THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON STATUS WITHIN THE INFORMAL POLITICAL CONVERSATION

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Abstract

Migrants' lives are rarely strongly divided between their home and host countries. Instead, their lives orbit between two, or sometimes more, countries, becoming generators of cross-border exchanges with simultaneous loyalties and political participation in several countries. The informal transnational political conversation is a reflection of the overlapping political rights and practices that are forged and maintained through migration. This thesis examines the impact of migration on status within the informal transnational political conversation. It presents findings regarding the effects of migration on political interest and on homogeneity in the characteristics of political conversation partners; the importance of perception in political expertise; and political ideology as an element in maintaining trustworthiness within the transnational conversation. It is concluded that migration affects not only the political conversation from the point of view of internal dynamics of influence but also impacts the conversation participants themselves, in terms of their characteristics and interests. The thesis also presents a possible avenue for future research.

Keywords: Informal political conversation, Extraterritorial voting, Political behaviour, Migration, Transnational political practices, Colombia, Canada, Political influence, Persuasion.

Dedication

To my great friend, The Paraclete. Thanks to my son, my husband and my mother for their patience and unconditional support.

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Table of contents

Chapter 1
Introduction

Migration is recurrent in the history of humanity. However, the twenty-first century has been especially marked by this phenomenon. According to the International Organization for Migration, 3.6 percent of the world's population currently lives in a country different from where they were born (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021, p. 3). Estimates indicate that by 2020, there were 281 million migrants in the world, 128 million more than in 1990 (p. 3).

These mass movements of people challenge the traditional analysis of political activities since they imply a transformation in the context in which citizens' rights are framed. Currently, 115 countries allow non-resident citizens to vote extraterritorially, i.e., from abroad (Braun & Gratschew, 2007, p. 3). This figure represents more than fifty percent of the world's democracies with multiparty elections and universal suffrage. Extraterritorial voting is one of the forms of political participation most associated with diaspora politics (Lafleur, 2011, p. 482) or transnational political practices (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003, p. 762), which refer to efforts by states and migrants to preserve connections and maintain a commitment to the community of origin across borders (Barry, 2006, p. 26).

Migrating has a profound impact on the individual. Citizens who leave their country maintain links with the people and places left behind (Waldinger, 2015, p. 82), mainly because of a greater sense of belonging to their country of origin

compared to the host country, emotional ties, and interest in facilitating their possible return in the future (Nyblade & O'Mahony, 2014, p. 46).

Regardless of the reasons for leaving the country of origin, migrants face cultural, economic, social, and political changes in the host country, while facing the challenge of reframing their existing relationships to maintain connections with their country of origin. One of the most significant political challenges for migrants is to maintain a voice in the daily life of their country of origin, beyond elections, in everyday interactions such as informal political conversation within the social group.

Political conversation allows citizens to construct and reveal their identities, enhance their opinions, and connect their private lives with the political environment (Kim & Kim, 2008, p. 66). Migration impacts this daily activity because it implies the loss of a shared public life (Bennett et al., 2000, p. 101) that is useful for transmitting and strengthening the political preferences of the social group (Putnam, 1966, p. 652).

When they are in the same territorial context, the social group influences the political behaviour of its members (Campbell et al., 1960, pp. 295-332). What happens when some of the group members do not share the same territorial context? Evidence indicates that moving to another country allows migrants to develop new points of view and spread them to their cross-border social group (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011, p. 2), increasing their forms of participation (Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020, p. 8) and presumably modifying the internal dynamics of their social group.

The present research is focused on immigrants' informal political conversation with their conversation partners in their home country, what I will term "informal transnational political conversation". This research aims to contribute to the broader topic of extraterritorial political behaviour by addressing this question: How does migration shape the immigrant's status within their political conversation groups in their home country?

The research in the present thesis is motivated by a pair of competing hypotheses drawn from existing literature regarding the impact of migration on status in political conversation. Chapter 2 reviews in detail the literature motivating these hypotheses. For now, the two possibilities are presented in general terms. The first is that credibility and status increase due to a perceived increase in political expertise after emigration. The alternative possibility is that credibility and status decrease due to decreased trustworthiness following emigration.

The results indicate that migration impacts status within the political conversation because it impacts levels of interest in and search for political information. In the present research, there is evidence of a lack of interest in Colombian politics prior to migration. In contrast, the evidence presents a boost in political interest and information-seeking after migration. However, in the case of Colombians in Canada, these increases in interest in the politics of the country of origin and the greater search for information cannot be attributed directly to migration, since the political context of the country has generated greater political interest also among Colombians who remain in the country. What can be said with

certainty is that the arrival of the new president has generated political polarization of Colombians both inside and outside the country.

Regarding expertise, one of the most significant findings of the research is that the migrant's perception of their own expertise is insufficient for their conversation partner to share that perception. In some cases, it was evidenced that the conversation partner in the country of origin acknowledges an increase in the general political understanding of the migrant conversation partner but considers that it is necessary to live their country's daily reality to have a superior knowledge of it.

Concerning trustworthiness, the evidence suggests that the interlocutors' shared political ideology or similarity of political values make the perception of shared political interests endure after migration. Shared political interests, in this sense, refers to the perception that the outcomes of decisions similarly affect them. Interlocutors in Colombia referred to a shared political position or a system of shared values that maintained the perception of trustworthiness. This is in harmony with Lupia & McCubbins (1998, p. 64), who argue that reputation, party identification or ideology can be heuristics useful for persuasion if they convey information about experience and reliability to the interlocutor. In contrast, trustworthiness diminished when the interlocutor in Canada was interested in Colombian politics, but had the opposite political position of the interlocutor in Colombia.

The results indicate that migration not only affects the dynamics of influence within the conversation but also impacts participants by changing, in some cases, the homogeneity of their characteristics and level of interest in and engagement with

home-country politics. Concerning status within the conversation, the evidence seems to indicate that, in most cases, migrants diminish their status within the transnational political conversation. Thus, while they remain outside the country, their chances of influencing the politics of their home countries diminish.

Concerning the way in which this thesis is organized, the reader will find that the first chapter addresses the context of the research, the methodology, the hypotheses, the variables of interest and the questionnaires used in the interviews of the participants in Canada and Colombia. The second chapter addresses the literature review and the theoretical framework, focusing in particular on the concepts of opinion leader, informal political conversation, political influence, status, expertise, trustworthiness, transnational political conversation and extraterritorial voting. The third chapter discusses the current political context of Colombia, the arrival of the new president, the increase in political conversation, and the polarization and concerns of Colombians regarding the future of Colombia. The fourth chapter deals with informal transnational political conversation and its general characteristics, such as validation of opinions and the phenomenon of self-censorship. The fifth chapter deals with migration, information and political interest. Access to information from outside the country, self-perception of expertise, perception of conversation partners in Colombia, and interest in Colombian politics after migration are discussed. The sixth chapter discusses perceptions of the expertise and trustworthiness of all participants in the research. Lastly, chapter seven presents the study's conclusions, limitations and suggested future research directions.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

The political behaviour of citizens is influenced by the people with whom they talk about politics (Huckfeldt, & Sprague, 1995, p. 189-190), as well as their immediate social and geographical environment (Pattie and Johnston, 1999, p. 877). Due to this, this research presumes that when one member of an informal political conversation group emigrates, the dynamic of influence within the group is affected.

This research addresses this question: how does migration shape the immigrant's status within their political conversation group in their home country? A qualitative research methodology has been chosen to develop the research, using, as a case study, the experiences of Colombian migrants to Canada and their Colombian conversation partners. Case studies allow a greater conceptual refinement by analyzing a smaller number of cases (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 19). They also enable the approach to relevant variables for this research, such as status, which is difficult to measure statistically.

Concerning the relevance of qualitative research, Bhattacherjee (2012, p. 113) highlights its importance in investigations that seek to explore a phenomenon rather than to predict or explain it. Furthermore, Schmitt-Beck and Lup (2013) indicate that qualitative methods, such as interviews, have high heuristic value and can provide rich insights into the phenomenology of real political conversation (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 530).[1]

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[1] Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck's authority in political conversation research is noteworthy, not only because he has confirmed the filter theory initially put forward by Lazarsfeld et al. (1968; see Chapter 2), but also because he is one of the most prolific and dedicated authors in the research of informal political conversation.

Although survey results could be more easily generalized, the first findings regarding the importance of informal political conversation resulted from several interviews; see Chapter 2 regarding Lazarsfeld et al.'s seminal book, *The People's Choice*. Similarly, scholars who have already researched political conversation within a given national context, such as Eveland et al. (2011), indicate that the survey, as an indirect measurement, is less valid in this context (Eveland et al., 2011, pp. 1091-1092). These scholars have used surveys to address political conversation research and, following that experience, have suggested that qualitative or mixed methods are more appropriate when investigating political conversation (Eveland et al., 2011, p. 1096).

1.1.1 Research instrument

Due to this thesis's topic and its exploratory nature, the semi-structured interview has been selected as the research instrument. This form of interview has been chosen because it allows the research to proceed in the form of a natural conversation without neglecting the object of study, and also permits the researcher to probe for more details when necessary (Huggins, 2014, p. 4).

Generally speaking, the use of interviews as a research instrument allow the researcher to explore and validate concepts, identify potential causalities that are not evident through other instruments and obtain more "metadata" (see discussion of metadata, below). According to Mosley (2013, p.2), qualitative interviews are an important and often essential tool for making sense of political phenomena. The author states that probably due to a lack of training in interview methods, some people may consider them a less important and less useful research instrument.

Similarly, Rogers (2013), who has researched migrant populations in the United States, highlights that interviews have advantages that make them effective methods for exploring and validating concepts. For this author, interviews offer the researcher considerable analytical scope to probe respondents' thinking, which is not usually possible with the standard survey format (Rogers, 2013, p. 233).

In line with this, Mosley (2013, p. 5) states that interviews are also helpful for identifying causalities that are not evident in other forms of data because, through the interview, researchers interact directly with people. They can directly and deeply assess the roots of individual actions and attitudes. Furthermore, the interview allows the researcher to obtain more information both from the interviewee and from other people. During an interview, it is possible to obtain a concrete answer to a given question and metadata related to the interview context that is useful for analysis, such as whether the interviewee felt uncomfortable or hesitated in answering. In obtaining information about other people, during the same interview, a person can give an account of themselves and their interaction with or perception of other people with whom they interact.

1.1.2 Objectives of the research instrument

Concerning the specific role of the interviews in this thesis, two main objectives were pursued through them. The first objective was to collect sufficient data to answer the research question regarding the impact of migration on status within the political conversation. The second objective was to explore the characteristics of the transnational political conversation.

In terms of the first objective of collecting sufficient data to answer the research question, it will be explained in more depth in Chapter 2 that the two key determinants of status within the conversation and of the ability to persuade others politically are perceived expertise and trustworthiness. Regarding expertise, participants in Canada were asked questions about their interest in Colombian politics, the amount of information they consulted on Colombian politics, and their self-perceived expertise after immigrating to Canada. Similarly, in interviews with participants in Colombia, questions were asked about their perceptions of the expertise and level of information of conversational contacts in Canada. In line with the above, in terms of trustworthiness, which theory suggests is mainly determined by the perception of shared interests, participants from Canada and Colombia were asked about their concerns for Colombia's future and their perception that these concerns coincide with those of their transnational political interlocutor.

Regarding the political influence capacity of participants in Canada, they were asked whether their voting choice in the last presidential election coincided with that of their interlocutor. Participants in Colombia were also asked about their participation in other political conversation circles and to whom they would turn for advice on a political decision.

For the second objective of exploring the characteristics of transnational political conversation, participants in Canada and Colombia were asked about how they start the conversation, who usually initiates the conversation, the issues that spark political conversation, what political conversations were like before migration,

and how they handle disagreement when it arises. The full text of the interview questionnaires can be found in the Appendix.

1.1.3 Population analyzed

The population analyzed was Colombian permanent residents in Canada and Canadian citizens born in Colombia who were, in 2023, when the research was conducted, between 25 and 65 years of age and who had immigrated to Canada after 2012. Before starting the call for participants, the graphic designs, the invitation and informed consent forms, the research protocols and the ethical guidelines were designed, which were presented for review and approval before Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR). All content was developed in Spanish and English because the call and interview processes were conducted in Spanish, the participants' first language. Following ICEHR's approval and confirmation of SITA fund support, the call for participants was opened from April 19 to May 26, 2023.

