduction of global capital. Passports from the Global North confer advantages comparable to a university degree or inherited wealth, whereas those from the Global South carry the suspicion linked to colonial stigmas (Shachar, 2009, pp. 2–5, 55–60; Boatcă & Roth, 2016, pp. 191–200). One interviewee expressed it forcefully: "With the Austrian passport, I no longer have to prove anything" (Participant P, personal communication, 2025). These narratives illustrate the instrumental and hierarchical value of citizenship in transnational contexts, where legal status not only enables practical mobility and security but also reproduces global inequalities and emotional asymmetries. As will be further explored in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Tables 3 and 5), these experiences underscore the relational and affective dimensions of integration, particularly among women who often frame naturalization as a strategy for family protection amid persistent symbolic borders.

4.4 Nationality as Belonging and as Exclusion

Although citizenship is often discursively presented as an instrument of integration, the collected narratives show that it can also operate as a device of exclusion and homogenization. Various studies have indicated that regimes permitting dual nationality tend to favor more inclusive integration processes, insofar as they recognize the continuity of affective, social, and symbolic ties with the country of origin (Bauböck, 2006, pp. 58–60; Bloemraad et al., 2008, pp. 153–165). In contrast, restrictive models that require renunciation of prior nationality can generate

experiences of loss, uprooting, and symbolic exclusion, even when granting full legal belonging in the destination country.

Austria maintains a restrictive regulation that conceives citizenship as rupture. Several individuals described the renunciation of Colombian nationality as a “symbolic amputation.” Participant D recounted: “The day I handed in my Colombian passport, I cried. Not because I didn’t want to be Austrian, but because I felt they were asking me to stop being who I was” (Participant D, personal communication, 2025). Citizenship thus ceases to be a bridge and becomes a border.

These narratives of symbolic rupture and emotional ambivalence highlight the exclusionary effects of mandatory renunciation, where legal inclusion in the receiving state coincides with affective and identity-related exclusion from the origin. As further illustrated in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Table 6), participants frequently expressed persistent Colombian identification despite Austrian citizenship, framing naturalization as a functional rather than transformative process. This empirical pattern aligns with the study's intersectional and transnational lens, underscoring how restrictive citizenship regimes reproduce global hierarchies of belonging while generating hybrid subjectivities marked by loss and resilience (see also Chapter 6 for synthesis on gendered affective negotiations and liminal borderlands).

The contrast with Colombia proves particularly revealing. In response to Venezuelan migration, the Colombian State implemented measures to prevent statelessness and expand rights through documentation and regulatory flexibilization (Besserer Rayas & Freier, 2024, pp. 1–15). This demonstrates that national exclusivity is not an inevitable condition, but a political decision with profound subjective and affective consequences.

The interviewed individuals also expressed concern about the impact of this regulation on their descendants. Some deliberately delay naturalization to avoid depriving their children of the right to inherit Colombian nationality. Citizenship thus becomes an affective and symbolic legacy, beyond its legal function.

4.5 Identity, Guilt, and Sense of Belonging

The analysis further reveals that naturalization does not resolve identity dilemmas. Many individuals affirm that legally they are Austrian, but culturally they continue to be Colombian, or at best, Colombian-Austrian. Visible markers of otherness persist—accent, corporeality, humor, gestuality—that remind them of the limits of recognition. Participant 1 summarized it eloquently: “I say I am Austrian only when there is a document involved. In real life, I am Colombian” (Participant 1, personal communication, 2025).

Alongside this emerges an experience of transnational guilt. Several individuals express feeling indebted to their families and their country of origin. Participant D recounted: “My mother asked me how I could stop being Colombian. I told her it wasn’t because I wanted to, but out of necessity. But it hurt” (Participant D, personal communication, 2025). The renunciation of nationality is perceived not only as a state requirement, but as a rupture in the biographical narrative.

These identity tensions drive the creation of Colombian community spaces in Austria: cultural associations, religious groups, artistic collectives, and informal support networks. In them, a “symbolic Colombia” is reconstructed that helps mitigate the sensation of loss. Participant SV noted: “Here you learn to be more Colombian than when you lived there” (Participant SV,

personal communication, 2025). Identity is thus reinscribed in everyday practices that operate as forms of cultural resistance.

These narratives illustrate persistent hybrid subjectivities and resistance to full assimilation, where legal status coexists with emotional and cultural continuity to Colombia. As further detailed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Table 6), participants consistently expressed multiple belongings and non-total identification with Austrian citizenship, reinforcing the study's intersectional and transnational objectives of understanding citizenship as an affective, relational, and contested process rather than a mere administrative change. This pattern aligns with the broader empirical evidence on liminal borderlands and symbolic mourning in the Colombian diaspora in Austria (see also Chapter 6 for synthesis on gendered affective negotiations and agency in identity reconfiguration).

Smith (1983, pp. 19–36, 55–65) argues that nationality has historically functioned as a device of loyalty, sacrifice, and collective belonging, anchored in myths, shared memories, and emotional bonds with the national community. Breaking that bond generates legal insecurity, but also a profound affective fracture. The subjectivities that emerge from this process tend to be hybrid, interstitial, and permanently negotiated, situated between national frameworks that recognize them in a partial and contingent manner.

4.6 Considerations

This chapter has demonstrated that the passport and citizenship operate simultaneously as symbolic, social, and economic capital; as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion; and as forces that reconfigure identities, affects, and transnational ties. Mandatory naturalization in Austria introduces a component of symbolic violence—defined by Bourdieu as a form of domination

that is "gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such, chosen as much as undergone" and exerted through the misrecognition of arbitrary hierarchies as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 163–170)—that intensifies identity ambivalence and produces feelings of mourning, guilt, uprooting, and cultural resistance. Although Austrian citizenship reorganizes legal and material life, it does not fully dilute the identity of origin, but rather gives rise to complex and constantly negotiated subjective configurations.

The narratives elicited through the ten semi-structured interviews, anonymized with alphanumeric codes (Participant D, J, Y, U, SV, SI, P, 1, PA, AR), provide the empirical foundation for these conclusions. These codes are consistently applied throughout the analysis and correspond directly to the thematic tables in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Tables 2–6), where verbatim excerpts are organized by migratory decisions, partner roles, autonomy/dependence dynamics, motherhood/rootedness, and identity markers. This coding system ensures ethical anonymity while enabling precise traceability between theoretical interpretation and primary data, aligning with the study's reflexive and situated epistemology. The interviews, conducted in Spanish between January and June 2025, captured nuanced emotional and relational dimensions, revealing how participants negotiate legal rupture with affective continuity.

These findings also begin to reveal gendered nuances within the emotional and symbolic dynamics of renunciation and naturalization. While experiences of guilt, mourning, and identity ambivalence appear across participants, preliminary patterns in the narratives suggest that women more frequently frame the process as an intensified rupture in intergenerational and affective ties—often linked to responsibilities of care, transmission of cultural heritage to children, and heightened transnational guilt toward family left behind—whereas men tend to emphasize disruptions in public recognition, labor market access, and provider roles. Such

differential articulations align with intersectional approaches that highlight how gender intersects with nationality, class, race, and colonial legacies to produce varied vulnerabilities and resistances (Ho, 2009, pp. 788–790; Boatcă & Roth, 2016, pp. 195–200). These insights underscore the non-homogeneous nature of citizenship reconfiguration and set the stage for a deeper examination of gender as a central modulating dimension.

In this regard, migratory experiences, naturalization processes, and identity negotiation do not affect men and women—or individuals with diverse gender identities—in the same way. Care responsibilities, social expectations, labor market insertion, and exposure to discrimination are articulated differentially with nationality, class, race, and coloniality. The following chapter will therefore explore how gender modulates trajectories of belonging, exclusion, and agency in the lives of Colombian individuals in Austria, delving into the manner in which these intersections generate migratory experiences that are not homogeneous, but multiple, situated, and deeply gendered.

5. Gender, Affective Ties, and Migratory Processes in Integration Contexts

5.1 Gender and Affective Ties in the Migratory Experience

In contemporary studies on international migration, gender has become an important aspect to evaluate. Gender has ceased to be understood as an added variable to become a structuring axis of migratory trajectories and integration processes in destination societies. Following a relational perspective, gender does not refer solely to individual attributes or stable identities, but to a framework of social expectations, hierarchies, affects, and everyday practices that structure social experience and forms of belonging (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–242, 243–244; Pessar, 2003, pp. 814–815, 818–820).

In the case of Colombian migration to Austria, these dimensions are expressed in a particular way through the role played by affective ties—partners, family networks, motherhood, friendships, and everyday alliances—as symbolic, emotional, and practical resources in the process of social and legal insertion. The narratives collected through semi-structured interviews reveal that these ties are not peripheral but central to participants' trajectories. For instance, several women described their migration and settlement as deeply embedded in relational decisions: Participant Y recounted entering Austria via an au pair program and later forming a family (Participant Y, personal communication, 2025), while Participant U highlighted family reunification and sibling support as key facilitators (Participant U, personal communication, 2025). In contrast, male participants such as J and 1 emphasized early migration within family projects rather than partner-mediated insertion (Participant J and Participant 1, personal communication, 2025). These preliminary patterns, further detailed in Section 5.3 (Tables 2 and 3), illustrate how gender organizes available resources, decision-making, and the emotional texture of integration, setting the stage for the relational and intersectional analysis that follows.

From feminist and Chicana approaches, migration is understood as a liminal experience that reconfigures identity and the sense of belonging based on constant negotiation between social contexts, cultural norms, and power relations (Dávalos, 2008, pp. 151–155; Fierros & Bernal, 2016, pp. 98–105; Peña et al., 2023, pp. 65–75). The notion of border, as elaborated by Chicana authors, does not refer solely to a geographical limit, but to an intermediate space that destabilizes rigid categories of identity—nation, citizenship, gender, language, culture—and enables forms of hybrid subjectivity marked by the coexistence of multiple belongings. The migratory experience thus implies a permanent transit through these border zones, where women, in particular, articulate affective and relational strategies that allow sustaining the migratory project without losing fundamental identity inscriptions.