The call for participants was made through the Facebook groups of Latinos and Colombians in Canada. In total, 20 requests for Facebook group postings were sent out and of these, 15 were successful (i.e., were posted in the Facebook groups to which the call for participants was sent). The Facebook groups were chosen based on several aspects monitored between December 2022 and January 2023. The aspects considered were the province, as I aimed to have at least one group for each province in Canada; the number of group participants, with the goal of covering a good number of participants; and the activity of the groups, with the aim of having weekly active groups where administrators post frequently, and participants

comment and leave feedback on the posts. The content published in each group was one of the most relevant aspects when selecting the groups where the call for participation in the research would be published. Groups focused solely on selling products and services, groups with low activity, and groups that provided advice on immigration procedures in Canada were discarded. The former is because of the limited attention that could be paid to an academic-related post in sales groups, and the latter to avoid misunderstandings about the nature of the research.

After the pre-selection of the groups, I proceeded with the presentation of the research and the request for publication of the invitation to participate in the cases of closed groups and the direct publication in the cases of open groups. One of the biggest challenges at this stage was the response times of administrators of closed groups and the elimination of publication by other users in the case of open groups. The initial objective was two publications for each group, an initial publication and another reinforcement publication two or three weeks later. This could be achieved only in some groups due to the previously mentioned challenges.

For the contact of those interested in the research, three channels were enabled: email, a telephone number for calls and WhatsApp. A Canadian contact number was used in the Canadian graphic designs, and a Colombian number in the Colombian designs. Concerning the selection process of the participants in Canada, the only criteria were that they met the profile previously described and that they filled out the required forms as part of due process. At this stage, the main challenge was the non-completion of the forms by people who expressed their interest in

participating and met the profile to participate. Concerning the latter, follow-up email messages were sent before the interested individual was discarded.

A total of 23 people in Canada expressed interest in participating in the research, although not all of them were eligible to participate. Of those who met the profile to participate, 15 filled out the form concerning interest in participating and of this number, 13 completed the entire documentary process and were interviewed.

The interviews were scheduled according to the availability of the interviewees without having a specific limitation on the time of day or day of the week to carry them out. The approximate duration of each interview was between 40 and 50 minutes. These were conducted in Spanish via Zoom and audio-recorded. After being interviewed, nine people in Canada referred to their political conversation partners in Colombia. There was no limitation on the type of relationship between the interviewee in Canada and their conversation partner in Colombia. Nor were participants in Canada asked to ensure the participation of the conversation partner in Colombia as a prerequisite for participating in the research. Twenty-two interviews were conducted in total, one for each participant: 13 participants in Canada and 9 participants in Colombia. After the interviews, the transcription was done in Spanish and then translated into English. In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, some of their demographics were modified, and pseudonyms were also applied.

Chapter 2
Literature review

This research examines the impact of migration on status within the informal political conversation. It is investigated whether, when leaving the country, the migrant increases or decreases their status within political discussion with their contacts in the country of origin. The implications of a change in status within the conversation are related to the possibility that the migrant increases or decreases their ability to influence the political decisions of their conversation partners. Research results are framed by two extreme theoretical possibilities: moving from being a follower in the country of origin to an opinion leader after migration or reducing status within the group by moving from being a political opinion leader in the country of origin to a follower after migration.

The investigation is based on theoretical approaches to political influence and informal political conversation, which have been built based on findings of "domestic" social interactions, that is, those that occur between two or more people living in the same political community, either in the same city, region or nation. Therefore, this research applies these 'domestic' theories to cross-border interactions to identify the particularities of cross-border interactions. This literature review develops a theoretical framework and addresses, in particular, the concepts of opinion leader, political conversation, political influence, and transnational political practices.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical starting point for this research is the findings of *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968) regarding informal political conversation. The findings pointed to conversation as a powerful vehicle of political influence (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p.153), where citizens are influenced by an opinion leader (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1965, p. 33) who has the potential to generate changes in individual opinions and group decisions (Kaplan & Miller, 1987, p. 306).

The People's Choice was one of the first studies to track voters' behaviour, from their pre-election attitudes, reactions to advertising propaganda, and their vote on election day. The aim of this research was to establish the role of various influences on voting and other political attitudes. The study maintained the same pairs of interviewers and interviewees throughout the research period, giving rise to more casual and exploratory discussions than those usually developed in social-scientific research. Unlike other research of the time, which used aggregated data (e.g., election results) to make inferences about individuals' behaviour, *The People's Choice* used individual-level data to make inferences about social processes and determine the correlation between individual behaviour and broader social aggregates (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995, p. 7).

The research began in 1940, and the results were published in 1944. The Columbia-University-based authors, Lazarsfeld and his colleagues, later known as the "Columbia School", proposed that to understand the vote of each elector, it is necessary to understand their background, particularly three factors: religion, area of residence and socioeconomic status. These factors are worthy of mention since

they established an enduring intellectual and methodological paradigm in the investigation of political behaviour.

Prior to the research conducted by the Columbia School, it was thought that only the mass media had an influence on the electorate's vote and that this influence was direct from the media to the voters, which is understood as a one-step communication flow (Eulau, 1980, p. 211). In contrast, the Columbia School researchers found that many voting decisions had been made before the start of the election campaign and that the campaign had not been the primary mechanism by which the vote choice was formed. When participants were asked what had contributed to their decision, their response was: other people (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1965, p. 32).

The researchers found what appeared to be a considerable person-to-person interaction, especially during the critical months of the electoral contest. Therefore, they put forward the concept of a "two-step communication flow", whereby the mass media reach the voters not in one step but in two steps (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p. vi). First, information flows from the media to an opinion leader, and the opinion leader, as a so-called "filter", transmits the information to a certain social aggregate. The two-step communication flow has been controversial from the point of view of political communication, particularly concerning the influence of mass media (Zaller, 1996). However, the filter hypothesis, which will be addressed later, has been confirmed in subsequent research (Schmitt-Beck, 2003).

Since the details of these findings were beyond the initial scope of the research, the authors of *The People's Choice* left some aspects undeveloped and

delved into them in two subsequent publications: *Voting: a study of opinion formation in a presidential campaign* (Berelson et al., 1954) and *Personal Influence* (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1965).

In *Voting*, the authors make an admirable *ex post facto* analysis and refine the concept of the opinion leader. Furthermore, in *Personal Influence*, they make an ingenious exploration of the applicability of the findings from political behaviour to domains such as marketing, fashion, public affairs and movies, and address the filter hypothesis in more detail. However, a weakness of these publications is that none of them is sufficient on its own to understand the concepts initially raised in the findings of 1944. The later works slightly modify what was initially raised. Thus, it is necessary to delve into the three publications to understand the evolution of the first results and find theoretical unity.

2.2 OPINION LEADER

In the context of interpersonal influence, the opinion leader has an informal character. They are different from a lobbyist or a public figure. They are an ordinary citizen who politically influences others in their immediate environment. Their field of action is a micro-context. The figure of the opinion leader becomes relevant when it is discovered that during the political campaign of 1940, voters had decided their vote before the mass media began to publicize it, and in order to make this decision, they sought advice from other people in their immediate circle (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p. 49).

The Columbia School's findings indicated that these informal leaders shared three characteristics: greater interest and competence in political issues, more

significant social activity or opportunity for social interaction, and slight superiority to other group members with regard to occupation and education. This superiority with respect to the group had to be moderate: sufficient to gain respect, but not so marked as to alienate them from contact with the group. Following Berelson et al. (1954, p. 112-114), the informal leaders were slightly more competent than the group but otherwise quite typical of the group of people they informed and influenced politically.

The possibilities that the opinion leaders have to exert influence on other people similar to them are linked to the nature of the conversation, which is the means they use to exert their influence. This allows spontaneity, flexibility and enhances their closeness with their micro-context.

The opinion leader can exert a more penetrating influence than the traditional media because their influence is exerted casually. Attempts at political influence by the mass media can be easily evaded, while it is more difficult to dodge a political issue when it arises in the middle of an informal conversation with someone close to oneself. Usually, the political topic arises unexpectedly during a conversation as a secondary and casual matter (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p. 152).

Flexibility is another possibility provided by the conversation. The opinion leader can choose the right moment to address the topic, adapt the message according to what they know about their interlocutor (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p.153), interpret reactions, and reinforce their argument by using references or examples that they know are understood and have an effect on their interlocutor.

Trust is an advantage that the informal opinion leader could potentially have in their favour. People trust the judgment and evaluations of a respected person in their circle, since they share the same interests and goals and, therefore, could help them make a decision that is in their best interest. Following Lazarsfeld et al. (1968, p. 156), the opinion of a respected person within the same context offers the voter a better understanding of the effects of the decision on the immediate environment and the possibility of choosing what is in their best interest.

Opinion leaders are, in turn, influenced by others close to them. They also turn to people they trust for advice, thus forming a complex web of opinion-leadership relationships. To paraphrase Berelson et al. (1954, p. 109), through opinion leaders, a complex circuit of leadership relationships is created in communities, similar to a nervous system running through the body.

2.3 INFORMAL POLITICAL CONVERSATION

Political conversation is part of citizens' lives. Exchanging views about a political news story, trying to persuade others about a candidate, or simply sharing information is so natural that it sometimes goes unnoticed as a channel of political influence.

This research takes up the definition of conversation of the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (2015, p. 44), which refers to any voluntary and free dialogue in which ordinary citizens talk informally about topics that interest them. It addresses informal conversation, which lacks structure and has no specific frequency (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1991, p.122). It is a conversation whose initial topic is not specifically political (Walsh, 2004, p. 35), but where political topics may

arise during an interaction about general topics. In harmony with this, it is worth adding that due to the transnational nature of the informal conversations that are the subject of this research, the definition of conversation for this research is not limited to face-to-face conversations, but also includes textual, voice and video conversations through technological platforms.

Regarding the definition of political conversation, researchers have disagreed on what exactly constitutes a political conversation between citizens. Most of the discussion revolves around political conversation and its role in the framework of deliberative democracy. A definitive conclusion to this discussion is beyond the scope of the present investigation, but the various positions on the subject are nevertheless considered.

Some scholars have called political conversation the soul of democracy (Kim et al., 1999, p. 362), as it occurs in private, but its results reverberate through the political system. That is, it has the potential to create a bridge between the private sphere and the public sphere.

The term public sphere refers to all areas of social life in which public opinion can be formed openly and freely (Habermas, 1991, p. 38). According to Schmitt-Beck and Schnaudt (2023, p. 6), what concerns the public sphere and political conversation can be conceptualized in three discursive spheres: public, semi-public and private. The differences between the spheres lie in the accessibility and structure of the conversation. Applying Schmitt-Beck and Schnaudt's typology to the present research, the focus is on private informal political conversation.

Following the issue of the soul of democracy, other authors point out that political conversation is not the soul of democracy but a social manifestation far removed from the democratic ideal because, just as politics is talked about casually, so is any other subject. From this perspective, it is argued that democracy creates democratic conversation, while casual conversation does not naturally create democracy (Schudson, 1997, p. 306).

In this sense, Minozzi et al. (2020), in an empirical study of conversation networks, proposed two models of political conversation – the intentional model and the incidental model – to determine the motivations people have for engaging in political conversation. In this way, these authors aimed to contribute to elucidating the controversy. The intentional model conceptualizes political conversation as planned, with selected interlocutors, and is motivated by specific goals, such as determining (through the conversation) which candidate or political programme is better (Minozzi et al., 2020, p. 135). For its part, the incidental model posits that political conversation arises as a consequence of other social interactions. It is unplanned, casual, and motivated by multiple goals (Minozzi et al., 2020, p. 136).

Applying their framework to conversation networks tracked for nearly a decade, Minozzi et al. (2020) conclude that informal political conversation is driven by non-political factors. In other words, they argue that informal political conversation is largely incidental and unintentional (p. 148).

Despite attempts to evaluate informal political conversation in the light of the democratic ideal expected from debate or structured political discussion, the two are different in nature without implying that informal conversation does not have

benefits as a political activity. Political conversation makes citizens more motivated to participate in elections and civic and political activities, while also allowing them to acquire greater political knowledge. These positive effects of conversation are not attributed to the action of conversing but to the characteristics of the people with whom the conversation takes place (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 529). Regarding this, Schmitt-Beck and Lup (2013, p. 527) explain that political conversations with people with similar political views help clarify issues and increase understanding, while conversations with people with different political views can also contribute to them becoming more sensitive to the interests of others and more tolerant of those opinions and those who hold them (Schmitt-Beck and Lup (2013, p. 529). In the first scenario, the conversation serves as an echo chamber, where citizens only receive confirmation of previously held opinions. In contrast, in the case of a conversation with a person with a different viewpoint, the participants are exposed to a questioning of their own opinions and receive stimuli to reconsider their existing preferences.