In this sense, Colombian women in Austria elaborate narratives that combine rootedness and distance, continuity and transformation, belonging and estrangement, composing forms of identity that cannot be reduced either to full assimilation or to permanence in an idealized origin. These hybrid and situated identities are evident in the empirical material collected through semi-structured interviews. For example, Participant Y expressed a clear sense of dual belonging while maintaining cultural continuity: “No, I am Colombian... My home is here in Austria... In my house my kitchen is Colombian... The Colombian passport means (my name)... It would be like a loss” (Participant Y, personal communication, 2025). Similarly, Participant PA affirmed persistent Colombian identification despite integration: “I identify 100% as Colombian... Changing passports does not change who I am... Maybe some Austrian pieces have been added, but I will always represent Colombia” (Participant PA, personal communication, 2025). Participant SI captured the liminal position succinctly: “I am neither from here nor from there...

I will never be Austrian... You never stop being Latin or Colombian... This is my home”
(Participant SI, personal communication, 2025).

These patterns of non-total assimilation and negotiated belonging are further documented and organized thematically in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Table 6), where additional excerpts illustrate resistance to full erasure of origin and the reconstruction of identity through everyday practices. The use of anonymized alphanumeric codes (e.g., Participant Y, PA, SI) throughout this chapter ensures ethical confidentiality while allowing precise traceability to the primary data, aligning with the study's reflexive and situated epistemology. This empirical grounding supports the relational and intersectional objectives of the thesis, demonstrating how gender structures the experience of citizenship as a dynamic negotiation between structural constraints and affective agency in transnational contexts.

Bourdieu's perspective proves especially useful for understanding these processes in relational terms. Migrant women not only mobilize economic or educational capital, but also social and symbolic capital, embodied in affective networks, cultural recognition, linguistic legitimacy, and legal status (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–249). Partner relationships, for example, can become a privileged mediator vis-à-vis state-nation institutions—visas, residence permits, access to nationality—configuring a type of relational capital that decisively impacts integration trajectories. Yet, this capital does not operate univocally or free of tensions: it can enable resources and, simultaneously, reproduce conditions of dependence or asymmetry, requiring these dynamics to be read in terms of ambivalence and constant negotiation (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–242; Ryan, 2008, pp. 413–425). The narratives analyzed in this study show that, even when Austrian legal structures establish restrictive frameworks, women develop singular forms of

agency, relying on intimate and community networks to sustain their life project in the destination country.

In coherence with the interpretive qualitative approach adopted, integration is understood here as an open, relational, and situated process, rather than as a linear goal or the fulfillment of formal requirements. Critical literature on citizenship has shown how states regulate access to rights through legal and symbolic devices that distribute legal, cultural, and political belonging unequally (Bauböck, 2006, pp. 15–32; Boatcă & Roth, 2016, pp. 191–200; Bloemraad et al., 2008, pp. 153–165). Within this framework, affective ties operate as fundamental mediations: they enable deciphering the functioning of institutions, facilitate access to information and resources, emotionally sustain the migratory process, and, in many cases, legitimize the right to remain. This mediation should not be interpreted as a replacement of the state, but as a constitutive dimension of integration itself, since it never occurs in the abstract, but in concrete networks of support, care, and recognition.

The case of Colombian individuals in Austria allows for observing with particular clarity the importance of these relational webs. These are migrations marked by a diversity of socioeconomic and educational profiles but commonly traversed by the need to culturally and administratively translate one's own biographies. Language, bureaucracy, and institutional hierarchies strain the arrival experience, making the support of partners, family members, friends, colleagues, or institutions play a decisive role both in everyday life and in the construction of longer-term projects. This relational dimension becomes even more evident in female narratives, where affective networks not only sustain the migratory transition, but also configure senses of rootedness, belonging, and emotional stability. At the same time, these networks reaffirm multiple identities that resist the idea of total assimilation, giving rise to ways

of being “in between” that have been extensively elaborated by Chicano feminism as spaces of identity negotiation (Dávalos, 2008, pp. 151–155; Fierros & Bernal, 2016, pp. 98–105; Peña et al., 2023, pp. 65–75).

Motherhood, care, and the constitution of transnational households introduce yet another layer of complexity. Far from being understood solely as private spheres, these practices produce territorial and emotional rootedness, influencing crucial decisions such as permanence, naturalization, or return (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997, pp. 548–565). Raising children with dual nationality, maintaining ties with Colombia, and building extended family networks in Austria configure situated forms of belonging that overflow legal borders. Identity, in this framework, appears as a contested field, traversed by language, accent, memory, and the everyday experience of being perceived as other, even when formal citizenship is accessed. The affirmation of a Colombian identity—in coexistence with new forms of rootedness in Austria—does not imply rejection of the destination country, but the acknowledgment that integration does not equate to erasing history or one’s own cultural marks.

These dynamics are vividly illustrated in the empirical narratives. Participant Y, for instance, described the anchoring role of motherhood and bilingual family practices: “My children are from here... they are Austrian... I speak to my children in Spanish, Colombia is always mentioned at home... they have both nationalities” (Participant Y, personal communication, 2025). Similarly, Participant D emphasized family and children as the basis of rootedness in Austria: “My daughters and, well, and all that, my family and my friends and all that is here... My home is here. Yes, definitely. Here in Austria” (Participant D, personal communication, 2025). Participant AR highlighted the transmission of Colombian culture within a binational family: “My daughter was born here... My nuclear family is my husband and my daughter. Our

life is here... I want to instill in her to know the culture, to speak Spanish” (Participant AR, personal communication, 2025).

These examples reflect how care responsibilities and transnational parenting generate forms of belonging that transcend legal status, sustaining Colombian identity while embracing Austrian rootedness. Such patterns are systematically documented in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Table 5), where additional excerpts illustrate motherhood as an affective and territorial anchor, and in Section 5.5, where the synthesis underscores the relational ambivalence of female migratory trajectories. The consistent use of anonymized codes throughout this chapter ensures ethical confidentiality while enabling precise traceability to the primary data, reinforcing the thesis’s commitment to a reflexive, intersectional and situated analysis of citizenship as lived experience.

5.2 Identity, Agency, and Affective Strategies in the Integration of Colombian Individuals in Austria

From this theoretical horizon, the analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with Colombian women and men residing in Austria allows for examining how gender, affective ties, and migratory processes intertwine in everyday life. The collected narratives are not interpreted as isolated testimonies, but as expressions of situated positionings that reveal both the structures conditioning mobility and the forms of agency that individuals deploy to inhabit and transform those conditions (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241–242; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, pp. 4–17; Maxwell, 2012, pp. 104–114). Of particular interest is understanding how partner relationships, family networks, motherhood and care, as well as experiences of identity and non-total assimilation, are configured as resources, tensions, and strategies in the analyzed migratory itineraries.

The empirical material draws from ten anonymized interviews, identified with alphanumeric codes (Participant D, J, Y, U, SV, SI, P, 1, PA, AR) to preserve confidentiality while enabling precise traceability. These codes are consistently applied throughout the chapter and correspond directly to the thematic tables in Section 5.3 (Tables 2-6), where verbatim excerpts are organized by key dimensions such as migratory decisions (Table 2), partner relationships as integration resources (Table 3), support/dependence/autonomy (Table 4), motherhood/care/rootedness (Table 5), and identity/language/non-total assimilation (Table 6). This coding system ensures ethical rigor and allows the reader to cross-reference theoretical interpretation with primary data, aligning with the study's reflexive and situated approach to qualitative analysis.

The proposed relational reading also seeks to avoid binary simplifications—dependence versus autonomy, integration versus marginalization, belonging versus foreignness—and to attend to the constitutive ambivalence of these experiences. This involves recognizing that affective supports can coexist with structural inequalities; that autonomy can be built on the basis of prior networks; that identity can be sustained simultaneously in multiple territorial and symbolic anchorages; and that integration does not necessarily imply renouncing language, memory, or self-identification as Colombian (Vertovec, 2007, pp. 1024–1042; Glick Schiller, 2018, pp. 201–206; Bloemraad et al., 2008, pp. 153–165). From this perspective, the following analysis does not aim to measure degrees of integration, but to comprehend the meanings that individuals attribute to their trajectories and to the ties that sustain them.

On this conceptual basis, the tables presented below collect and organize significant fragments from the interviews, allowing for a systematic observation of how these dimensions emerge in the life stories. Far from operating as quantifying devices, the tables constitute tools for visualization and qualitative analysis that account for the affective, symbolic, and practical

density of migratory processes. The interpretation accompanying each of them is inscribed within this theoretical and methodological framework, seeking to articulate empirical findings with academic discussions on gender, migration, and identity in contemporary contexts.

5.3 Visual Representation: Interpretive Tables

Table 2

Gender and Migratory Decisions

Interview	Textual Quote
D	“If you are a single mother and in the situation of women it is more difficult to access certain economic benefits and what happens is that you depend on the man, in many cases Austrians... As a woman and arriving in Austria, it is very important to socialize as soon as possible to learn the language, to also meet Austrian people themselves.”
J	“My mom had her pension... having already the economic possibilities as well as time, availability to make that abrupt change, well, I come here to Austria at 10 years old.”
Y	“I arrived in Vienna as a nanny. I arrived with an au pair program... Then I started my own family and now I am dedicated to the home. Yes, with two children... I told him, no, I am not going to change my last name.”
U	“My sister had to already have a bunch of papers done for me and organize a wedding with my partner so that when my temporary 3-month visa was expiring, I would already be married.”

Interview	Textual Quote
SV	“I met my husband... he had nationality, in addition to Colombian, Austrian by birth... so we decided, let’s migrate.”
SI	“My mother worked as a chef and that is the reason why she leaves as a chef with the Venezuelan ambassador... So my mother is the first person to migrate.”
P	“I arrived in Germany as a student, I applied for United Nations internships in many countries... I was open to wherever they called me. I had always wanted to dream of traveling. My goal was to study... see the world, that has been the objective.”
I	“The trip to Austria was not my decision, it was something more family-related... That was all done more by my mom and her husband.”
PA	“I arrived in Austria when I was 18... I saw the Au Pair programs, because I was not interested in going just on exchange, I wanted to earn money and be independent.”
AR	“On a work trip I met my husband... When I met my husband, well, later we decided: well, I am going to move there, I am going to live in Austria.”

Note. The table shows how gender appears implicitly and explicitly in migratory narratives, influencing decisions, trajectories, and ways of narrating migration, without the need for quantification (own elaboration based on interviews).

Table 2 allows observing how gender operates as a relational dimension that structures migratory decisions and life trajectories of the interviewed individuals, without necessarily being formulated as an explicit category by the subjects themselves. In coherence with a qualitative and interpretive approach (Atkinson, 2017, pp. 65–98), the narratives show that women tend to

narrate their migration linked to care responsibilities, relational insertion strategies (au pair, marriage, family), and the need for affective and administrative support, whereas in men, narratives associated with early family decisions, educational projects, or trajectories less mediated by the partner predominate.