Other authors agree that informal political conversation, also called everyday political talk, is not necessarily driven by an intentional process but is spontaneous (Eveland et al., 2011; Walsh, 2004; Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013), and there is no clear division between social conversation and political conversation – the two are intertwined. Although occasionally motivated by political concerns, informal political conversations are usually unplanned and sometimes even uncivil (Conover & Miller, 2018, p. 379).

2.3.1 Filter function

Informal political conversation is biased and mainly top-down. The information discussed in a conversation comes from the media or official sources, such as political parties or government agencies. However, it is mediated and interpreted by opinion leaders (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1991, p. 144; Weimann, 1982, p. 771), who are prone to impose their arguments and point of view (Mancosu, 2019, p. 2929).

Moreover, informal political conversations often revolve around information published by the mass media, which means that when discussing the meaning of these messages, interlocutors receive signals regarding whether or not to accept the media messages. Thus, informal political conversation acts as a filter between mass media messages and a given micro-context. According to Schmitt-Beck (2003, p. 234), the influence of the media is exerted to the extent that they manage to penetrate the micro-context of the voter through person-to-person communication. Once past the filter of informal conversation, the mass media can deploy its persuasive power.

Schmitt-Beck (2003) takes up the claims of Katz and Lazarsfeld (1965), who argue that personal communication acts as a mediator between mass communication and the micro-contexts of voters. Schmitt-Beck's research confirms the filter hypothesis using electoral studies from several countries and obtains robust results of general applicability. The author indicates that the political conversation, in addition to its potential to exert a direct influence on the decisions of voters, also has indirect importance as a filter in the process of influence exerted

by more distant sources of political information, such as the mass media (Schmitt-Beck, 2003, p. 235).

In contrast, the political conversation may become confrontational depending on who is interacted with and the topics being discussed, so people may try to seek out others with similar attitudes to avoid unpleasant interactions (Mutz, 2006, p. 84). The anticipation of disagreement may motivate more conflict-averse people to less readily engage in conversations about political topics or to self-censor (Minozzi et al., 2020, p. 136). Thus, although political heterogeneity is essential for democracy (Mutz, 2006, p. 86), in informal political conversation, interlocutors are often selected according to homogeneity (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 519). Political heterogeneity refers to people with diverse backgrounds and different political views. Homogeneity, conversely, refers to similar people with similar political ideas.

Following Schmitt-Beck & Lup, most informal political conversations are homogeneous, that is, they occur between like-minded people and consist of exchanges of mutually agreeable statements and positions (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 520). Spouses, relatives and friends are important sources of political influence (Kenny 1998, p. 241; Zuckerman, 2005, p. 70). However, intimacy and respect, although present in the relationships of the interlocutors, are not the explanation for the varying degrees of political influence that are present; instead, political influence is grounded in the characteristics and preferences of others with whom the voter talks about politics, more specifically, by a minority or majority status relationship within the conversation (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1991, p. 156).

Political influence is then attributed to interlocutors considered politically trustworthy and perceived to have political expertise (Kenny, 1998, p. 240).

2.3.2 Effects

Informal political conversation satisfies political functions, although it does not meet the characteristics of formal deliberation because it is a by-product of social interaction (Conover & Miller, 2018, p. 387). Through conversation, voters clarify their preferences, better understand the political world, and develop a language for talking about politics, which prepares them for other political actions, including formal deliberation (Conover & Miller, 2018, p. 387).

People acquire knowledge about politics through conversation. In this vein, political conversation fosters learning and, thus, has effects on the political knowledge of interlocutors (Bennett et al., 2000, p. 119). By talking with others, one's understanding of politics can become more sophisticated, increasing the ability to evaluate public affairs and apply one's political interests (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 524).

Political knowledge could be understood as the information that citizens have about politics. The concept of political sophistication, on the other hand, generally refers to political knowledge *and* understanding. Stolle and Gidengil (2010) argue that the citizen's political knowledge should be measured according to daily life needs. They write that "[a] realistic assessment of citizens' political knowledge needs to focus on what they need to know, and that includes practical knowledge of government benefit and services" (Stolle & Gidengil, 2010, p. 103). However, according to Miller (2011), political sophistication encompasses more than political

knowledge from a normative point of view. It refers to politically interested, attentive and well-informed citizens:

> High sophisticates are more motivated to consume political information and, as a result, have more of it, so they have richer associative networks than low sophisticates. With greater learning, newly processed information creates more links between nodes in long-term memory (Miller, 2011, p. 578).

In harmony with the above, having well-informed interlocutors increases individual and group political knowledge (Huckfeldt, 2001, p. 436) and also increases the probability of "voting correctly," that is, casting a vote according to one's political interests (Richey, 2008, p. 374). Following Richey, the more politically knowledgeable interlocutors one has, the better (i.e., more "correct") one's choices will be.

2.3.3 Overview

The literature on political conversation currently emphasizes at least two broad themes: the role of political conversation within deliberative democracy and the effects of political conversation or particular types of political conversation on political behaviour. The deliberative democracy approach often addresses the debate regarding the extent to which informal political conversation can live up to the standards of political deliberation (Conover et al., 2002; Eveland et al., 2011; Kim et al., 1999; Mansbridge, 1999; Schudson, 1997; Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013; Walsh, 2004). They also address differences in conversation in heterogeneous versus homogeneous environments, focusing on how heterogeneity is more

desirable for deliberative democracy for various reasons, including that it allows for disagreement and, thus, the potential development of political tolerance (Mutz, 2006; Huckfeldt et al., 2004).

For its part, the literature related to the effects of political conversation and the analysis of specific forms of conversation addresses normatively positive or negative political outcomes (Conover & Miller, 2018; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1991; Huckfeldt, 2001; Klofstad, 2010; Richey, 2008; Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013), the flow of political influence through political conversation (Kenny, 1998; Richey, 2008; Zuckerman, 2005) and the exploration of specific types of political conversation (Schmitt-Beck & Schnaudt, 2023).

Although the focus of the present research is not specifically on the role of informal political conversation in democracy, it is worth mentioning that its relevance lies in the fact that informal political conversation fulfills political functions even though it is far from the formality expected in the ideal of democratic deliberation.

2.4 POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Political influence as a consequence of conversation has been widely documented (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968; Putnam, 1966; Robinson, 1976; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1991; Stoker & Jennings, 2005; Johnston & Pattie, 2006; Klofstad, 2010; Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013). This influence is understood as an interaction mechanism in which two people reach a political agreement after one or both of them change their minds (Mancosu, 2019, p. 2918). The two main theories to explain this phenomenon are the rational choice perspective (Downs, 1957) and the social cohesion perspective (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968).

From the rational choice perspective, ignorance and political sophistication are considered rational choices. The term rational does not refer to the quality or appropriateness, in a normative sense, of the individual's cognitive processes, but to the efficiency of the means used to achieve the goals (Caplan, 2011, p. 99). Rational ignorance consists of choosing to remain politically uninformed because acquiring information is too costly for the voter. In particular, if the voter presumes that their vote's impact on an election's outcome is negligible (Martinelli, 2007, p. 316), then almost any cost incurred to acquire political information is irrational.

The cost of information refers to the time citizens must invest to be informed (Downs, 1957, p. 265). Since time is money, and acquiring knowledge takes time, people weigh the benefit of being informed against its cost. Moreover, in sophistication, the incentive to acquire more political information is the possibility of being able to influence the vote of others and thus achieve a more significant impact on voting (Downs, 1957, p. 147).

Amidst rational ignorance and political sophistication lies informal conversation: a shortcut that allows one to acquire the necessary information from others and thus determine the option that best suits one's interests. Concerning political sophistication as a consequence of informal political conversation, Schmitt-Beck and Lup (2013, p. 529) indicate that by talking to others, citizens acquire a more sophisticated understanding of politics by increasing their ability to evaluate public affairs and their interests in the political process. They can also increase their knowledge about politics and become more sensitive to the interests of others, even those who do not share their political preferences.

Shortcut is a term that refers to cognitive heuristics. It is not an exclusively political science concept. It is also widely studied in psychology because it is a common approach derived from previous experiences in all individuals. According to Kuklinski & Quirk (2001), the concept refers to the mental shortcuts – simple rules or default assumptions – that all individuals use to make decisions automatically or unconsciously, reducing cognitive effort in decision-making (p. 294).

Obtaining information from someone else entails a lower cost (effort) than informing oneself, making the latter the rational choice, all other things being equal (Downs, 1957, p. 147). From this perspective, people seek guidance from those they consider to be more politically knowledgeable, regardless of whether or not they agree with them (Johnston & Pattie, 2006, pp. 135-136). Although the political conversation is asymmetric when more informed people interact with less informed people (Caplan, 2011, p. 105), those seeking someone with greater political knowledge aim to make high-quality decisions (Kaplan & Miller, 1987, p. 306).

Following the social cohesion perspective, the social environment of a typical voter is politically homogeneous and persists as such because of political conversation (Berelson, 1954, pp. 101-102). Individuals have their preferences and, through casual conversation, become aware of possible differences between their political preferences and those of other social network members. In cases where personal preference does not coincide with that of the social group, most citizens succumb to pressure and adopt the policy preferences of the social

network. The reason is the desire to maintain a shared social identity (Sinclair, 2012, p. 5).

Citizens' social networks consist, thus, of people with similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics with whom they share similar perspectives (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948, p. 148). Although family members cannot be chosen, individuals often choose and prefer to belong to homogeneous groups (Sinclair, 2012, p. 6). In cases where the political preference of the social group is not sufficiently clear, citizens turn to an opinion leader from their circle of trust (family, friends, co-workers) to make the decision that suits them best according to their ideas, values and behaviour patterns. The opinion leader is an integral part of the same group. Although they do not have markedly different characteristics, they are respected for their sound judgment and ability to evaluate politics (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p. 155). Therefore, it is likely that people in the social group vote without understanding the issues of the election but because a particular vote choice has been suggested to them (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p. 157):

> Trust in another person's point of view may be due to his prestige as well as to the plausibility of what he has to say or its relevancy to one's interests. It is obvious that in all influences, prestige plays a considerable role. The degree of conformity is greater the higher the prestige of the person in our group who seeks to influence us (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p. 156).

Prestige is understood as the credibility of the source and comprises two main components: expertise and trustworthiness (Tormala et al., 2006, p. 684). Expertise refers to the degree of perceived political knowledge of the opinion leader.

Trustworthiness refers to the degree to which the claims made by the opinion leader are considered valid and the general feeling that the source and the audience share common interests (Wallace et al., 2020, p. 440).

The perception of the source's expertise and trustworthiness determines the message's acceptance (Alt et al., 2016, p. 329). The more the opinion leader knows about politics, the more likely it is that others will listen to and decide according to the direction of the message (Klofstad, 2010, p. 95). The message is rejected if the source is perceived as unreliable (Hovland & Weiss, 1951, p. 648). Evidence indicates that citizens' assessments of the opinion leader's political expertise correspond to reality (Huckfeldt, 2001, p. 436). In most cases, opinion leaders do have greater knowledge than those who choose them as opinion leaders.

2.4.1 Status

Now that the relevance of the opinion leader as a channel of influence has been established, it is useful to look in greater detail at what aspects are relevant when persuading others. According to Lupia and McCubbins (1998), persuading others requires the sum of two aspects: expertise and trustworthiness; both characteristics shape credibility. In this research, status is used as a term interchangeable with credibility. In some sections of their research, Lazarsfeld et al. (1968) allude to this same concept using the word prestige.

In order to persuade, it is not enough to be an expert, but the other person to be influenced must perceive that expertise. Nor is it enough that there is a close personal relationship – the opinion leader must be perceived as a reliable source (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, p. 51).

2.4.1.1 Expertise. Citizens need knowledge to make political decisions and usually do not have it (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001, p. 951), so they resort to mental shortcuts that allow them to make decisions as if they had sufficient knowledge (Kuklinski & Quirk, 2001, p. 294). Informal conversation is one such shortcut that makes it easier to reach conclusions without understanding the arguments or even remembering the messages received (Kuklinski & Hurley, 1994, p. 748). Drawing on the political knowledge of others through informal political conversation offers the possibility of accessing what is needed to form opinions and make political decisions, which is why people often supplement the knowledge they lack with the advice of others (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, p. 39).

Early research on interpersonal influence indicated that an opinion leader should bring their constituency in touch with political reality and have a greater interest in media information than the rest of the group (Katz, 1957, p. 77). However, later research indicated that an opinion leader's perceived political knowledge or expertise transcends the informational component and includes the ability to foresee the consequences of political decisions made (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, p. 20).

2.4.1.2 Trustworthiness. In the context of political conversation, trustworthiness depends to a large extent on the perception of shared interests (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, p. 68). The lower the perception of shared interests with the political interlocutor, the lower the trustworthiness.

The importance of trustworthiness – and thus of objectively shared interests – raises an interesting theoretical possibility for the study of transnational informal

political conversation. People tend to form their perceptions of a political decision by evaluating the consequences of that decision for the nation as a whole (Mansfield & Mutz, 2009, p. 432). When living in the same country, political actors have the same interest in a positive outcome, as they are equally affected by the consequences. The literature is silent, however, regarding political trustworthiness between conversation partners residing in different countries. It is of particular interest for this research to explore the effects of migration on trustworthiness, given that in the political conversation between a migrant and their conversational contact in their home country, political trustworthiness cannot be based on objectively shared interests with respect to political outcomes in the home country.

2.5 TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL PRACTICES

Migrants' lives are rarely strongly divided between their country of origin and their host country. Rather, their lives orbit between two or sometimes more countries, making migrants a bridge between different societies. According to Bauböck (2003, p. 705), migration is an international phenomenon that involves a movement of people between territories of independent states. Such a phenomenon only becomes transnational when it creates an overlap of rights and practices in two different political communities. The term transnationalism, widely used in economics (Glick Schiller et al., 1992, p. 2), refers, in a general way, to the process by which migrants forge and maintain multiple social relationships that unite their home and host countries (Basch et al.1994, p. 6).

Scholars from various disciplines use the term transnational to refer to this reality of the migrant who maintains relationships and interests in two or more

different countries simultaneously. According to Martiniello & Lafleur (2008, p. 648), the interest in studying globalization and its impact on society has resulted in the development of several definitions of transnationalism, all of which coincide in describing the transnational as cross-border exchanges.

Among political science scholars, the main contrasts with respect to the conceptualization of the transnational revolve around the analysis of transnational political activities concerning territory. On the one hand, Østergaard-Nielsen (2001, p. 262) considers that migrants' political activities transcend nation-state borders and are best analyzed in a deterritorialized transnational framework. In contrast, Guarnizo & Smith (1998, p. 12) indicate that transnational practices are constructed within the boundaries of specific social, economic and political relations that are united by perceptions of shared interests and meanings. Following Guarnizo & Smith (1998, p. 13), any kind of transnational relationship would be unthinkable without a basic sense of shared meanings and a sense of predictability of outcomes that binds the people involved.

Concerning the concept of transnational politics, this research follows the definition of Martiniello & Lafleur (2008):

Immigrant political transnationalism covers any political activity undertaken by migrants who reside mainly outside their homeland and that is aimed at gaining political power or influence at the individual or collective level in the country of residence or in the state to which they consider they belong. Such power or influence may be achieved by interacting with all kinds of institutions (local, subnational, national or international) in the country of residence and/or

the home country, by supporting movements that are politically active in the country of origin or by intervening directly in the country of origin's politics. (Martiniello & Lafleur, 2008, p. 653).

Some authors also use the term transmigrant rather than immigrant (Basch et al., 1994; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998) to differentiate those migrants who regularly participate in transnational activities from those who do not. The specificity of the term transmigrant becomes relevant in the context of the findings of Guarnizo et al. (2003, p. 1234) regarding the low participation of Colombians living in the US in transnational activities, confirming that not all migrants engage in regular and frequent transnational activities. Immigrants more involved in transnational activities are better educated, have resided in the host society longer, and are more likely to participate in local politics (Guarnizo et al., 2003, p. 1239). In the specific case of Colombians in the United States, the authors confirm that not all Colombian immigrants are transmigrants, while affirming that the low participation of Colombians in transnational activities in the United States would continue with a downward trend in the coming years (Guarnizo et al., 2003, p. 1234).

Since the term transmigrant is not widely used among political science scholars, the present research refers to immigrants and their transnational political activities, with an interest in two transnational political practices: transnational political conversation and, to a lesser extent, extraterritorial voting. The rationale for including extraterritorial voting is that it is a reflection of the ties that unite citizens abroad with the country of origin (Lafleur, 2013, p. 117) and, in the particular case of Colombians, it is a right that they can exercise and gives them the possibility to exert political influence in their country of origin.

2.6 TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL CONVERSATION

Transnational political practices encompass various forms of participation: direct participation in the politics of the country of origin and indirect participation through the political institutions of the host country (Itzigsohn et al., 1999, p. 323). Forms of direct political participation include extraterritorial voting, support for political parties and participation in debates in the press (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003, p. 761). Indirect activities, on the other hand, include indirect participation through the political institutions of the host country or international organizations (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003, p. 762).

The informal political conversation has not previously been formally classified into either of the above two types of transnational political participation. Indeed, its classification as a form of political participation is still under scrutiny in intra-territorial normative-theoretical frameworks (Klofstad, 2010). However, given the direct and informal nature of the everyday political conversation, it could be classified as a direct transnational political activity because the immigrants interact with their interlocutor in the country of origin without going through any institution or intermediary to engage in such political activity.

To date, the only mention in the academic literature regarding transnational informal political conversation was made by Lafleur & Sánchez-Domínguez (2015). The researchers were analyzing the case of Bolivians living in the United States ahead of the presidential election and found that telephone conversations with non-immigrant relatives increased the likelihood of voting for a specific candidate:

The importance of talking about the upcoming election with non-emigrant relatives by phone is very significant. Among the emigrants who engaged in such activities, the likelihood of voting for Evo Morales is almost five times that of the reference category. This supports the idea that even though emigrants have sparse information about the electoral campaign, the influence of transnational connections—when they are of a political nature—can have a strong impact on their electoral behaviour (Lafleur & Sánchez-Domínguez, 2015, p. 174).

These observations are consistent with Guarnizo & Smith (1998, p. 12), who argue that transnational practices are possible only to the extent that they occur within social relations' limits. That is, transnational interactions are possible because the people involved share meanings and have the perception that they share interests (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998, p. 13).

In the absence of an existing, specific theoretical framework for transnational informal political conversation, this research takes as its starting point the findings of the research on informal political conversation – discussed in preceding sections of this chapter – developed in the domestic context, that is, concerning interactions involving people living in the same political community, whether in the same city, region or nation.

2.7 EXTRATERRITORIAL VOTING

Migration has changed how citizens exercise their rights by challenging the traditional relationship between democratic rights and territorial borders. Indeed, increased migration has contributed to the growing importance of extraterritorial

voting (Goldberg & Lanz, 2021, p. 279) and the right of expatriates to be active members of their home country's politics is increasingly recognized.

Extraterritorial voting can be defined as the possibility for citizens residing abroad to participate in elections in their home country through suffrage outside the country. Currently, 115 countries allow non-resident citizens to vote extraterritorially, i.e., from abroad (Braun & Gratschew, 2007, p. 3). This figure represents more than fifty percent of the world's democracies, considering it refers to multiparty elections with universal suffrage. Furthermore, the IDEA report (Braun & Gratschew, 2007, p.3) provides the geographical distribution of countries that allow extraterritorial voting as follows: 28 countries in Africa, 16 countries in the Americas, 20 countries in Asia, 41 countries in Europe and ten countries in Oceania.

In Latin America, Colombia was the first country to grant political rights to its citizens abroad with Law 39 of 1961, which allowed citizens to vote extraterritorially in presidential elections. This law was introduced in 1958 by liberal and conservative elites after they were forced into exile by a military dictatorship (Guarnizo, 2001, p. 234). Subsequently, extraterritorial voting for Congress (Const.,1991, art.171) and plebiscites (Const.,1991, art.103) were included in the 1991 Colombian Constitution. Colombian immigrants from all over the world can exercise this right for national elections, i.e., presidential and congressional elections. Extraterritorial voting for regional elections for mayors and governors is not allowed.

Regarding referendums, Colombia was also a pioneer in allowing this possibility of extraterritorial voting by including it in the 1991 Political Constitution.

Colombians can also have dual nationality (Const.,1991, art.22) and elect candidates representing the diaspora (Const.,1991, art.176). Including the last presidential elections in Colombia, held in May, 2022, Colombians abroad have been able to vote 15 times in presidential elections, 7 times for the Senate and once for a plebiscite, with the referendum for the peace agreement in 2016.

Despite these formal political benefits, some research indicates that the number of Colombians exercising their right to vote from abroad is a minority (Mcilwaine & Bermúdez, 2015, p. 387). This indicates, according to the findings of Mcilwaine and Bermúdez's research on Colombians living in the UK and Spain (2015, p.387), that not all Colombians abroad want to express their commitment to the homeland through mechanisms imposed from 'above' such as voting.

In this sense, Escobar (2007, p. 67) indicates that Colombian politics abroad does not question the political system in Colombia, but rather is an extension of the same system, given that the Colombian community living abroad has high abstention rates and is perceived as politically apathetic. This author argues that further evidence of this is that Colombia's personalist electoral system extends across borders, dispersing votes among many candidates and eliminating any potential threat to the status quo (Escobar, 2007, p. 67).

At the same time, and without ignoring the reality of abstentionism, it is possible to argue that the Colombian electorate abroad is not an extension of the system insofar as Colombians abroad do not vote the same way as Colombians residing there. A concrete case in point would be the results of the 2016 peace

plebiscite and the 2022 presidential elections. In both cases, the results abroad differed from those inside the country.

The analysis of extraterritorial voting by Colombians in Canada is beyond the scope of this research. However, it is suspected that the cost and difficulty of travelling to cities with a Colombian consulate to vote would be one of the main reasons for the low turnout. Colombia currently has consulates exclusively in Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal and Calgary. This means that Colombians living away from these cities and in other provinces of Canada, for example, the Atlantic provinces, would have to incur airfare and accommodation costs to exercise their right to vote.

2.8 THE STATE OF THE LITERATURE AND EXPECTATIONS

The phenomenon of migration has created an overlap of rights and political practices that are forged and maintained due to the simultaneous membership and participation in the political arena of two or more countries. Due to its omnipresence in everyday life, the informal political conversation is part of the political practices maintained after migration. Although its characteristics, limitations and benefits have been investigated in the domestic context, this has not been the case with the transnational informal political conversation, where the characteristics, limitations and benefits are still to be investigated.

Informal conversation is a relevant political practice since it fulfills political functions despite not fulfilling the characteristics of formal deliberation (Conover & Miller, 2018, p. 387). Through conversation, voters clarify their preferences, better understand the political world and develop a language to talk about politics

(Conover & Miller, 2018, p. 387). Political conversation fosters learning and has effects on the political knowledge of interlocutors (Bennett et al., 2000, p. 119) since when talking to others, the understanding of politics can become more sophisticated, increasing the ability to evaluate public affairs and one's political interests (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 524).

In harmony with the above, informal political conversation has also been established as a powerful vehicle of political influence where citizens are influenced by a conversation partner who has the potential to generate changes in individual opinions, thanks to the fact that their interlocutors perceive their expertise and trustworthiness. Such aspects are relevant in light of this research since the perception of the source's expertise and trustworthiness determines the acceptance of the message emitted by an interlocutor (Alt et al., 2016, p. 329). Accepting the message implies a status within the conversation and the possibility of political influence.

In the case of migrants, establishing expertise and trustworthiness makes it possible to address the question of the impact of migration on status within the transnational political conversation. Higher status means greater chances of adding votes for candidates or political issues of interest, while a diminished status implies lower chances of influencing political decisions (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, p. 64). Considering the above, the theoretical expectations of the research are presented below, that is, the hypotheses that frame the research in this thesis.

2.8.1 HYPOTHESES

The status within the political conversation group is equivalent to credibility, which is formed by expertise and trustworthiness. Research related to persuasion indicates that expertise and trustworthiness independently are not sufficient. Both aspects are required to influence others (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, p. 50-51).

This research hypothesizes that migration might impact both aspects in opposite directions, increasing the perception of expertise and decreasing the perception of trustworthiness. One hypothesis proposes credibility and status increase due to the perception of increased political expertise after migration. Conversely, the second hypothesis suggests that credibility and status decrease as a consequence of a decline in trustworthiness.