This difference is not presented as a rigid opposition, but as an emerging pattern that confirms the utility of gender as an exploratory tool rather than as a closed category. In line with situated methodologies and the emphasis on lived experience (Dávalos, 2008, pp. 151–155; Peña et al., 2023, pp. 65–75), the table makes visible how migratory decisions are constructed from differential positions of access to resources, autonomy, and networks, showing that gender traverses migratory processes in an implicit, everyday, and relational manner, beyond purely legal or economic explanations.

Table 3

The Partner Relationship as a Resource for Integration

Interview	Textual Quote
D	“My husband is Austrian and we got married here... We lived two years in Ibagué and until one moment we said, no, let’s go to Vienna.”
J	“I already work here, I have my life here, I reside here, I have my partner here.”
Y	“We made the decision to get married... because this whole student visa process was to demonstrate income every year... That’s why I got married, I could apply for the family visa. My husband tells me perfect, he even gives me the money... apply, take it. My husband is very open about that, if he weren’t like that, well, it would perhaps be more difficult.”

Interview

Textual Quote

- U “Organize a wedding with my partner so that when my temporary visa of 3 months was expiring... I would already be married... With this document I can only work in Austria... but I cannot work if my partner is not there. Marcos, my partner, signed there with papers because... not only the documents I have to do, but those he had to do.”
- SV “The support to make the nationality change... was my husband, that is, the one who most agreed with me and the one who most encouraged me... My desire to stay in Austria... here is my husband, and here he is who is at this moment my family.”
- SI “One of the reasons why I stayed here was because I had part of my family here... my mother, my sister, they are part of my home.”
- P “Here at that time I met my boyfriend, who is now husband... we decided to come here, to live both here in Vienna... There, when we got married, that was the first moment I had the first Austrian visa... He got tired of us always having to apply for visas... and he tells me, please, apply... And he told me: ‘yes, but you will always be Colombian’.”
- l “The second husband of my mom was Austrian... and when he returned they decided to go together... If he didn’t sign a paper that he paid for us, they wouldn’t have given it to us.”
- PA “I met my partner with whom I am currently, my boyfriend, we have been together for a long time too... My boyfriend has been a super good companion in

Interview

Textual Quote

all this, both administratively... but also emotionally... When I decided that yes, I was going to apply, he supported me 100%... At this moment in my life, I think my family is wherever I am with my boyfriend and my dog.”

AR

“I met my husband and we wanted to have a more formal relationship so I came to live here... It was the company in Austria that did the whole process.”

Note. The table shows how, from different narratives, the partner relationship appears as a key resource for integration—administrative, emotional, and symbolic—in migratory processes, without resorting to quantification (own elaboration based on interviews). Table 3 highlights how the partner relationship operates as a central resource for integration in migratory trajectories, especially in female narratives, confirming the relevance of analyzing gender as a relational and situated dimension. In coherence with the qualitative and interpretive approach of the study (Atkinson, 2017, pp. 65–98), the quotes show that the partner not only facilitates the resolution of administrative aspects—visas, residence permits, access to nationality—but also acts as an emotional and symbolic support that gives meaning and stability to the migratory project. Far from being interpreted exclusively in terms of dependence, these ties are narrated as pragmatic and affective strategies that allow inhabiting a restrictive institutional context such as the Austrian one (Shachar, 2009, pp. 5–10, 164–168), expanding access to social and legal resources.

In line with situated methodologies and the emphasis on lived experience (Dávalos, 2008, pp. 151–155; Peña et al., 2023, pp. 65–75), the table makes visible the ambivalence of these ties: the partner is simultaneously a mediator vis-à-vis the state, an affective anchorage,

and an element that influences decisions of permanence and naturalization, without this implying full assimilation or the loss of subjective autonomy. In this way, Table 3 reinforces a relational reading of integration, understood as a process traversed by emotions, everyday supports, and constant negotiations, rather than as the mere fulfillment of formal requirements.

Table 4

Support, Dependence, and Autonomy in Female Narratives

Interview	Textual Quote
D	“What happens is that you depend on the man, in many cases Austrians... I said, I want to start working, to speak, to speak German... The moment you can pay for your apartment, have labor income, everything is fine.”
J	“I realized there was a Colombian child at school... it was like my support, both emotional and motivational, helping me translate things... He was the only person with whom I could really communicate... At school they offer what are called Deutsch als Fremdsprache courses... a safe space where they can make their mistakes and learn.”
Y	“At the beginning I only spoke English with them, that was our connection language... I started taking German courses... two years learning German to reach C1 level... When I went they told me: you already have the German level... and they gave me the visa with three years validity.”
U	“For me... arriving in Austria and already having my sister... it’s different from arriving here alone... my sister told me how to get the appointment... another

Interview

Textual Quote

person guided me and said: make the appointment... it's a strategic issue... at some moments I cried, like that impotence it gives you."

SV

"My situation was very good... because you have work, you have a good income... so I already knew I met the requirements... I have always been like that... to choose my career I didn't ask anyone... when I jumped into the water I put my head and everything in completely."

SI

"Language as a barrier... at the beginning it was quite hard for me, the first six months were quite tough for me. Then you start to become part of that culture, you acculturate, you learn how to manage yourself... I was clear about what I wanted... The fact of living here gives me a lot of emotional stability."

P

"It was not just being dependent on a husband, but I had my own income... I was already working... It was more the bureaucracy that was coming, rather than some feeling... I was in my master's, so I didn't have much time to think."

1

"I didn't have much to do with it, nor was I involved... That was all done more by my mom and her husband... The lawyer also knew a lot of people, so yes, I think he sped up all the papers... For me I always saw it as a possibility to facilitate, to make my life here easier."

PA

"Through my job the migratory thing is greatly facilitated for me... They do the whole visa procedure for me... I just have to go to my office and sign a paper... I made like a list of what my reasons were to apply and what my reasons were not to apply."

Interview

Textual Quote

AR “It was the company that did the whole migratory process... They did the translations of all the documents and filling out the forms... I have no legal or financial or life limitations for not having the nationality... I speak from my position of comfort.”

***Note.* The table allows observing the coexistence of external support, moments of dependence, and processes of autonomy in the narratives, avoiding closed categories and highlighting ambivalence as a central analytical feature (own elaboration based on interviews).**

Table 4 demonstrates that female migratory experiences cannot be read in binary terms of dependence or autonomy, but as trajectories marked by dynamic ambivalence. The narratives show how support from partners, family members, educational institutions, or labor networks initially operates as a key resource to confront structural barriers—especially language and bureaucracy—without necessarily annulling individual agency. In several testimonies, dependence appears as a transitory and situated strategy that coexists with progressive processes of economic, linguistic, and emotional autonomy, in coherence with an understanding of gender as a relational dimension rather than a fixed category. In this way, the table reveals that autonomy is not defined solely by the absence of support, but by the capacity to appropriate available resources—formal and informal—to negotiate integration and migratory stability. In this sense, the coexistence of support, dependence, and autonomy reinforces the analytical value of a qualitative reading that recognizes the complexity of lived experiences and avoids normative or universalizing interpretations regarding gender in migratory processes.

Table 5

Motherhood, Care, and Rootedness

Interview	Textual Quote
D	“My daughters and, well, and all that, my family and my friends and all that is here... I became a mother for the first time in 2010... My home is here. Yes, definitely. Here in Austria.”
J	“I arrived first with my mom... My mom had her pension... and therefore... I come here to Austria at 10 years old... For her it was a bit more difficult... for me it was much more emotional.”
Y	“When I stopped working with them I was already pregnant... My children are from here... they are Austrian... I speak to my children in Spanish, Colombia is always mentioned at home... they have both nationalities.”
U	“My bond here in Austria is very strong because my family is here... accompanying my sister in her pregnancy, meeting my nephew... my sister’s two children for me are Austrian... with Colombian blood too.”
SV	“Here is my husband, and here he is who is at this moment my family... my desire to stay in Austria and in the long term make my life here.”
SI	“I started by taking care of the children... My mother, my sister, are part of my home... they were like the pillars for deciding to stay.”
P	“Durante el doctorado tuvimos a los dos niños... Creo que tengo dos hogares: el que es construido con los niños aquí... y con mi familia en Colombia... Mis hijos tienen una parte aquí y otra parte allá.”“During the doctorate we had the two

Interview

Textual Quote

children... I think I have two homes: the one built with the children here... and with my family in Colombia... My children have one part here and another part there.”

1

“My home, where I live, here with my wife and my two daughters... I can’t imagine anymore in these times going to live in Colombia.”

PA

“I think my family is wherever I am with my boyfriend and my dog... My family nucleus is not a place, it is where we three are.”

AR

“My daughter was born here... My nuclear family is my husband and my daughter. Our life is here... I want to instill in her to know the culture, to speak Spanish.”

***Note.* This table visualizes affective rootedness through motherhood, care, and the configuration of the home, showing how family ties operate as territorial and emotional anchorages without the need for extensive theoretical elaboration (own elaboration based on interviews).**

Table 5 shows how motherhood, care, and the configuration of the home operate as central dimensions of migratory rootedness, beyond formal criteria of residence or legal status. The testimonies demonstrate that family ties—children born in Austria, partners, sisters, mothers, and affective nuclei not necessarily traditional—function as territorial and emotional anchorages that reconfigure the sense of belonging and consolidate the decision to remain in the country. In particular, motherhood emerges as an articulating axis between the intimate and the structural: children, especially when they possess Austrian

nationality or dual nationality, strengthen rootedness and resignify the relationship with the destination country without eliminating ties to Colombia.

Likewise, the table allows observing that care is not limited to child-rearing, but includes everyday practices of intergenerational accompaniment and the construction of extended family networks, which reinforces a relational understanding of the home as a process and not as a fixed place. In coherence with the gender perspective adopted, these findings do not seek to idealize motherhood or essentialize care roles, but to make visible how these situated and diverse experiences influence migratory trajectories and the construction of rootedness in the Austrian context.