Research results were expected to fluctuate around two extremes: moving up from being a follower in the country of origin to an opinion leader after migration or reducing the status within the group by changing from being a political opinion leader in the home country to a follower after migration.

Hypothesis 1: migration boosts perceived expertise. Citizens require knowledge to make political decisions and usually do not have it (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001, p. 951), so they resort to mental shortcuts that allow them to make decisions as if they had sufficient knowledge (Kuklinski & Quirk, 2001, p. 294). Drawing on the political knowledge of others through informal political conversation provides the possibility of accessing what is necessary to form an opinion and make political

decisions, which is why people often supplement the knowledge they lack with the advice of others (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, p. 39).

Early research on interpersonal influence indicated an opinion leader should put its influence group in touch with political reality and have a greater interest in the information emitted by the media than the rest of the group (Katz, 1957, p. 77). However, later research indicated that the perception of political knowledge or expertise of an opinion leader transcends the information component and includes the ability to forecast the consequences of policy decisions made (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, p. 20).

The increase in status could be because the conversation group members perceive migration to the new country as providing access to a wider political perspective. The migrant might have a favourable opinion about the country of emigration. If the new country is perceived as aspirational, more politically and economically stable, and with better rates of development and security, then it might be desirable for the group members to draw on this perspective by consulting the person who has migrated. The increase in status within the group could also be because the person who has emigrated has remained more up to date with political matters than political conversation partners in the country of origin.

Hypothesis 2: migration decreases trustworthiness. People tend to form their perceptions about a political decision by assessing the consequences of that decision for the nation as a whole (Mansfield & Mutz, 2009, p. 432). When they live in the same country, political conversation partners have the same interest in a positive outcome since they are equally affected by the consequences.

Trustworthiness in a political conversation partner depends to a large extent on one's perception of shared interests (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, p. 68). The lower the perception of shared interests with the political conversation partner, the lower the level of trustworthiness.

It is hypothesized that migration may affect the perception of shared interests with the migrant because the consequences of political decisions do not affect the migrant to the same extent. Therefore, if it is perceived that the common interests are lower after migration, then trustworthiness diminishes. If trustworthiness declines, credibility and status decrease within the political conversation group. In such a context, if the migrant maintains status within the group, it implies that it has managed to project the same common interests with its political conversation partners.

Chapter 3
Current Colombian context

This section considers the political context in Colombia at the time of the research. Specifically, it addresses the increase in political conversation and polarization following the arrival of the new government. It also explores the concerns that participants in Canada and Colombia have regarding Colombia's future and whether they consider that their transnational political conversation partners share the same concerns.

During the encounters with the participants, both those in Canada and those in Colombia alluded to their concerns about the situation in the country. For this reason, and because some of the research findings must be understood in light of the participants' perceptions of Colombia's political context, the general aspects expressed by the interviewees are compiled here.

The findings indicate that the situation in the country has increased political conversation and polarization, a common challenge modern societies face in being unable to talk constructively across lines of political disagreement (MacGilvray, 2022, p. 165). As for the participants' specific concerns, they can be divided into three groups: about the country's structural problems; around the reforms proposed by the new government and the impact they may have on the functioning of health, education and pension systems; and finally, concerns related to the non-implementation of the reforms proposed in the campaign. In regard to the latter two

topics, political division between participants can be perceived. While some fear the new government reforms, others hope they will be implemented.

3.1 A POLITICAL CHANGE IN COLOMBIA

The electoral victory of Gustavo Petro in Colombia's 2022 presidential elections marked a milestone in the country, as he was the first leftist president elected in Colombia's recent history (The Economist, August 6, 2022) and a former militant of the guerrilla group the M-19 (Lambert, July 11, 2023). The M-19 was responsible for the "Siege of the Palace of Justice" in 1985, one of the most remembered guerrilla takeovers in the country, where magistrates and other members of Colombia's judicial branch were held against their will in the Palace of Justice, the building where they worked. According to the Supreme Court in Colombia (Council of State, 2020), the siege of the Palace of Justice left a balance of more than 100 dead and several people missing, and many of these cases are still unsolved.

Gustavo Petro has clarified on several occasions that he did not participate in the seizure of the Palace of Justice. Although he and other former guerrilla members signed a peace agreement with the Colombian government in 1990 (CNMH, March 11, 2015), the electoral triumph of the left in Colombia after more than 60 years of internal armed conflict was unthinkable. This triumph took traditional Colombian politicians by surprise as well as political analysts in the region, such as Handlin (2017), who, three years before the victory of Gustavo Petro, published a book on polarization in Latin America and left out Argentina and

Colombia because the measurements indicated "very weak" polarization (Handlin, 2017, p. 19).

At the time, Handlin argued that, in the case of Colombia, the low polarization could be explained by an internal armed conflict involving left-wing insurgents (Handlin, 2017, p. 20). Subsequently, other authors would identify the rapid and bitter growth of political polarization in Colombia starting in 2016 with the Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) (Carothers, 2019, p. 3). This polarization began among the political elites and spread to the population (Carothers, 2019, p. 153).

Polarization can be defined as a state and as a process (Callander & Carbajal, 2022, p. 626). According to DiMaggio et al. (1996, p. 693), polarization as a state refers to the degree to which opinions on an issue are opposed relative to some theoretical maximum. As a process, it refers to the increase in opposition over time. Callander & Carbajal (2022, p. 853) indicate that polarization as a process is most visible initially among elites and, from there, gradually becomes visible among the masses. However, such a process is complex because polarization arises from the interaction between elites and voters. That is, it originates from an "update" that voters give to elites. Such an update refers to an interaction where voters make their interests known to the political elite. Subsequently, with the tactics of the elites, it gradually spreads and feeds back to voters:

We show that the necessary ingredient for polarization is the interaction of voters and elites. Voter updating is necessary, yet on its own does not guarantee polarization. It is only when updating is combined with the

strategic maneuverings of party elites that a feedback loop is created and polarization occurs (Callander & Carbajal, 2022, p. 861).

In this sense, it is worth briefly mentioning that polarization in Colombia would be of a process type and historically has not been unfamiliar to Colombia (Feldmann, 2019, pp. 154-155); in fact, polarization was prominent between the years 1946 and 1960, during the era known as "La Violencia"[2], expressed in differences between liberals and conservatives (Bushnell, 1993, p. 201). This time would later give rise to guerrilla groups and lay the groundwork for a prolonged internal armed conflict.

Against the predictions of many and fulfilling the ardent desire of others, Petro was elected president of Colombia with 50.44% of the vote in the second round of the presidential elections (Lambert, July 11, 2023). He began his presidential term on August 7, 2022, which will end on August 7, 2026. Although the Petro government failed to consolidate majorities in Congress, by the time the interviews for this investigation were conducted, a crucial fiscal reform had already been approved and other reforms were underway in the Congress of the Republic, specifically pension reform and health reform.

3.2 INCREASED CONVERSATION AND POLARIZATION

Twenty-seven percent of the research participants[3] alluded to the situation in the country as a stimulus for political conversation. To illustrate, Cristián comments:

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[2] The term La Violencia (the Violence) refers to a specific historical period, not violence as a phenomenon.
[3] The total number of participants in the research is 22. When referring only to participants in Canada, this refers to 13 persons, and when referring only to participants in Colombia, this refers to 9 persons.

I think that nowadays, I would say, there is a concern due to the government. However, before this government, we also talked about politics, but not as much. I think that now, with this government, conversations on this subject have greatly increased (Cristián, Canada).

For his part, Osvaldo explains that as a result of the current situation, people who did not talk about politics before are now doing so:

That is almost the daily life here, to tell you the truth. Because of our current day-to-day life, even people who normally did not talk about politics are doing so. I have always been very aware of the political issue, so I always talk about politics in many contexts with many people all the time (Osvaldo, Colombia).

In the same vein, Julián points out that before Gustavo Petro's candidacy, he had no interest in politics as he does now:

No, actually, in the past, I had no interest in politics. My interest only started when Petro ran, when there were so many oppositions and so many points to talk about. It was at that moment that I started to talk about politics. And I ask my cousin because she is very much in opposition to the current president (Julián, Colombia).

With the increased interest in politics has also come increased polarization. Darío indicates that he has noticed an increase in polarization in conversations with his conversation partner in Colombia, as well as an increase in media polarization:

I arrived in Canada in 2017, and political actions and polarization have increased since that year. So, that's how our political conversations have also

increased. I mean, he did not comment as much on politics as he does now.

That is very clear. I consider from my academic experience, my interest, and

the university where I studied that I am a person who gives a lot of opinions

on politics. I have my points very clear, and I like to debate them. In his case,

it was not so, and now it is, which I am very happy about (Darío, Canada).

Similarly, Edith mentions her concerns about the radicalization of politics, as well as other issues that trouble her: *"The political issues are also worrying more in the sense of political radicalization of the right and left wings. And corruption, I think those are the most important issues"* (Edith, Canada).

For his part, Álvaro also alludes to polarization and what he considers to have become an unhealthy cycle in political discussion:

I have noticed that since Gustavo Petro's candidacy, the discussion has

become very polarized, and there are already many people who are even

afraid to say that they are leftists because they are disqualified. They are

treated as if they don't know anything about politics or that they are

communists, socialists and other adjectives that have become negative from

one moment to the next, without necessarily having to be so. I've seen that

more right-leaning people have become a bit more radical. So, there is no

space for discussion, but simply each group is reinforcing more and more

what they believe to be the truth, and the discussion of other points of view,

which are not necessarily right-wing or left-wing, is not encouraged. If

someone says he is from the centre, he is disqualified as lukewarm. From my

point of view, being abroad, Colombian political discussion has entered an unhealthy cycle (Álvaro, Canada).

In short, the interviews indicated that there has been an increase in informal transnational and intra-territorial political conversation, initially due to the candidacy and later the presidency of Gustavo Petro. The conversation was initially motivated by the possibility of Petro becoming the first left-wing president in Colombia's recent history, and today, the motivation for political conversation is maintained by the reforms that have been implemented and proposed for the remainder of the presidential term.

3.3 CONCERNS ABOUT COLOMBIA

When asked if there is anything about the future of Colombia that worries them, the research participants who responded to this question[4] mentioned some concerns about the country's future. Some made general mentions and others more specific ones. For example, César said: *"Every day. There is no issue in Colombia that does not worry one"* (César, Colombia). In the same vein, Federico states: "Yes, I think that, in general, there is a concern that spreads to a large part of the population" (Federico, Canada). Some other participants' comments reflected similar dynamics: *"Many things. A lot of things worry me about the future of Colombia"* (Nelson, Colombia)*; "Yes, ma'am. Sometimes I fear that perhaps things get heavy"* (Rosa, Colombia).

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[4] This question was answered by 16 participants.

Regarding the specific concerns of the participants, these can be divided into three groups[5]: about the country's structural problems, around the reforms proposed by the new government, and concerns related to the non-implementation of the reforms proposed in the campaign. The latter concerns express an expectation that the new government should implement the reforms it proposed during the campaign.

Structural issues

Forty-four percent of all research participants expressed concerns about structural issues in the country. The issues that most concern them are the economy and the cost of living, corruption, violence and inequality.

To begin with, Valeria, Julián and Cristián referred to the economy and the cost of living in the country as their main concerns[6]. To illustrate, Valeria mentions her impression of arriving in Colombia from Canada:

I was in Colombia last year, and I was quite surprised by the increase in the cost of living. It seemed crazy to me, even considering that it's like having a higher purchasing power when someone goes with Canadian money. But obviously, putting myself in the shoes of a person from Colombia, I found it quite sad. The cost of living is very high. It also seemed to me that now there is more labour informality, which is already common in Colombia but probably increased after the pandemic. I can see some situations in my family that, in

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[5] Note that participants listed more than one concern in each statement, thus some of their names are referenced more than once. However, they are counted only once and in the section where the statement was included.

[6] Dario also expressed concern about the country's economy.

recent years, have worsened economically. So yes, there are many issues in Colombia that concern me (Valeria, Canada).

In the same vein, Julián refers to the impact that the rise of the US dollar has had on the Colombian economy: *"The health issue and the issue of the price increase here in comparison with the dollar. We feel that Colombia's inflation is increasing in a way that perhaps we have not seen in a long time, so it is worrying"* (Julián, Colombia).

By way of general context, Cristián refers to the rise in prices and the fear that Colombia is going down the same path as neighbouring countries:

We are concerned that they are taking away our freedom. We are concerned about the high prices at a general level, gasoline, the family basket. For people who want to go on trips, the economy generally affects them a lot. We are concerned about the economy in general. We are concerned that companies are already afraid to continue with foreign investments. We are concerned about the country's future because we have examples in neighbouring countries (Cristián, Canada).

Corruption is another area of concern among research participants; twenty-five percent of them alluded to this concern[7]. To illustrate, Federico refers to his concern about corruption and the lack of opportunities for citizens: *"Corruption, or in other words, the lack of enabling opportunities for citizens from institutional spaces"* (Federico, Canada).

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[7] Lisa, Martina and Edith also expressed concern about corruption in the country.

On the other hand, Lisa and Darío expressed concerns about violence in the country. Dario explains his concern about several aspects, among which violence stands out as his primary concern:

I would think that the first one has to do with the country's stability in terms of peace, the level of violent actions in the country; obviously, we want them to decrease. Second, it could be health, the health system in Colombia. Third, economic stability. And also, given our profile, the country's academia, and educational level. I think those have been the biggest concerns. And they may vary depending on the debate. Sometimes some are more important than others, but in that order, I would think those are the ones that concern us the most (Darío, Canada).

In the same sense, Lisa mentions: *"Well, I think so. It's the violence, and it's the corruption, the lack of opportunities, everything"* (Lisa, Colombia).

Finally, two participants mentioned, among other concerns, inequality in the country, specifically the distribution of wealth (see statements by Edith and Álvaro). Other topics were mentioned only by one participant: Darío mentioned his concern about the academic and educational level in the country and Edith mentioned her concern about migration in Colombia: *"Yes, for example, the issue of inequality. I think we are concerned about that. Migration, the effects of migration"* (Edith, Canada).

Uncertainty over reforms

Thirty-seven percent of participants alluded to concerns about the reforms proposed by the new government and the country's future. For example, Osvaldo indicates that his concerns regarding the future of Colombia are many and sensitive:

There are many things about the future of Colombia that worry me, really many. The health system, I mean the changes they want to make to the health system, the issue of stability is very delicate. From my knowledge and what I have seen, there are many very delicate issues. We see the situation as quite complex from the political point of view at the moment (Osvaldo, Colombia).

Several other participants' comments reflected similar dynamics:

*The policy of the current president where the future of health, work, the economy, pensions, and private property can be affected. These are sensitive issues that we have talked about (*Agustín, Canada).

The future of the health system, the future of the pension system, and the employment of young people between 18 and 35 years old is a tenacious situation in Colombia, and the issue of the NEET[8] is a very serious future problem for Colombia (César, Colombia).

*Well, one is the distribution of wealth. Secondly, there are different reforms: pension, health, and labour (*Álvaro, Canada).

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[8] NEET is an acronym for "Not in Education, Employment, or Training". The expression is widely used in economics and refers to a person who does not work and does not study.

The future is uncertain because of all the reforms that are being processed in

Congress (Wilson, Colombia).

Concern that reforms will not materialize

Nineteen percent of the research participants express concern that the reforms proposed by the new government will not materialize, and they hope that the reforms will be carried out. To illustrate, Nelson points out that the political opposition is strong and manipulative:

One of my concerns is that even when Colombia voted for a change and the

change won; unfortunately, they did not let it happen. They put all the

obstacles, and the opposition is so manipulative and politically strong that it

makes change impossible. It worries me that we voted and chose a change,

but the manipulation of the ultraconservative machineries does not allow it.

We are worried that it will not be possible for what the people wanted to

happen to happen (Nelson, Colombia).

In this sense, Marta considers that matters are a "bit tangled" and hopes that they will be able to start:

At the moment things are a bit tangled, things are not flowing very well, and

we hope that this is a process and that, in the end, we will see a start because

there are always many difficulties. It is not easy. A country like this is

complicated and tangled for many years, and it is not easy (Marta, Colombia).

Martina expresses her concern about corruption and also argues that apprehensions over the materialization of reforms are associated with the fact that Congress has not been renewed in the same way as the presidency:

The biggest concern we have in our family and friends is that with the level of corruption the country has, it will never move forward, and in fact, it will continue sinking no matter which political party is in power. […] *People in Colombia still do not have a very clear political conscience; they vote one way for Congress, and they vote in another way for the president* (Martina, Canada).

3.4 SHARING OR NOT THE SAME CONCERNS

Participants in Colombia and Canada have different concerns regarding the country's structural problems and the new government's reforms. Since there is not a particularly sharp division between the issues of concern to participants in Canada and Colombia, they were asked whether they feel they share the same concerns as their political conversation partner.

Agreement

Sixty percent[9] of participants share the same concerns as their conversation partners. To illustrate, Mateo explains that he shares the same concerns by sharing the same principles as his conversation partner. Moreover, he indicates that comparing Colombia to Canada exacerbates the concerns:

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[9] This question was answered by 20 participants.

Since we start from the same principles, we understand each other with the same concerns. Concerns that, on the one hand, positive and on the other negative, are exacerbated by the comparison with the new country, so to speak, with Canada. This is definitely a matter of concern (Mateo, Canada).

In harmony with the above, Julián believes that his conversation partner's sense of belonging to Colombia makes him share the same concerns for the country as he does: "*Yes, because at the end of the day, she says that this is her land where she came from, and also her whole family is here. So yes, she worries her as much as I do*" (Julián, Colombia). Marta, for her part, considers that she shares the same concerns as her conversation partner in Canada, and both hope that changes will occur in the country: "*I would think so. There have been some beginnings of new situations, and it is hoped that they will evolve in favour of society*" (Marta, Colombia).

Disagreement

In contrast to the previous participants who consider that their conversation partners share the same concerns as them, ten percent of the research participants consider that they do not share the same concerns as their conversation partners. To illustrate, Wilson argues that his conversation contacts in Canada do not share the same concerns since their concerns are related to political positions: *"They don't share them. The concern in Colombia is due to the political position, and the people in Canada have a contrary political position"* (Wilson, Colombia).

Regarding the above, about not having the same concerns as her conversation partner, Rosa explains that she has not yet expressed her concerns to her conversation partner: *"We haven't talked about that. We haven't talked much*

about those things lately, and I haven't been talking about it for a while. I am worried that soon things could get difficult here in Colombia" (Rosa, Colombia).

Partial agreement

Thirty percent of the participants in the research consider that they partially agree with their political conversation partners because they differ in how these problems should be solved, in the perception of the importance of some concerns or about the short- or long-term consequences of the problems. To begin with, Álvaro and Darío agree with their conversation partners regarding the concerns, but they do not agree on the solutions. For example, Álvaro argues: *"I think we share the same concerns but differ in how we think the government should address those concerns"* (Álvaro, Canada). In the same vein, Dario explains that they differ in the possible solutions to the problems: *"I think we have the same concerns. Maybe not the same ideas on how those problems or those concerns can be solved. But we indeed share most of those social and political concerns"* (Darío, Canada).

For his part, Julio considers that in terms of concerns related to the future of Colombia, he may agree in some aspects with his conversation partner, just as he could agree with other people. However, he considers that the focus of interest of each one is different, and therefore the importance that each one gives to the concerns is different: *"I think we can have common points, like you or like me, but anyway, we come from very different areas. So, I give much more relevance to elements such as environmental policy and much more relevance to things like hydrocarbons"* (Julio, Canada).

From another perspective, Valeria, Jaime and Santiago consider that they possibly share some concerns with their conversation partners. However, these concerns are different for people who are in Colombia since they are impacted by Colombia's reality daily. For example, Valeria considers that her conversation partner worries about day-to-day life in the country, while she worries about aspects that could impact her return to the country in the long term:

> *I think we share general concerns about health, the possibility for young people to have a pension and many different things. Still, surely at some point, the concerns are also divided because perhaps they, involved in the situation, worry about more immediate things, more of daily life. Perhaps far away, I think about things a little more in the long term, thinking about some point when I return to Colombia* (Valeria, Canada).

In the same vein, Santiago argues:

> *I think we do share some concerns. My concerns are more in the long term because I am not living day to day in Colombia, but perhaps at some point, I will return to Colombia. My concern is not here and now but in the medium or long-term future, whereas the person I talk to in Colombia is thinking more about the here and now because he is living in the here and now. So, I think that would be the main difference* (Santiago, Canada).

In harmony with the above, Jaime believes that the differences in concerns are related to the age of his conversation partner since he may not be perturbed about issues that may have a more significant impact in the long term:

The concerns are basically the same with respect to the economy, security, etcetera. However, I also think that the vision of the future is different for him at 70 years old. I mean, he is probably not very stressed about what is going to happen in the country 30 or 40 years from now, right? Which it does worries me because I aspire to be able to reach an advanced age in which the country can still be functioning, at least in a stable way (Jaime, Canada).

3.5 CONCLUSIONS

Colombia is a country that, after more than 60 years of internal armed conflict, signed a peace agreement in 2016 and continues to face the problem of violence. In the complex context of living in a disputed country, in 2022, they elected the first left-wing president in the country's recent history, representing hope for some and uncertainty for others. This scenario has stimulated the political conversation among the previously uninterested, while exacerbating division across the board.

Participants from Colombia and Canada have a variety of concerns regarding the country's structural problems and the new government's reforms. In order of importance, most of the research participants' concerns are related to the various reforms proposed by the new government and the country's future. In second place are the structural issues that most concern research participants: the economy and the cost of living, corruption, violence and inequality. In third place are the concerns of those who hope that the new government's campaign proposals will materialize and that they can be implemented.

Most participants consider that they share the same concerns as their transnational political conversation partners, some explaining this by referring to the

migrant's sense of belonging to their country of origin, a shared value system and an interest in the well-being of the conversation partners in Colombia. On the other hand, those who disagree with the concerns of their conversation partners indicate that they do not share the same political position as their conversation partner or have not spoken to their conversation partner about their worries.

Finally, those who feel that they partially agree with their conversation partner's concerns allude to differences in ideas for solutions and the long-term or short-term impact of decisions. Participants imply that there is a short-term concern on the part of participants in Colombia. In contrast, long-term worries are more typical of participants in Canada, who consider the possibility of a return to live in Colombia in the future.

The next chapter will examine how transnational political conversation sometimes emerges from media content. According to the interviewees' statements in this chapter, it is intuitive that such content is prioritized according to the concerns described by the participants. Thus, in cases where a clear position in favour of or against the new government's reforms is evident, it is intuited that news related to the reforms is prioritized in the transnational conversation. The same is expected for news related to the structural concerns reported by participants: the economy, corruption, violence and inequality.

Chapter 4
Transnational informal political conversation

This section analyses the characteristics of transnational informal political conversation based on the responses of the research participants. Similarly, general aspects of intra-territorial informal political conversation are introduced in order to contrast the characteristics of intra-territorial and transnational conversations, although I do not attempt an exhaustive comparative exercise.[10]

Past literature suggests that informal intra-territorial political conversation is spontaneous and fluid. It has no intended objectives or structure (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 515). Since it is intertwined with the social conversation, there is no clear division between political and social discussion (Conover & Miller, 2018, p. 379). The political topic is not the main objective of the informal intra-territorial political conversation. Instead, it arises during a conversation about other issues (Walsh, 2004, p. 35), usually due to political concerns (Conover & Miller, 2018, p. 379).

This chapter shows that some of these characteristics of intra-territorial political conversation are reflected in transnational conversation, which is equally spontaneous and arises in the middle of a social or family conversation. The differences between intra-territorial and transnational political conversation seem to be given by the impact of migration in two aspects: the relevance of concern as a

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[10] Note that participants' responses are gathered based on their similarities. When an answer matches more than one topic in the same section, the comments refer to this response without repeating the quote.

stimulus for initiating political conversation and the decrease in homogeneity among conversation partners.

4.1 GENERAL FEATURES OF TRANSNATIONAL CONVERSATION

The first characteristic identified in transnational political conversation, one which coincides with intra-territorial conversation, is that the political theme arises casually in the middle of a conversation about another topic of a social or family nature. The spontaneity with which the political question arises in the transnational conversation can be seen in the participants' statements below.

I would say that when we talk about political issues, the conversation arises spontaneously and is not related to other topics. That is to say, if we were to talk about a political topic today, we do it because one of us starts talking and asking questions or commenting on the situation, but it does not derive from another topic (Darío, Canada).

Usually, we are talking about everyday issues, and the political topic comes up. It's the topic we spend the most time discussing, but it's not the only thing we discuss (Cesar, Colombia).