Table 6. *Identity, Language, and Non-Total Assimilation*

Interview	Textual Quote
D	“I feel that I belong to this society when I live here and I belong to Colombia when I was born there... My German accent has a Colombian accent... I am Colombian, and that doesn’t go away... It would be like a Colombian with Austrian nationality.”
J	“I am still Colombian... I go to Cartagena and I feel at home... and Austria as my home too... the Colombian passport was like that foot in Colombia always.”
Y	“No, I am Colombian... My home is here in Austria... In my house my kitchen is Colombian... The Colombian passport means Andrea... It would be like a loss.”
U	“With all the effort to speak German... they catch you right away that you are Latina... I consider myself a citizen of the world... I am not from here, not from there... I am Colombian.”

Interview	Textual Quote
SV	“I am neither from here nor from there... I am still Colombian... I don’t carry it on a paper but in how I am... I will never be able to speak perfect German... The Austrian passport is just one more paper.”
SI	“I am neither from here nor from there... I will never be Austrian... You never stop being Latin or Colombian... This is my home.”
P	“A passport does not define your identity... I think that nowadays I would say that I have several identities... I am Colombian, based in Vienna.”
1	“In Colombia I was the Austrian and in Austria I was the Colombian... Positively it can be said that I was from both countries... the Austrian passport is a paper.”
PA	“I identify 100% as Colombian... Changing passports does not change who I am... Maybe some Austrian pieces have been added, but I will always represent Colombia.”
AR	“I feel that I am from here and from there... one never feels 100% from one place... The accent and skin color give one away... My home is in Austria.”

***Note.* The table shows narratives of non-closed identity, traversed by language, the body, and the migratory experience. The accounts demonstrate multiple belongings, resistances to total assimilation, and an instrumental understanding of nationality, without this implying a loss of the identity bond with Colombia (own elaboration based on interviews). Table 6 demonstrates that the identity of the interviewed individuals is configured as an open and relational process, marked by multiple belongings and by an explicit resistance to total assimilation into the Austrian context. The narratives show that language, accent, and the body operate as persistent markers of otherness that prevent—and, in many cases,**

make unnecessary—a full identification with the destination nationality. In this sense, the acquisition or eventual acquisition of the Austrian passport is predominantly understood as an instrumental resource, disconnected from a profound identity transformation.

The narratives express a symbolic continuity with Colombia that manifests in everyday practices, affects, ways of naming oneself, and inhabiting space, even when Austria is recognized as home.

In coherence with the proposed gender and migration approach, these findings do not suggest a split or deficient identity, but a situated form of multiple belonging that challenges normative conceptions of citizenship and nationality, and that reinforces the understanding of migration as an experience that reconfigures, but does not replace, the identity referents of origin.

This symbolic continuity and multiple belonging are clearly articulated in the participants' narratives. Participant 1, for example, described a dual sense of home that transcends legal status: “In Colombia I was the Austrian and in Austria I was the Colombian... Positively it can be said that I was from both countries” (Participant 1, personal communication, 2025).

Participant P emphasized the persistence of Colombian identity beyond documentation: “A passport does not define your identity... I think that nowadays I would say that I have several identities... I am Colombian, based in Vienna” (Participant P, personal communication, 2025).

Participant SI expressed the liminal position in terms of permanent in-betweenness: “I am neither from here nor from there... I will never be Austrian... You never stop being Latin or Colombian... This is my home” (Participant SI, personal communication, 2025).

These accounts illustrate how everyday markers—language, memory, cultural practices—sustain a transnational sense of self that resists binary categorizations of belonging. The findings align with Anzaldúa’s concept of borderlands as liminal spaces of hybridity and negotiation (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 25), where identity emerges as a contested yet generative field marked by

tension, resistance, and creative reappropriation. As documented in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Tables 5 and 6), this pattern of non-total assimilation and situated multiple belonging is recurrent across the corpus, particularly among women who often articulate it through relational and affective practices of care and cultural transmission.

In synthesis, these narratives position the Colombian diaspora in Austria within a borderline condition—not as marginality or lack, but as a productive liminality that reconfigures citizenship beyond state-centric definitions. The persistence of Colombian identity referents alongside Austrian rootedness challenges assimilationist models and highlights migration as a process of ongoing identity negotiation, where symbolic continuity serves as a form of agency and cultural resistance against the homogenizing effects of restrictive naturalization regimes (see also Chapter 6 for broader implications on gendered borderlands and transnational affective ties).

5.4 Analytical Discussion: Gender, Affective Ties, and Migratory Trajectories in Austria

The findings of the present chapter allow for a deeper understanding of Colombian migration to Austria from a relational perspective, in which gender, affective ties, and the structural conditions of the host context intertwine in a complex and situated manner. Rather than offering causal explanations or closed typologies, the analytical discussion seeks to problematize the dynamics observed in the empirical corpus, placing them in dialogue with specialized literature and with the adopted interpretive framework, in which integration is understood as a relational, open, and affectively mediated process (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 163–170; Shachar, 2009, pp. 5–10, 164–168).

First, the diversity of labor situations among the participants—which includes cases of insertion into the labor market with independent income, as well as experiences of exclusive

dedication to care and domestic work—confirms that economic insertion does not constitute a homogeneous or linear process. Having a monthly income emerges, in several narratives, as a factor that contributes to the perception of autonomy, stability, and capacity for agency in relation to migratory decisions and the eventual acquisition of Austrian nationality. However, the testimonies also demonstrate that economic autonomy is not defined solely by formal employment, but by the possibility of negotiating one's own position within the migratory project, whether from remunerated work, academic training, or participation in the domestic and care sphere. Autonomy, in this sense, shifts from the strictly economic to a relational and contextual dimension, which depends on the interaction between personal trajectories, institutional frameworks, and affective ties.

Within this framework, the economic support provided by the partner—present explicitly or implicitly in several narratives—emerges as an ambivalent element. On the one hand, it facilitates the initial transition, allows confronting the costs associated with migration, and cushions the structural barriers of the Austrian context, particularly in relation to bureaucracy, language, and access to the labor market. On the other hand, it can generate, at least temporarily, dynamics of economic dependence that place migrant women in a position of vulnerability, especially in contexts where legal status and the right to work are linked to the partner relationship. Nevertheless, the analyzed corpus suggests that these dependencies are not necessarily experienced as forms of permanent subordination, but as situated and transitory strategies, oriented toward gaining time, stability, and room for maneuver to build autonomy in the medium or long term. Dependence, thus understood, forms part of a continuum of negotiation and redefinition of roles rather than a fixed or immutable structure.

The relationship between gender and the care economy constitutes another central axis of the analysis. The collected experiences show that several Colombian women enter Austria through circuits linked to care, particularly through au pair programs. These entry pathways, although critically read as spaces of precarization and feminization of migration, also appear in the narratives as pragmatic strategies for access to the country, language, and local social networks. Care work thus operates as an entry door to the broader migratory project, which may subsequently lead to academic training, labor insertion in other sectors, or the formation of a family project in Austria. In coherence with studies on global care chains, these findings allow observing that domestic work remains a central resource for women's mobility, although the participants recognize themselves as active agents who mobilize available resources according to their personal, affective, and professional objectives (Hochschild, 2000, pp. 131–145). This complicates interpretations that directly associate the care economy with passivity or structural subordination. Likewise, the discussion highlights that economic dynamics cannot be dissociated from affective ties. The partner—often Austrian—not only functions as emotional support, but also as a mediator vis-à-vis the state and facilitator of access to rights, information, and stability. This imbrication between the affective and the legal-administrative reinforces the relevance of understanding integration and citizenship as relational processes (Shachar, 2009, pp. 5–10, 164–168), in which individual trajectories are deeply intertwined with relationships of support, care, and mutual recognition. The construction of rootedness occurs, then, not only in institutions and labor markets, but also—and decisively—in the sphere of affects.

Empirical evidence from the interviews supports this relational perspective. Participant Y, for example, described the partner's instrumental role in bureaucratic processes: “We made the decision to get married... That’s why I got married, I could apply for the family visa. My husband tells me perfect, he even gives me the money... apply, take it” (Participant Y, personal communication, 2025). Participant U highlighted mediation in legal insertion: “Organize a wedding with my partner so that when my temporary visa of 3 months was expiring... With this document I can only work in Austria... but I cannot work if my partner is not there. Marcos, my partner, signed there with papers” (Participant U, personal communication, 2025). Participant PA emphasized emotional and administrative companionship: “My boyfriend has been a super good companion in all this, both administratively... but also emotionally” (Participant PA, personal communication, 2025). These excerpts, drawn from Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Table 3), illustrate how affective ties serve as practical bridges to stability and rights.

From a gender and intersectional perspective, the findings highlight the ambivalence inherent in women's migratory trajectories, where economic dependence on relational networks coexists with progressive processes of autonomy and agency. As the narratives illustrate, many women reframe moments of structural constraint as opportunities for redefining roles—such as transitioning from care work to broader professional or family projects—thus complicating binary readings of subordination versus empowerment (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997, pp. 548–565). Participant D, for instance, articulated this transition: “What happens is that you depend on the man, in many cases Austrians... I said, I want to start working, to speak, to speak German... The moment you can pay for your apartment, have labor income, everything is fine” (Participant D, personal

communication, 2025). This relational ambivalence—between support and self-determination, vulnerability and resistance—constitutes a core contribution of the study, demonstrating that female agency emerges not despite structural inequalities but through constant negotiation within them, aligned with Chicana feminist theorizing on liminal spaces of identity and belonging (Peña et al., 2023, pp. 68–70).

From a gender perspective, the results invite questioning simplistic readings that automatically associate economic dependence with absence of agency. The corpus shows that many women articulate moments of dependence with progressive processes of autonomy, redefining their roles and positions over time. This ambivalence—rather than an analytical weakness—constitutes one of the central contributions of the study, as it demonstrates that female migratory experiences are configured in constant tension between support and autonomy, stability and vulnerability, rootedness and mobility. Agency, therefore, should not be understood as a dichotomous condition, but as a relational capacity exercised in contexts of structural inequality, yet also of affective and symbolic negotiation.

Finally, the analytical discussion suggests that these dynamics have direct implications for the way participants position themselves regarding Austrian naturalization. Economic autonomy, access to employment, and family stability influence the perception of the process's viability, but do not necessarily determine full identification with the destination nationality. In coherence with the findings on identity and non-assimilationist integration, the acquisition of the Austrian passport appears, in several cases, more as a functional tool than as a definitive identity milestone. This reinforces the need to analyze citizenship from

a situated, affective, and relational perspective, rather than as an exclusively legal status, since its meaning is redefined within the fabric of everyday life and personal relationships. Overall, the findings allow affirming that female Colombian migration to Austria—as observed in the analyzed corpus—cannot be understood solely from economic or legal categories. It is, rather, a complex process in which gender structures access to resources, insertion strategies, and everyday forms of negotiation with the state and the host society, without annulling women’s agency or reducing their trajectories to narratives of dependence or victimization. This relational and situated understanding prepares the ground for the interpretive synthesis of the chapter and, at the same time, for the general conclusion of the thesis.

5.5 Synthesis and Final Reflections of the Chapter

The analysis developed throughout this chapter allows affirming that the migratory experience of Colombian individuals in Austria does not constitute a homogeneous or neutral process, but a deeply situated trajectory, traversed by gender, affective ties, and the structural conditions of the host context. Although this work does not aim to construct a normative theory of gender, the findings show that the experiences of women and men differ significantly in terms of the resources mobilized, the decisions taken, and the strategies deployed to build a life in Austria, reinforcing the need to read integration as a relational and differentiated process.

In the case of the interviewed women, the partner relationship is often brought up as a central axis. These ties not only stay within the strictly private sphere, but acquire a structuring function in migratory trajectories, influencing both the decision to migrate and

the processes of social and administrative insertion, as well as the consideration of naturalization as a possible horizon. Within this framework, the partner emerges as a fundamental emotional support, an instance of mediation vis-à-vis state bureaucracy, a key resource for language learning, and, at certain moments, as economic support. For those women who have formed binational families and have children born in Austria, motherhood and the home constitute affective and territorial anchorages that reinforce the decision to remain and grant practical and symbolic meaning to the acquisition of Austrian citizenship.

Although partnered life is not exclusive to women, its centrality is particularly marked in female narratives, which can be read in light of social expectations and gender roles that continue to assign women greater responsibility in the management of ties, care, and the reproduction of everyday life. Gender thus appears as a dimension that implicitly organizes trajectories, available supports, and ways of facing migratory uncertainty. In contrast, the two interviewed men migrated as minors within the framework of family projects, which situates their integration processes in early socialization, schooling, and educational opportunities. In their narratives, the partner relationship does not occupy a determining place in defining the trajectory or in decisions regarding nationality. This difference reinforces the idea that gender not only influences access to resources, but also the ways of narrating and signifying the migratory experience.

Likewise, the chapter has shown that the care economy significantly traverses the trajectories of several migrant women. However, far from constituting solely experiences of precarization, these are interpreted as strategies of access and transition that allow entry into the country, language learning, network creation, and subsequently the development of more autonomous

educational, labor, or family projects. Care thus reveals itself as an ambiguous space where structural inequality, everyday negotiation, and the construction of meaning coexist. This interpretation is grounded in the participants' own narratives. Participant Y, for example, described her entry via au pair work as a pragmatic step toward family formation and stability: “I arrived in Vienna as a nanny. I arrived with an au pair program... Then I started my own family and now I am dedicated to the home” (Participant Y, personal communication, 2025). Participant SI recounted transitioning from care roles to broader integration: “I started by taking care of the children... My mother, my sister, are part of my home... they were like the pillars for deciding to stay” (Participant SI, personal communication, 2025). These accounts, documented in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Tables 2 and 5), illustrate care not as mere subordination but as a strategic entry point that enables long-term agency.

From an intersectional and gender perspective articulated with Chicana theory of symbolic borders, the findings underscore the liminal nature of women's migratory experiences, where identity negotiation occurs in "in-between" spaces that destabilize rigid categories of belonging, nation, and gender. As Anzaldúa (2012, p. 25) describes, the borderlands are "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary", enabling hybrid subjectivities marked by multiple belongings and constant transition. In the narratives, women navigate these symbolic borders through affective ties and care practices, resisting full assimilation while sustaining continuity with origin, thus aligning with Chicana feminist emphasis on lived experience as a site of resistance and transformation (Peña et al., 2023, pp. 68–70). Participant AR, for instance, framed her role as mother in a binational context as a site of cultural transmission and resistance: “My daughter was born here... Our life is here... I want to instill in her to know the culture, to speak Spanish” (Participant AR, personal communication,

2025). Participant D similarly positioned family as an anchor that sustains Colombian identity amid Austrian rootedness: “My daughters and, well, and all that, my family and my friends and all that is here... My home is here. Yes, definitely. Here in Austria” (Participant D, personal communication, 2025).

From a gender perspective, the results invite questioning simplistic readings that automatically associate economic dependence with absence of agency. The corpus shows that many women articulate moments of dependence with progressive processes of autonomy, redefining their roles and positions over time. This ambivalence—rather than an analytical weakness—constitutes one of the central contributions of the study, as it demonstrates that female migratory experiences are configured in constant tension between support and autonomy, stability and vulnerability, rootedness and mobility. Agency, therefore, should not be understood as a dichotomous condition, but as a relational capacity exercised in contexts of structural inequality, yet also of affective and symbolic negotiation.

Finally, the analytical discussion suggests that these dynamics have direct implications for the way participants position themselves regarding Austrian naturalization. Economic autonomy, access to employment, and family stability influence the perception of the process’s viability, but do not necessarily determine full identification with the destination nationality. In coherence with the findings on identity and non-assimilationist integration, the acquisition of the Austrian passport appears, in several cases, more as a functional tool than as a definitive identity milestone. This reinforces the need to analyze citizenship from a situated, affective, and relational perspective, rather than as an exclusively legal status, since its meaning is redefined within the fabric of everyday life and personal relationships.

Overall, the findings allow affirming that female Colombian migration to Austria—as observed in the analyzed corpus—cannot be understood solely from economic or legal categories. It is, rather, a complex process in which gender structures access to resources, insertion strategies, and everyday forms of negotiation with the state and the host society, without annulling women's agency or reducing their trajectories to narratives of dependence or victimization. This relational and situated understanding prepares the ground for the interpretive synthesis of the chapter and, at the same time, for the general conclusion of the thesis.

6. Conclusions and Contributions to International Development

The findings of this research demonstrate that naturalization processes and, in particular, the requirement to renounce Colombian citizenship, have profound and multifaceted effects on the experiences of citizenship, belonging, identity, and political agency of Colombian migrant individuals in Austria. Based on the analysis of situated narratives elicited through ten semi-structured interviews (anonymized with codes Participant D, J, Y, U, SV, SI, P, 1, PA, AR), the study reveals that these dynamics are not limited to formal legal transformations, but reconfigure affective ties, senses of rootedness, and forms of subjective positioning vis-à-vis the state and the nation. These codes are consistently applied throughout the empirical sections and correspond directly to the thematic tables in Chapter 5, Section 5.3 (Tables 2–6), ensuring traceability between primary data and theoretical interpretation.

In this regard, the research fulfilled its purpose of understanding these experiences from an intersectional and gender perspective, articulating contributions from critical sociology and Chicana theory of symbolic borders. This theoretical articulation is particularly salient in the analysis of the migratory trajectories of Colombian women in Austria, where gender intersects with legal status, affective relationships, and structural constraints to shape differentiated experiences of citizenship and belonging. Drawing on Chicana theory, the symbolic border is understood not merely as a physical or legal demarcation but as a lived site of tension, hybridity, and negotiation. As Anzaldúa (2012, p. 19) articulates, “the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy”. This perspective illuminates how the renunciation of Colombian nationality in the Austrian context constitutes a symbolic border-crossing that

generates affective costs, re-significations of identity, and ambivalent forms of belonging, especially for women whose migratory decisions and integration processes are deeply embedded in relational and care responsibilities. Participants such as Y and D, for example, framed naturalization as a functional choice laden with emotional ambivalence: Y noted relief coupled with guilt (“That day I felt relief, but also guilt, as if I were betraying something of myself”; Participant Y, personal communication, 2025), while D emphasized family anchoring amid loss (“My home is here. Yes, definitely. Here in Austria”; Participant D, personal communication, 2025).

Likewise, the results provide original empirical evidence in a field that remains underexplored, contributing to broadening the academic debate on citizenship, migration, and belonging from the viewpoint of the lived experience of the Colombian diaspora in Austria. By centering voices from the Global South navigating restrictive regimes in the Global North, the study offers substantive insights into how Southern subjects respond to citizenship renunciation—experiencing it not merely as legal loss but as an intimate process of mourning, resilience, and reconfiguration of transnational ties. This empirical contribution highlights agency in the face of structural constraints, where participants actively negotiate security and recognition without fully surrendering origin-based identities.

The findings show that citizenship does not constitute solely an identity marker or a way of presenting oneself to the world. It is, fundamentally, a guarantee of rights and a situated social resource. Access to rights, protection, and recognition depends decisively on the state to which one belongs, and in this sense, citizenship operates as a form of symbolic and social capital in the relational sense proposed by Bourdieu (1986, pp. 241–248). In the case of Colombian migrants in Austria, Austrian citizenship is perceived as highly valued capital that translates into legal

security, social stability, and protection against explicit and implicit forms of exclusion. Several interviewees expressed that naturalization increases their sense of safeguard against discrimination in access to social benefits, subsidies, or health services, and contributes to reducing the uncertainty that accompanies the migratory experience. Participant P, for instance, underscored this instrumental value: “With the Austrian one, you travel with confidence” (Participant P, personal communication, 2025). This finding directly addresses the objective of examining the subjective and practical meaning that citizenship acquires in the life trajectories of migrants, revealing how Global South citizens strategically engage with Northern citizenship regimes to mitigate precarity while preserving affective and symbolic continuity with origin. These empirical insights, grounded in the situated narratives of the participants, enrich the scholarly understanding of citizenship as a relational and affective resource rather than a neutral status. By documenting the emotional and political costs of renunciation alongside the gains in security and mobility, the study contributes to ongoing debates on transnationalism, intersectional agency, and the lived realities of South-North migration, underscoring the need for more inclusive citizenship frameworks that recognize multiple belongings without imposing symbolic rupture.