The second characteristic of the transnational political conversation is that it emerges through comments that allude to news or current events in Colombia, such as marches and strikes. Regarding the news as a starting point for conversation, thirty-one percent of the participants who responded to the question indicated that the political topic usually comes up in conversation through comments about the news[11]. This is reflected in the following statements:

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[11] In the interview with Nelson, a conversation dynamic similar to that cited in the main text is also evident.

I think we take a look at 2 or 3 newspapers virtually and then comment on the most relevant news (Ramiro, Canada).

I call with the purpose of talking to them, to greet them, and during the conversation, some political issue or topic that during the week was news in Colombia comes up, and that's why we end up talking (Valeria, Canada).

We are usually talking about other personal and family things, and almost always, I am the one who brings up the subject of some recent event that has been highlighted in the news that I hear and read about here in Canada. Then I bring up the topic with him and mention what I think about it, and he gives me his opinion about it as well (Jaime, Canada).

In terms of the situation in the country as a starting point for conversation, forty-six percent of participants pointed to comments about everyday events as a starting point for political conversation[12]. For instance, Agustin comments that, "*It arises from the current situation in Colombia due to the concern about the current situation*" (Agustín, Canada). Similarly, Edith observed:

It almost always comes up in an informal conversation. Then, it depends on the event that is happening at the time. For example, if there are protests, it is almost always linked to the political environment, so we will end up talking about the politicians in government at the time. Or when there are elections, when there is an election period, we talk much more about the topic directly, like that. (Edith, Canada).

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[12] Similar statements to those quoted in the main text can be found in interviews with Osvaldo, Paula and Cristián.

One participant, equivalent to eight percent of the participants, did not specify how the political topic arises (see Cesar's previous statement). In contrast, fifteen percent of respondents stated that the political conversation arises from either of the two sources described above, i.e., as a consequence of comments regarding news reports or due to comments regarding the current situation in the country. Federico comments that, "*Well, generally, it is born from some daily event experienced there or some news that comes to our attention. The conversation starts and then drifts into other topics*" (Federico, Canada). Similarly, Lisa reflected that, "*The conversation arises because we talk about the issues. For example, recently, the elections or, for example, issues of the war in Russia and Ukraine, situations that arise here in the Senate Congress, laws, and situations in Bogota*" (Lisa, Colombia).

It is deduced from these responses that transnational informal political conversation arises spontaneously in the middle of an everyday conversation about family or social issues. Politics is brought up through comments on news reports and current events in Colombia. In intra-territorial political conversations, the political topic usually develops around the information published by the mass media, making the conversation act as a filter between the messages emitted by the mass media and the circle of political conversation (Schmitt-Beck, 2003, p. 234).

The evidence indicates that in the transnational political conversation, the information emitted by the media also plays a relevant role in the conversation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the media contents are prioritized according to the conversation participants' concerns. Although some scholars have briefly indicated the role of concern as an incentive for political conversation (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 521), this aspect seems to be more relevant in transnational political

conversation, since it is present in comments about current affairs in the country, as well as in concern for the well-being of the interlocutor who remains in the country (see next section).

4.2 STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Considering the person who usually brings the political topic into the conversation, only some of the participants in Canada answered that they are usually the ones who initiate the political conversation. They represent thirty-five percent of the people who answered this question. For instance, Agustin said, "*I'm always the one who starts the topic*" (Agustín, Canada). Santiago explained how he introduces political connections into conversations about everyday life with his mother:

The truth is that I'm always the one who takes care of the political side of things because it's always with my mum. Well, most of the time it's with my mum. So, for example, she talks about some topic in her daily life, and I'm the one who relates what she's telling me to something political. And then I'm the one who tries to explain to her what she's going through in her day-to-day life, so I think that, in that sense, it's me. (Santiago, Canada).

The remaining participants, fifty-three percent, state that the start of the political conversation is random and is not usually initiated by a particular person. That is, the person who initiates the conversation varies according to the conversation, and it is not always the same person who proposes the political topic. Note that in answering this question, some participants also mentioned the topics with which they initiated the conversation. They referred to comments about the news (Valeria and Martina) and reactions to current situations (Darío).

Regarding the random start of the conversation, Martina comments that sometimes her conversation contact in Colombia refers her to the relevant news in the country, or sometimes she asks about a specific issue she learned about. *"Well, sometimes me, sometimes my interlocutor. Sometimes there is new news that has come out, and they refer me to the new news, and they start, or sometimes it is me asking what happened with a certain topic I heard, so it depends. I wouldn't say it's always one. I would say it can be one or the other"* (Martina, Canada). Similarly, Dario comments that the conversation begins spontaneously, given the reactions that circumstances arouse in them. *"It depends on the situation. Sometimes I have done it, and sometimes he has done it. We don't have specific parameters to follow. Maybe it's just the reaction we get from the situations that are happening, and given those reactions, we take the initiative to talk to each other about it"* (Darío, Canada).

One of the participants, Julian, who also mentioned the random start of the political conversation, explained that the start would depend on the topic being addressed. According to his explanation, the person in Canada usually shares information about Canada, while he usually provides information about the daily reality in Colombia:

> *That depends on the conversation. For example, he usually tells me what offers there are in Canada, and I also explain to him more or less how the situation is here in Colombia. In the same way, he also follows through social networks the government here in Colombia. So, he is also kind of aware* (Julián, Colombia).

Twelve percent of the participants, who also pointed out that the person who initiates the political topic is random, explained that the opening of the political topic

is not always linked to a specific person, but changes depending on the people with whom they speak:

> *Usually, it can be me if I'm talking to family. If I'm talking to friends, often the friends are the ones who bring up the political issue, and it almost always comes up because of a comparison between government policies in Canada contrasted with those in Colombia* (Álvaro, Canada).

In line with this, Cristián explains, "*Well, with my cousin, I start it, and with my friends, it depends on what is happening at the time. So, let's say, many times they take the initiative or many times, I'm the one who begins*" (Cristián, Canada).

On the other hand, it is noticeable that eighteen percent of the participants mentioned that they start the political conversation out of concern for the well-being of the person with whom they talk about politics. For example, Paula commented, "*Sometimes him, sometimes me. I couldn't tell you exactly because it is part of their daily life and well-being. Politics is part of everything they need; how is the job, employment, etc. So, normally, sometimes I can start it, and sometimes he starts it*" (Paula, Canada). Similarly, Mateo explains,

> *It is random. They are spontaneous conversations based on the terms of, above all, my brother asks me how I am and how the city is, and from that introduction, there are moments where conversations are developed regarding politics and the cultural and social changes associated with it. Not generally or not always, but in a great number of opportunities* (Mateo, Colombia).

The evidence suggests that in cases where one person always raises the political topic, the person outside the country takes on this role. In addition, the role

of the interlocutor abroad may change depending on with whom they interact. Thus, with some contacts, the immigrants regularly raise the political issue; with other contacts, they have no fixed role, and the initiation of political discussion is random.

Moreover, the statements indicate that interest in the well-being of conversation partners in the country of origin also sparks transnational political conversation. Such worries about how political decisions affect the ones in the country could be a specific feature of transnational informal political conversation. However, while it is tempting to claim that concern for well-being is a general feature of the transnational conversation, participants also indicate that Colombia is going through particular political conditions (see Chapter 3); consequently, the possibility of a transitory concern cannot be discarded.

It is worth noting that the research participants have people from their close circle as their political conversation partners. Sixty-one percent have family members as a conversation contact, thirty-one percent have a friend as a political conversation partner, and eight percent said their conversation contacts are friends and family. In other words, the concern for the conversation partner is a concern for someone from the personal circle who remains in the country.

In this sense, Mateo's perception of the situation in Colombia and conversations about politics with his brother, who is in Canada, hints that perhaps concern for the well-being of the conversation partner might be a specific feature of the transnational political conversation. However, the results in this regard are not conclusive (the question is included here to properly contextualise the response).

Question: We are nearing the end of the interview, and I would like to ask you if you consider that if the Colombian political and social reality were different, would you address the political issue?

Yes, of course, I would. There is also an intention in the conversation, which, although it is present in what I just said, is the encounter with the other, it is found in a complementary tacit way, and it is the interest in the search for the well-being of the other. Many of the conversations are precisely oriented to seek the welfare of the other, so even if it were a contrary reality, in other conditions in Colombia, our conversations would be oriented towards that because the particular welfare, either of the person or the family, are also associated or subordinated to the cultural and political reality we live in. So that is a hallmark of our relationship (Mateo, Colombia).

4.3 CONSIDERING OPINIONS

Ninety-one percent of the research participants perceive that their opinion is considered in the transnational political conversation. For instance, Julian considers that there is an informational complement between him and his conversation partner. "*Yes, we both complement each other in the information*" (Julián, Colombia). For her part, Valeria perceives that she even achieves a little influence through conversation. *"I think so, although my parents and I probably do not agree on some things. It's possible that what I tell them at the end of the day might resonate a little bit with them"* (Valeria, Canada).

On the other hand, nine percent of the participants stated that their opinion is occasionally considered, as César says "*Sometimes*" (César, Colombia). Similarly,

Wilson explains that his opinion is counted depending on the topic. "*Sometimes yes and sometimes no. It depends on the topic at hand*" (Wilson, Colombia).

Among the participants who perceive that their opinion is considered in the transnational political conversation, thirty-three percent referred to the action of listening by saying that they listen or that they feel listened to. For instance, Jaime refers to listening as a sign of respect in conversation. "*Yes, always. Within the framework of my relationship with my uncle, there has always been respect for opinions, differences, and concepts about many aspects of life. So, he listens to me, and I listen to him*" (Jaime, Colombia). For her part, Paula, in addition to referring to listening in conversation, makes a subtle reference to self-censorship (see more about this in the section on self-censorship, below). *"Yes, I feel that my opinion is considered, but I don't give my opinion much. I listen, but on political issues, especially with my family, I give my opinion, but above all, I ask questions"* (Paula, Canada). Lastly, Edith feels that she is listened to, but she is not sure if her interventions have any effect on her interlocutors: "*Well, I think they listen, but I don't feel that my opinion makes them change their position*" (Edith, Canada).

Other participants consider that they are listened to depending on the person they interact with, or the topic addressed. For illustration, Darío considers that attention to his opinions varies according to the people he talks to. *"Talking specifically about this person, yes. Maybe with other people from Colombia with whom I still talk, I would say something else, but specifically talking about this friend, I do believe that he considers the things I say"* (Darío, Canada). For his part, Julio perceives that in the conversation with his partner, each one is heard to a lesser or greater extent, depending on the subject. "*Everything is a very argumentative*

conversation. So, for example, if he tells me that according to Law 100 and such and such articles, some approve such and such reform, I run out of arguments to say something. But for example, if it is a discussion related to science, which is a field in which I work, then I think he is more open to listening to that kind of thing" (Julio, Canada).

Highlighting the fact that some participants assume a listening attitude during the conversation has relevance in the sense that this could be related to political tolerance. According to Mutz (2006, p. 84), listening to the other side fosters democratic values by familiarising people with the reasons for other points of view. This effect is particularly manifest among people who engage in cross-cutting conversations and are concerned with maintaining social harmony (Mutz, 2006, p. 84).

4.4 AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT

Agreement and disagreement in political conversation are often associated with homogeneity and heterogeneity. Most informal intra-territorial political conversations are understood to be homogeneous; that is, they occur between like-minded people who exchange information and mutually agreed declarations (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 520). In a homogeneous conversation group, there tends to be more agreement than disagreement. To try to elucidate these aspects in the transnational political conversation, we proceed to describe the results.

When asked if they usually agree with their conversation partner about Colombian politics, thirty-six percent of research participants indicated that they usually agree with their conversation partners. For instance, Nelson emphasizes that he shares the political position with his partner: "*Yes, with him, yes. With the*

Canadian, we perfectly have the same political position" (Nelson, Colombia). Similarly, Cristián observed: "*Yes, we tend to agree. In fact, in the group of friends, there was one who was inclined toward another political line, and she disagreed with our views. She preferred to leave the group because she felt she was the only one who thought differently"* (Cristián, Canada).

In contrast, disagreement is associated with heterogeneous conversational environments. Political heterogeneity refers to people from different backgrounds and different political positions. Heterogeneity is considered beneficial for democracy (Mutz, 2006, p.86). However, heterogeneity and disagreement are often more present in formal, structured political deliberation than informal political conversation.