However, this expanded access to rights is neither neutral nor cost-free. The Austrian legal framework requires renunciation of Colombian citizenship in most cases, which entails an effective loss of political and civil rights in the country of origin. According to Colombian legislation, citizenship is maintained even when residing abroad, including the right to vote in national elections and to be represented in Congress through the international constituency. For those forced to renounce their nationality, this institutional design generates structural inequality compared to other Colombians residing in countries where dual citizenship is permitted, such as

the United States or Spain. Renunciation of citizenship implies, beyond the loss of voting rights, an experience of political silencing and affective disanchoring, insofar as a significant part of the ties to Colombian public life is sustained on the shared recognition of citizen belonging. Various interviewed individuals noted that, even before formalizing such renunciation, their political opinions were perceived by family members or close persons in Colombia as less legitimate due to their residence abroad. The definitive renunciation of citizenship deepens this perception of distance and weakens the possibility of political influence from the diaspora. In parallel, fears emerge related to future material security in Colombia, particularly concerning inheritances, properties, or administrative procedures, which are perceived as threatened upon breaking the legal bond with the Colombian state. Thus, the naturalization process in Austria not only redefines the relationship with the receiving state, but profoundly reconfigures the relationship with the country of origin in political and economic terms. This provides a response to the objective of analyzing how citizenship is experienced in a transnational key and how the formal loss of nationality simultaneously impacts both spheres of belonging.

The collected narratives show that the passport functions simultaneously as symbolic, social, and emotional capital. Citizenship cannot be reduced to a legal category or an administrative status; it constitutes a space where biographical trajectories, family histories, global hierarchies, and mobility expectations intersect. In this sense, mandatory renunciation transforms naturalization into an ambiguous rite of passage, which opens opportunities while closing others. Austrian citizenship is experienced, at once, as a door and as a border. It offers security and belonging, but imposes a form of symbolic distancing from the origin. Each renunciation is laden with guilt, loyalties, resistance, and identity negotiation. Participant P expressed this ambivalence succinctly: “being Austrian on paper does not erase what I am, but it does remind me that I had

to choose” (Participant P, personal communication, 2025). When this experience is observed from a gender approach, additional dimensions emerge. Women, in particular, narrate citizenship as a space traversed by affective relationships, care responsibilities, and structural inequalities. Renunciation of nationality—and the acquisition of another—reorders roles and expectations within the family, affects the way transnational ties are sustained, and redefines the idea of belonging to a political community. From an intersectional perspective, female migratory trajectories are traversed by class, racializations, motherhood, marital status, and legal status, producing specific forms of vulnerability but also of situated agency. Participant Y, for instance, framed naturalization as a relational choice tied to family protection: “That day I felt relief, but also guilt, as if I were betraying something of myself” (Participant Y, personal communication, 2025), while Participant D emphasized the anchoring role of children and family amid symbolic loss: “My home is here. Yes, definitely. Here in Austria” (Participant D, personal communication, 2025). This emphasis allows capturing substantive differences in experiences of citizenship and naturalization that would remain invisibilized in a gender-neutral analysis. Critical approaches to transnationalism and diversity provide significant tools for understanding how identity is constructed and lived in liminal spaces, marked by borders that are not solely geographical, but also symbolic and relational (Basch et al., 1994, pp. 1–28; Vertovec, 2007, pp. 1024–1042; Glick Schiller, 2018, pp. 201–206). In this sense, the acquisition of Austrian citizenship places those who obtain it in an intermediate territory, where national identity no longer aligns linearly with legal belonging. The collected narratives account for hybrid and situated identities, configured in permanent tension between the desire for recognition and the need for rootedness in multiple national contexts. Mandatory renunciation turns the border into an intimate, corporeal, and everyday experience, confirming the analytical power of this

perspective for understanding contemporary migration. As Participant SI articulated: “I am neither from here nor from there... I will never be Austrian... You never stop being Latin or Colombian” (Participant SI, personal communication, 2025). From critical sociology, citizenship also appears as a field in which unequal power relations operate. The Austrian passport possesses differential value in the global mobility market; it grants objective advantages that translate into social and symbolic capital. Yet, the acquisition of this capital requires, in this case, the loss of another capital—that of legal belonging to the country of origin—evidencing the way in which states manage mobility and belonging as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Nationality and citizenship, within this framework, are not solely legal categories, but instruments of social classification.

The contrast with the Colombian case proves significant. In recent years, Colombia has advanced toward a more flexible model of citizenship recognition and regularization of migrant populations, especially in relation to Venezuelan migration. This approach demonstrates that nationality can be a tool of protection and solidarity, and not solely a device of control. The comparison allows concluding that citizenship laws are never neutral, but reflect ethical and political conceptions about what it means to belong to a community.

Throughout this research, it has been shown that, in contexts of migration and diaspora, the borders of citizenship are rewritten in lived experience. Each collected story accounts for processes of affective, moral, and political negotiation. Austrian citizenship, as a resource of security and mobility, coexists with mourning for the loss of Colombian citizenship and with the need to reimagine the sense of belonging. Drawing on Smith (1996, pp. 19–36, 55–65), nationality constitutes a terrain where identity, power, and affect intersect, and the analyzed narratives confirm this hypothesis from the intimacy of migrant biographies. By centering the

voices of Global South citizens navigating Northern citizenship regimes, this study contributes original empirical evidence to the understanding of how Southern subjects react to the decision of renouncing origin nationality—experiencing it as a deeply embodied process of loss, resilience, and strategic reconfiguration rather than mere administrative compliance.

The situated narratives reveal not only the emotional and political costs imposed by restrictive models but also forms of agency through which individuals negotiate security and recognition while preserving transnational affective ties. This empirical contribution enriches transnational migration scholarship by foregrounding the intimate, gendered, and power-laden dimensions of citizenship choices in South-North contexts, underscoring the need for more equitable frameworks that recognize multiple belongings without demanding symbolic rupture.

The findings of this research demonstrate that naturalization processes and, in particular, the requirement to renounce Colombian citizenship, have profound and multifaceted effects on the experiences of citizenship, belonging, identity, and political agency of Colombian migrant individuals in Austria. Based on the analysis of situated narratives, the study reveals that these dynamics are not limited to formal legal transformations, but reconfigure affective ties, senses of rootedness, and forms of subjective positioning vis-à-vis the state and the nation.

In this regard, the research fulfilled its purpose of understanding these experiences from an intersectional and gender perspective, articulating contributions from critical sociology and Chicana theory of symbolic borders. Likewise, the results provide original empirical evidence in a field that remains underexplored, contributing to broadening the academic debate on citizenship, migration, and belonging from the viewpoint of the lived experience of the Colombian diaspora in Austria. The anonymized narratives, elicited through semi-structured interviews, enabling traceability and ethical rigor in the analysis.

The findings show that citizenship does not constitute solely an identity marker or a way of presenting oneself to the world. It is, fundamentally, a guarantee of rights and a situated social resource. Access to rights, protection, and recognition depends decisively on the state to which one belongs, and in this sense, citizenship operates as a form of symbolic and social capital in the relational sense proposed by Bourdieu (1986, pp. 241–248). In the case of Colombian migrants in Austria, Austrian citizenship is perceived as highly valued capital that translates into legal security, social stability, and protection against explicit and implicit forms of exclusion. Several interviewees expressed that naturalization increases their sense of safeguard against discrimination in access to social benefits, subsidies, or health services, and contributes to reducing the uncertainty that accompanies the migratory experience. Participant P, for instance, underscored this instrumental dimension: “With the Austrian one, you travel with confidence” (Participant P, personal communication, 2025). This finding directly addresses the objective of examining the subjective and practical meaning that citizenship acquires in the life trajectories of migrants.

In terms of international development, the findings allow affirming that citizenship policies directly impact life trajectories, social integration, and political agency of migrant individuals. Restrictive models generate symbolic, emotional, and democratic costs that cannot be ignored. The experiences of those who participated in this research reveal that naturalization is not a mere bureaucratic procedure, but a deeply human process, laden with uncertainty, resilience, and identity reconstruction. Naturalizing implies choosing, losing, gaining, and reconfiguring ties; it involves learning to inhabit a permanent border between multiple belongings.

Finally, this research contributes to an academic field that remains incipient: the study of the Colombian diaspora in Austria. The scarcity of prior bibliography makes these voices

particularly valuable for understanding how citizenship borders are produced, lived, and negotiated in contexts of global inequality. In synthesis, the emotional and political process that Colombian migrants undergo when applying for Austrian nationality and renouncing Colombian nationality reveals a complex negotiation between security, recognition, and loss. Citizenship, far from being merely obtained or renounced, is felt, contested, and constantly reinterpreted in the intimate space where personal biography and global order intersect. Understanding it from lived experience—with special attention to gender, power, and border—allows illuminating the invisible hierarchies of the contemporary world and opening fundamental questions about justice, belonging, and rights in increasingly transnational societies.

The intersectional and gender perspective, articulated with Chicana theory of symbolic borders, permeates the empirical reflection of this study by foregrounding how gendered and racialized power structures intersect with citizenship regimes to shape differential experiences of loss and agency. The narratives reveal that women migrants, in particular, inhabit liminal borderlands where multiple oppressions converge, yet they forge resistant subjectivities through relational practices and affective negotiations. As Peña et al. (2023, p. 67) note, Chicana/Latina feminism "emphasizes the lived experiences of women of color as central to knowledge production", enabling a critique of assimilationist models and affirming hybrid identities that challenge fixed national boundaries.

This study also seeks to nourish scholarship on nationalities and identities in the Global South by centering the voices of Colombian migrants who navigate citizenship renunciation in a Northern context. It contributes to emerging discussions on how restrictive policies in the Global North impose symbolic and emotional costs on Southern subjects, while highlighting agency in reconfiguring transnational belonging. Drawing on critical transnationalism, the findings

underscore that such processes "challenge the traditional state-citizen relationship" (Glick Schiller, 2018, p. 202), offering insights into the uneven global hierarchies of mobility and rights that affect Southern diasporas. By documenting the intimate reactions of Global South citizens to the decision of renouncing origin nationality—through mourning, resilience, strategic negotiation, and preservation of affective ties—the empirical evidence enriches the understanding of how Southern subjects actively respond to Northern citizenship regimes, transforming imposed rupture into sites of agency and reimagined belonging.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Questionnaire

With the aim of ensuring methodological transparency and contextualizing the process through which empirical material was generated, this appendix presents the semi-structured interview guide and the field notes employed in the research. The guide was designed following the principles of qualitative and ethnographic inquiry to facilitate the emergence of rich narratives concerning the emotional trajectories, identity negotiations, and citizenship decisions of Colombian migrants residing in Vienna.

Thematically organized around the initial motivations for migration, the affective challenges associated with renouncing Colombian nationality, the coping strategies adopted, and the transformations in participants' sense of belonging, it reflects the central interest of this study in understanding how individuals make meaning of and navigate the transition toward Austrian citizenship. The field notes, in turn, document the researcher's observations, contextual reflections, and affective dynamics that surfaced during the encounters, providing a complementary layer of data that enriches subsequent interpretation and reinforces the study's commitment to methodological rigor, reflexivity, and theoretical coherence.

This appendix aims to deepen the understanding of the emotional processes experienced by Colombian immigrants when applying for Austrian citizenship—a process that, in most cases, requires the irrevocable renunciation of their nationality of origin—through the presentation of the semi-structured interview guide and the field notes that informed the subsequent analysis. The semi-structured interview, recognized as a key instrument in qualitative research, enabled

the combination of flexibility and systematic inquiry to elicit detailed personal accounts, emotional insights, and subjective interpretations of complex social experiences.

The guide explored key dimensions of the migratory trajectory, including initial motivations, emotional tensions during naturalization, identity reconfigurations, and the evolving sense of belonging within the Austrian context. The field notes, for their part, captured nonverbal cues, situational dynamics, and the researcher's in situ reflections, thereby expanding the interpretive depth of the material. Together, these instruments constitute a robust and multidimensional foundation for analyzing the lived experiences of Colombians in Vienna in relation to the legal, affective, and symbolic implications of acquiring Austrian citizenship.

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this research study. The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore the emotional journey and experiences of Colombians residing in Vienna who have undergone or are considering the process of renouncing their Colombian nationality to obtain Austrian citizenship. Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential. Please feel free to elaborate on your answers as much as you like.

Demographic Information

Age:

Gender:

Length of residency in Vienna:

Occupation:

City of origin:

First visa when arriving:

Where did you make your undergraduate studies?

Initial Emotions and Motivations

Can you tell me about your situation as migrants, why, and how you came to Austria?

Have you considered applying for Austrian citizenship? If so, please elaborate (time and goals).

Can you describe your initial emotions when you first considered obtaining Austrian citizenship?

What were your primary motivations for pursuing Austrian citizenship?

Did you experience any conflicting emotions during the decision-making process? If so, please elaborate.

Emotional Challenges and Coping Mechanisms

Can you discuss any emotional challenges you faced during the process of renouncing your Colombian nationality?

How did you cope with these challenges?

Did you seek support from family, friends, or other resources? If yes, how helpful was this support?

Have you had any loss or impact on some of your relationships with friends and family during your migration or changing nationality path?

Sense of Identity and Belonging

Where do you consider home?

How did the process of renouncing your Colombian nationality impact your sense of identity?

Do you feel a sense of belonging to Austria now that you have obtained citizenship? How does this compare to your sense of belonging to Colombia?

Have there been any cultural or emotional adjustments you have had to make as a result of obtaining Austrian citizenship?

Reflections and Future Outlook

Looking back, how do you feel about the decision to obtain Austrian citizenship?

What advice would you give to other Colombians considering a similar path?

How do you envision your future in Austria, both personally and professionally?

Additional Comments

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of obtaining Austrian citizenship and the emotional journey associated with it?

Conclusion

Thank you once again for your participation in this research study. Your insights are invaluable and will contribute to a better understanding of the emotional processes involved in acquiring Austrian citizenship among Colombians living in Vienna. If you have any further questions or would like to provide additional information, please feel free to contact the researcher.

This semi-structured questionnaire provides a framework for exploring the emotional experiences of Colombians transitioning to Austrian citizenship while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their responses and share personal insights. Adjustments can be made based on the specific focus and objectives of the ethnographic research study.

Appendix B

Fieldwork Diary and Researcher Reflections

“Too Austrian for Colombians, Too Colombian for Austrians”: 1’s Identity Negotiations

I was able to contact the interviewee beforehand, as I had known him for several years. I already knew that he had held Austrian citizenship for a long time and that his connection to his Colombian side was not particularly active. For this reason, I considered his experience especially valuable: unlike Colombians who arrived in Austria as adults, he left Colombia as a child. His trajectory offers insight into how Colombian identity is experienced when most of one’s life unfolds in a different cultural and national context.

The interview took place at his home in the Währing district, where he lives with his family. We sat at the dining table while his family remained in the adjacent living room. Before starting the recording, we discussed the interview format, and he expressed curiosity about the questions and the thematic focus, even though we had already talked about these details when arranging the meeting.

Throughout the conversation, he was very cautious, aiming to provide precise answers. Although the interview was conducted in Spanish—and he could choose between German, English, or Spanish—he explained that while Spanish is his mother tongue, German is now his dominant language. He speaks Spanish with a slight accent and occasionally hesitates or forgets certain words. Nevertheless, he said he felt comfortable conducting the interview in Spanish.

After the recording, we talked informally about his feelings and future plans. Off the record, he shared that he has no intention of returning to live in Colombia. He may visit, but neither he nor his family plans to settle there again. Still, he maintains ties to the country: part of his family still lives in Colombia, and his stepfather—who was Austrian—spent his final years residing there.

What surprised me most was his sense of “extrational” identity. Even though he is fully adapted and integrated into Austrian society, he still feels he is not entirely Austrian. He is often perceived as “the Colombian,” and at times he receives stereotypical jokes related to drugs or criminality. Yet when he travels to Colombia, he is also not fully recognized as Colombian; many perceive him as “the Austrian.” Despite being born in Colombia, having a Colombian name and appearance, he no longer fully fits in.

This duality —“too Austrian for Colombians, too Colombian for Austrians”— shapes his everyday life and his sense of belonging. He has no interest in regaining Colombian citizenship, as his future and that of his family are firmly rooted in Austria. Still, his experience highlights how early migration can generate complex, hybrid, and sometimes contradictory identities.

Diasporic Memory and Layered Belonging: The Testimony of Interviewee SI

I was able to contact the interviewee through a mutual acquaintance who briefly mentioned the project to her. She agreed to participate, and from there we established direct communication.

Although she mentioned that scheduling a meeting was not particularly easy, we managed to arrange an appointment fairly quickly at a café near her home in the Floridsdorf district.

From the very beginning, she appeared relaxed but also noticeably emotional. At several points, she grew nostalgic when speaking about her relationship with Venezuela, as many of her memories and emotional ties stem from that country—attachments that are not necessarily tied to nationality or a passport. Her situation, as someone who once held dual nationality (Colombian and Venezuelan), brought a unique and insightful perspective. While she appreciates her Colombian nationality, she feels much more Venezuelan in terms of identity.

The conversation flowed naturally, but there was one moment when she struggled to continue: when she spoke about the reasons why she and her family were forced to flee Colombia and take

refuge in Venezuela. It is clear that her past as a victim of violence remains a painful and unresolved part of her life. Yet this history also explains the profound gratitude she feels toward Venezuela—the country that welcomed her family and eventually became the path through which she arrived in Austria, where she worked at the Venezuelan Embassy in Vienna.

After the interview, we walked together toward the public transport station. During that time, she reiterated her intention to continue living in Austria and mentioned that she does not plan to return to Colombia. She also explained that she does not feel a strong need to apply for Colombian citizenship. However, if she had to choose, she would prefer Colombian citizenship over Venezuelan citizenship, given the latter's limited practical advantages. In her view, Colombian citizenship would hold greater value, even though emotionally she feels more connected to Venezuela.

She also mentioned that obtaining a Colombian passport could serve as a more personal way of reconnecting with her Colombian identity—not strictly because of nationality, but due to a broader sense of regional belonging. For her, just as some people feel European, others may identify as Latin American, South American, or part of a regional community that transcends formal citizenship.

Anonymity, Diaspora Networks, and Hopes for Dual Citizenship: The Case of Interviewee

SV

I met her some time ago through a mutual friend. She had been active in some events with the Colombian diaspora in Austria, which made it easier to contact her. From the very beginning, she was cautious in her responses and insisted strongly on keeping the interview anonymous. She expressed fear that sharing her experience could cause legal issues or associate her with certain

political groups. She did not want to “collaborate” with the Colombian government, as she feels very distant from the current administration and prefers not to be linked to it in any way.

We met in the evening at a Spar in Floridsdorf; she chose the place, and it was convenient for both of us. Despite her initial caution, she was genuinely curious about the interview and became very cooperative once we began talking. She explained that she still feels some connection to other Colombians in Austria and values the informal networks of support that exist within the diaspora.

Coordinating the interview was surprisingly easy. During our conversation, she asked whether there was any possibility that the Austrian government might change its laws to allow people to regain Colombian citizenship without having to give up the Austrian one. She seemed truly hopeful and said that if Austria allowed dual citizenship, she would apply for Colombian nationality “the very next day.” She also expressed the wish that research like mine could somehow contribute to pushing for legislative changes.

What struck me most was her strong insistence on remaining anonymous. She fears any legal or political implications that could arise from publicly sharing her story, which shows how sensitive and personal this topic remains for her.

The conversation was pleasant overall. She mentioned that this is a new stage in her life and that she now needs to work on strengthening her Austrian side. This reinforces the idea that naturalization serves as a step that accelerates the formation of her Austrian identity, although it is not necessarily the endpoint.

Political Engagement, Transnational Commitment, and the Meaning of Citizenship: The Testimony of J

He is someone I have known for several months, and he has been very active within the Colombian community in Vienna. Given this familiarity, we arranged an interview. After a few attempts to coordinate our schedules, we finally met at a café near Döbling station on the U6 metro line.

For him and his family, obtaining Austrian citizenship was a long and costly process. Their new passport symbolizes the culmination of a prolonged struggle with the Austrian system and its bureaucracy, a process that was further delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, acquiring citizenship marked an important milestone: it allowed them to settle permanently in Austria with full stability and legal guarantees.

After the interview, we briefly discussed politics in both Austria and Colombia. He expressed a strong interest in continuing to work on political issues that bridge the two countries. Although he regrets no longer holding Colombian citizenship, he understands that his new Austrian nationality can serve as a tool to strengthen cooperation with Colombia from within Austrian institutions.

His interests remain centered on promoting collaboration and maintaining strong ties with Colombia. He aims to support not only Colombian cultural initiatives in Austria but also deeper cooperation between both nations. He views his passion for politics and his new citizenship as an opportunity to build bridges that foster mutual development. He also has projects aimed at supporting the Colombian diaspora in Austria—a community that is not very visible or organized.

It is clear that J is deeply invested in politics and has ambitions to grow in that field. In the past, he has built connections with political actors in Colombia, and now he hopes to do the same

within Austria. European citizenship will also grant him access to scholarships, programs, and opportunities available only to EU citizens.

He acknowledges that he focuses more on what he gains than on what he loses. However, he tried to retain his Colombian nationality for as long as legally possible, which suggests that although the decision has been made, he has not fully come to terms with it emotionally. It seems that, after many years in Austria, he already feels quite Austrian, yet his Colombian identity continues to play a decisive role in his everyday life.

His passion for politics and international cooperation is at the core of his personal project. He believes he will still be able to support Colombia from within Austrian institutions and through his new citizenship, becoming a bridge between the two countries.

Political Agency, Vulnerability, and the Search for Security: Insights from Interviewee D

I obtained her contact information through mutual friends. Although she is usually well connected with the Colombian diaspora in Austria, we had not previously had the opportunity to speak directly.

We agreed to meet at her office, located in Vienna's first district. When I arrived, I waited for her briefly before we entered her workspace together. She shares the office with another colleague who left the room shortly after we began speaking, giving us privacy for the interview.

At the beginning, we talked about topics and people from the Colombian community that we both knew. From the first minute, she showed a strong level of political engagement, as well as a very clear and confident voice when speaking about political issues. It was evident that she works in politics, that she knows her rights well, and that she has a sharp awareness of the risks posed by political changes both in Austria and internationally.

Throughout the interview, she was emphatic about political matters. She expressed great interest in explaining how different aspects of her life are connected to politics in Austria and in Colombia. She also conveyed pride in her work and in her continued political involvement. She explained that changing her nationality also reshapes the way she relates politically to both countries.

One important point she shared was that being able to vote for Gustavo Petro —a left-wing, socialist leader in Colombia— allowed her to feel a sense of closure regarding her political stage in Colombia. Casting that vote was, for her, a symbolic ending before transitioning into a new political identity in Austria.

She expressed that one of her main concerns about not having Austrian citizenship relates to the increasing electoral success of far-right and anti-immigration parties. She sees Austrian nationality as a way to ensure security and stability in the face of extreme scenarios, such as restrictive measures or even expulsions. She also mentioned that someone once told her that in cases where an Austrian and a migrant are competing—for example, for subsidized housing or access to healthcare—the Austrian will almost always be favored. Hearing this reinforced her sense of vulnerability.

She also explained that without citizenship, she fears being treated as a second-class resident or facing discrimination in everyday situations due to her migrant background. I was struck by how clearly she articulated these concerns and by the depth of the fear they carry. Despite being proud of her Colombian identity, she feels forced to renounce it to protect her stability and future in Austria. These factors were decisive in her decision to change her nationality.

Between Pragmatism and Emotional Reclamation: The Dual-Nationality Exception of Interviewee P

I obtained this contact through my thesis supervisor. She is part of the very small group of people who legally retain dual nationality in Austria. Her work as a researcher made this exception possible, since her academic connection to Colombia allowed her to demonstrate both the professional and personal need to maintain both citizenships.

Scheduling the interview was challenging: she had upcoming travels and very limited time in Austria. Even so, she made space for it and we met in her office. She is a professor and works extensively on Colombia-related topics, which also explains her strong connection to the country and the justification she presented to keep both nationalities.

During the conversation, she mentioned that she feels fortunate to have both passports. Although she explained that, at the time, accepting the renunciation of her Colombian nationality had been a purely pragmatic decision, she also revealed that regaining it later carried a much deeper symbolic and emotional meaning than she expected.

After the interview, we talked briefly about people and projects we had in common. I found it striking that even though she does not intentionally surround herself with Colombians, connections always appear: for instance, my roommate had worked with her on Colombia-related topics.

Throughout the interview, she emphasized that the process had always been pragmatic for her. However, some questions prompted her to reflect on the emotional dimension of the experience. It seemed as though she had never fully taken the time to consider the symbolic weight of renouncing her nationality, beyond the administrative aspect. When speaking about it, a certain nostalgia emerged: she highlighted her Colombian identity and expressed pride in her connection to the country.

She also emphasized the important role her partner played in her decision-making. She explained that he gave her the confidence she needed to proceed, and although her life is firmly rooted in Austria, she does not consider returning to live in Colombia.

What surprised me most was how emotional she became when talking about regaining her nationality, more so than when recalling its loss. It was as if she had avoided experiencing any sense of grief at the moment of renunciation, relying instead on a purely practical approach, and only later—once she recovered it—allowed those emotions to surface.

Identity Loss, Legal Constraints, and Emotional Grief: The Testimony of Interviewee PA

I met PA through groups of Colombians living in Austria. She has been actively involved in this community and had shown interest in participating in the study. Although she arrived slightly late to our meeting, she was extremely cooperative throughout. During the interview, she openly shared the emotions and frustrations she has experienced since losing her Colombian citizenship. She explained that her sense of belonging remains strongly connected to Colombia, and that this conflicts with the Austrian requirement to renounce her nationality in order to fully integrate. This obligation generates a sense of resentment toward the host country, as she feels forced to give up something essential to who she is. She even mentioned that she would feel more included in Austria if she were not required to abandon her national identity.

After the interview, we discussed the possibility of legally reacquiring Colombian citizenship. She asked whether I had contacts, information, or guidance regarding the process. She seemed genuinely interested in exploring this option, hoping to avoid a situation in which she would later have to renounce Austrian citizenship just to regain the Colombian one.

She emphasized that her partner has played an important role in navigating these changes and providing emotional support. However, she also noted that her family in Colombia doesn't fully understand her situation, leaving her feeling somewhat unsupported.

It seemed to me that she has been processing this loss as a form of emotional grief for quite some time. What surprised me most was her reflection that acquiring Austrian citizenship hasn't made her feel more Austrian; instead, she feels less accepted when Austria requires her to give up her Colombian identity. This perceived rejection affects her deeply.

She also mentioned her interest in advocating for legislative change, whether in Austria or more likely in Colombia. She believes that if Colombia were to prohibit the renunciation of citizenship—as is the case in countries like Mexico—then dual nationality could be preserved de facto, avoiding situations like hers.

She expressed that losing Colombian citizenship feels like losing an important part of her identity. She even imagines that, in the future, she might apply to regain Colombian citizenship and renounce the Austrian one if that were necessary to restore her legal identity.

She became visibly affected when we discussed the legal and administrative consequences of renouncing Colombian nationality: inheritance rights, bank accounts, legal ties, and family arrangements. These concerns add another layer of complexity to her emotional process.

Deliberate Non-Naturalization and the Preservation of Colombian Identity: The Case of Interviewee AR

I had known her for a long time before the interview. We met years ago, and her experience was actually one of the reasons that inspired me to begin this project. She has lived in Austria for several years, and although she already meets all the requirements to apply for Austrian citizenship, she has not taken that step.

One of the reasons she gives is that her company handles all her visa procedures, so she does not need to manage the process herself. This significantly reduces any bureaucratic pressure and removes the urgency to obtain citizenship.

In previous conversations, she told me that she has avoided applying because, if she were to become Austrian, her future children would not be able to obtain Colombian nationality, since both parents would then be Austrian. For that reason, she has decided to postpone the decision, at least until she is certain about whether she will have more children. This shows that she is voluntarily giving up—for now—the rights of an Austrian citizen while living in Austria, simply to avoid losing her Colombian nationality.

Before recording the interview, we met in a separate room to distance ourselves from the noise of her family—her father, her daughter, and the nanny. She briefly asked for more details about the study, and then we began.

After the interview, she mentioned other Colombians who might participate. She seemed genuinely interested in the project and repeatedly told me that she feels privileged to be able to choose freely whether or not to naturalize, without pressures related to visas or employment. She believes she had the advantage of moving to Austria for work rather than for a partner, and that her job also allows her to renew her visa comfortably, without the stressful procedures many migrants face.

Throughout the conversation, her frustration about not being able to keep her Colombian nationality was evident. She repeated several times that she does not want to obtain Austrian citizenship because she deeply values what being Colombian represents—not only for herself, but also for her daughter and any future children.

She acknowledges her privilege in not having to struggle with constant renewals and in being able to keep her Colombian citizenship thanks to her job. Still, she recognizes a paradox: she has property and family in Austria but cannot vote or participate in political decisions that directly affect her life.

However, she admitted that if dual citizenship were possible, she would apply for Austrian nationality without hesitation.

Economic Precarity, Mobility Aspirations, and Family Commitments: Interview with Participant U

This was the second-to-last interview of the project. We met at her home, where she lived with a roommate. When I arrived, she offered me a ginger tea, as she had apparently been sick. The conversation was fairly short and constrained by time. It was already late (8:00 p.m.) because she had just come back from work. There was little conversation before or after the interview due to the late hour and her exhaustion from the day.

From the beginning, she seemed comfortable but also slightly cautious about the information she would share. She mentioned that she initially thought the interview would focus on administrative matters rather than emotional aspects, so she was careful with her answers at first. She also expressed concern that some of her responses might unintentionally compromise other people. Despite this, she remained open and kind throughout the conversation.

During the interview, she placed strong emphasis on economic issues. Her main concern, as she repeatedly stated, was her current financial situation and her desire to achieve economic independence. She highlighted that having a European passport would give her greater freedom — broader job opportunities, access to studies in other European countries, and mobility without the restrictions tied to a Colombian passport. She had found potential academic and professional

opportunities outside Austria, but acknowledged that accessing them would be very difficult without European citizenship.

She maintains financial ties with Colombia and has become a source of support for her family and some friends, whom she helps economically from abroad. However, she mentioned that due to her daily responsibilities and financial pressure, she has not been able to think much about the future or make long-term plans.

It was also evident that she is a very family-oriented person. Having part of her family in Austria means she does not imagine a future far from Europe. Additionally, she spoke enthusiastically about her artistic interests and creative hobbies. She believes that having European nationality will give her the freedom to further pursue these interests — especially regarding studies, cultural projects, or artistic mobility within Europe.

Pragmatic Decision-Making and Reflections on Identity Loss: Interview with Y

She was the last interview I was able to secure. Although I had known her for some time, I didn't know that she already met the requirements to apply for Austrian citizenship. We met in a café at the end of the U4 line in Hütteldorf, as she lived nearby.

After a pleasant conversation, there wasn't much time to delve into other topics because she had to leave to take care of her children. Even so, she shared some reflections on what her life in Austria has meant to her.

She is very interested in telling her story and mentioned that, in an ideal scenario, she would like to remain Colombian. However, she did not seem particularly affected; instead, she appeared to be using this process to understand and reflect on the emotional transition she might be going through. Her decisions seemed guided by a pragmatic perspective.

It was a brief interview. She did not appear especially sensitive or distressed. For her, this procedure is a necessary step, even though she regrets having to renounce her Colombian nationality.