Concerning disagreement in transnational political conversation, when participants were asked if they usually agree with their conversation partners, twenty-three percent indicated that they do not usually agree with their conversation partner. To illustrate, Julio believes that part of the disagreement relates to how he and his partner react to political issues: "*I don't think so. I think he is much more cautious. I tend to be much more emotional. I tend to get much more upset, to get more poisoned by all the things that happen in politics. So, I think he sees the big picture a little more calmly*" (Julio, Canada). For his part, Jaime feels that the disagreement with his conversation partner has increased over the years: "*Almost never [do we agree], especially in recent years, which is when the conversation has been mostly on the table. Maybe in previous years, we could agree more*" (Jaime, Canada).

As for the middle ground between frequent agreement and recurrent disagreement, forty-one percent of the participants stated that they sometimes, to

some extent or a certain percentage, agree with their conversation partners, as expressed by Ramiro: "*About 80 percent of the time*" (Ramiro, Canada). In harmony with this, *s*ome of the participants who alluded to some kind of agreement with their conversation partners provided information regarding the reasons for the disagreement. From their point of view, age and generational differences are an impediment to more frequent agreement between them. Nevertheless, they do try to reach some level of agreement with their conversation partners. These cases of disagreement due to generational differences represent fourteen percent of the total number of research participants. This is reflected in the following statements[13]:

> *It depends on who I am talking to. If it is with my siblings from my generation, we usually agree more frequently. With the previous generation, i.e., my parents, it is more complicated. We don't always reach an agreement with them, but we usually reach a good understanding of the differences* (Martina, Canada).

> *Yes, sometimes we agree, but there are other times when we also disagree, mostly because since he is older than me, he tends to focus on what he has lived and his experiences, and I basically focus on what I read, what I listen to. So, sometimes we do kind of have different opinions. In the same way, we don't get into a dispute but complement each other's information and reach agreements* (Julián, Colombia).

The outlook for Álvaro and Darío is different. They consider that the reason for not reaching a complete agreement with their respective conversation partners

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[13] In Valeria's interview, we find a statement similar to those presented in the main text regarding the disagreement with her interlocutor due to the age difference.

is due to differences in each other's political positions. These cases of disagreement by political position represent nine percent of the total participants. For his part, Álvaro mentions the biases he has identified in his conversation partner: "*There are no radical points of difference, but I do notice his leanings to the left, in the case of the political colleague with whom I talk more in-depth. Not more often, but more in-depth. Sometimes I see that he does have certain biases in his opinions*" (Álvaro, Canada).

Similarly, Darío recounts the evolution of the disagreement with his conversation partner and how, although he has changed his political position over the years, they continue to disagree in the same percentage as before: "*Before we disagreed thirty or forty percent of the time, his position was different than it is now. Now we disagree in that same percentage, but his position is different. So, it is very curious*" (Darío, Canada).

Santiago and Mateo argue that disagreements with their conversation partners are somehow related to the migration experience. Santiago is in Canada, and Mateo in Colombia, both referring to the experience with their respective political conversation partners. These cases of disagreement due to a different perspective after migration represent nine percent of the total research participants:

There might be some disagreements. Let me give you an example—Venezuelan immigration. I say: "No, Mum, but you can't think like that because you must think that I have also lived outside the country and immigration is a complex issue." And she says: "No, but this and this and this and this is happening with the Venezuelans too." So, I told her: "Well, yes." I can't contradict her because she is the one who is living that reality there, so I can't

contradict her. However, I try to make her see things with different eyes. I'm a bit more flexible, and I try to understand her. But I also try to find a way for her to have a different view of the problem so that she doesn't say: "This is how it is, and this is happening because the Venezuelans came here, etc.". No. I try to open her mind a bit more in that sense (Santiago, Canada).

I think that obviously, the temporal, geographical and current context distance makes us have different positions when it comes to explaining the phenomena that develop in the Colombian reality due to politics, but there are many elements in which there is an agreement. An agreement that derives mainly from the personal principles that unite us in conversation. But obviously there are other elements in which, perhaps because of the obvious differences of living in a different country, we may have some kind of difference (Mateo, Colombia).

In informal intra-territorial political conversations, interlocutors are often selected based on homogeneity (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 519). In contrast, the data collected here concerning transnational political conversation suggests a scenario that would require further attention, as it is presumed that migration could impact the homogeneity of conversation partners by creating space for political disagreement.

According to Mutz (2006, p. 85), heterogeneity brings as a benefit a greater tolerance and awareness for the legitimate arguments of the other political camp. Indeed, some participants in this research also gave signs of political tolerance. Furthermore, Mutz (2006, p. 85) states that a heterogeneous environment added to affective ties between people results in greater understanding and political tolerance.

It is not proposed here that if migration were to impact the homogeneity of political conversation, it would change its spontaneous and fluid nature to approach the democratic ideal of formal, structured and civic discussion. On the contrary, it is suggested that transnational political conversation, with its own characteristics of informality and lack of structure, could eventually benefit from an increase in the political tolerance of its participants through the impact of migration on political homogeneity.

4.5 SELF-CENSORSHIP

Thirty-eight percent of participants in Canada have experienced self-censorship during conversations with their partners in Colombia. Among the main statements in this regard are the desire to avoid conflict, the perception that Colombian interlocutors are more passionate about politics and the desire to not contradict the conversation partner in Colombia.

Desire to avoid conflict

The desire to avoid conflicts is reflected in the allusion to cases of family conflicts due to political discussions, as indicated by Álvaro:

I have seen many cases of friends who no longer talk to each other because of a political discussion and family quarrels, so I often prefer not to generate controversy, not to touch the subject and continue the discussion on different topics that are not necessarily political (Álvaro, Canada).

Like Álvaro, other interviewees also refer to changing the subject or avoiding political topics altogether as a conflict avoidance measure. Edith, for example, describes different conflict avoidance mechanisms depending on how close she is

to her interlocutor. She prefers to cut the conversation short if it is with a very close person and to change the subject if the conversation is with a friend:

> *I expose my point of view, and the other person will say no for X reason I prefer this person, or I disagree. And then, in the end, the truth is, always with my friends, we mainly say: "Well, everyone has their position, and let's talk about another topic." I prefer to end the topic with my mom because she is a very close person, so I know that it ends up as a conflict. So, if the person is too close, I prefer to cut the conversation to avoid conflict. If it's a friend, we will simply say: "No, it's better not to talk about that topic," and that's it. We'll just close it* (Edith, Canada).

Darío, for his part, prefers not to continue the conversation when he notices that agreement is not possible, and that the conversation has reached a point of no return in terms of disagreement:

> *My friend is a person who, as I said before, knows how to defend his ideas well, but he also lacks consensus and negotiation, and many times he stays with his own opinion and fails to see the other person's points of view in favour or valid. Then, when there was a point of no return, I decided not to continue with the conversation* (Darío, Canada).

In line with the above, Paula indicates that when she talks to her family members about politics, she gives her opinion but mostly asks questions. On the other hand, the dynamic with her friends is different because she has political differences with some, so she prefers not to give her opinion and just listen:

I don't give my opinion much. I listen, but on political issues, especially with my family, I give my opinion, but above all, I ask questions. On the contrary, with my friends, I try not to talk much about politics because there are differences, and I think that in politics, not everything is white or black. Politics is a sensitive subject, so when I am among friends, I try to be very neutral, to listen, but not to contribute (Paula, Canada).

For his part, Julio mentions that political debates in his family are dealt with casually and through humour. However, conversations about politics are avoided as he considers it to be a topic that generates much hatred.

Let's say there are jokes or things like that. Eventually, say something like the dollar went up because you voted for Petro or things like that. But I think that the political issue also brings a lot of hatred, and they are very passionate issues that I don't think I would like to see in the family. Honestly, I wouldn't (Julio, Canada).

In keeping with this, Julio prefers to address political issues virtually, with people outside his family circle, because it gives him more freedom to express himself without people feeling that he is attacking them personally:

When I had those conversations with my family, it was all face-to-face, but with my family, I don't usually talk about politics, only virtually. I think it gives it a touch of saying: I disagree with you, but I am not trying to attack you. There I also have more freedom to express certain things I think, even when those things do not agree with others (Julio, Canada).

Discomfort with approaches to politics

Half of the people who alluded to self-censorship also alluded to a decline in interest in Colombian politics during their interview, an issue that will be addressed in the section on political apathy, below. Some of these participants also indicated discomfort with how some interlocutors in Colombia approach politics: less respectful, more passionate and more heated.

I am very politically active in Canada with other Colombians who live here. We discuss a lot of politics, both Colombian and Canadian. And there is a high level of respect for the opinions of others, which doesn't happen so much with the people who still live in Colombia. I see that there is much less respect for the opinions of others, and they generate polemics that can end up in very heated arguments or fights (Álvaro, Canada).

I think my cousin is more passionate. He is more passionate about talking politics, and that also happens to me with many friends who are also Colombian. In these cases, I stop because that is my perception, and maybe I am wrong; I do not know much about politics […] Still, in case we disagree, I would rather change the subject and talk about something else because I don't like to discuss politics or religion (Paula, Canada).

Martina, another participant in Canada, who did not report self-censorship, mentioned having heated political conversations while living in Colombia:

I talked about politics with the same people, and maybe the discussion was more heated in the sense that, for example, with my nephews, it was more difficult to reach agreements. But perhaps because they have seen the experience of what I have lived, that has made them come to their senses a

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little more, and that has made it easier to agree on the differences. That is to say, I feel that the discussion is less intense now, we reach agreements more quickly than before (Martina, Canada).

Avoiding people to avoid the topic

Cristián, a participant in Canada who did not refer to self-censorship, referred to the case of someone else who decided to withdraw from a group because he was the only person who thought differently in the conversation group:

Yes, we tend to agree. In fact, in the group of friends, there was one who was inclined toward another political line, and she disagreed with our views. She preferred to leave the group because she felt she was the only one who thought differently (Cristián, Canada).

This case speaks directly to the theory of social cohesion, which indicates that through casual conversations, interlocutors become aware of possible differences between their political preferences and those of other social network members (Berelson, 1954, pp. 101 - 102). According to Sinclair (2012, p. 5), in cases where personal preference does not coincide with that of the social group, most citizens succumb to pressure and adopt the policy preferences of the social network, if they wish to maintain a shared social identity.

In this sense, Edith refers to the level of intensity and the perception of radicalism as indicators to determine whether she accepts the difference or distances herself from a political interlocutor. She makes explicit reference to changing the subject in order to save the relationship:

Nobody generally changes their mind in political matters. Or at least if people change their minds, they're not going to say so openly: "Oh, you convinced me, and now I have the same opinion as you." No, I don't think I've ever seen anything like that. It's going to take people a lot of time, and a lot of thought, to change their minds politically. People do not change their minds and disagreement; well, let's say, in my environment, we were all very respectful on that subject. The option is always to change the subject. Change the subject if you don't want to damage the relationship. (Edith, Canada).

In the same vein, Darío indicates that his interest in Colombian politics has remained the same, while his interest has broadened to politics in other countries. However, his interest in talking to certain people he used to talk to has diminished due to their political transformation:

I have broadened my political interest in Canadian and other countries' affairs. Still, as for the country and Colombia's political situation, I think it has remained the same. Maybe, due to that transformation, I was talking about a moment ago, which I have seen not only in my friend but also in other people, sometimes I am not interested in talking to those people as assiduously as I used to want to, but my interest in Colombian politics has remained the same (Darío, Canada).

On the other hand, Darío also indicates that in order to keep the conversation alive with his interlocutor in Colombia, he tends to give in or withdraw from the conversation. This is because, as a Colombian living abroad, he does not want to

give the impression of some kind of superiority in knowledge, knowing that he is not in the country living the reality on a daily basis:

> *I would say that I am the one who yields more. He is a very eloquent person, and, well, let's say, dialectically, we could say that he is a person who communicates very well and knows how to support his ideas, and knows how to give good reasons to justify his hypotheses. As a Colombian living abroad, I may unconsciously feel that his opinions are very valid and that I do not want to refute or contradict them since he lives firsthand the political experiences of the country* (Darío, Canada).

Some of the participants who mention self-censorship also mention political polarization in Colombia (15%). This issue was addressed in Chapter 3. Half of the people who mentioned self-censorship also mentioned a decrease in interest in Colombian politics, an issue that will be addressed in Chapter 5. However, the relationship between self-censorship and the perception of political polarization in the country is inconclusive. The causes of self-censorship could be a reduced interest in the country's politics or a desire to maintain relations outside the country. However, the evidence is ambiguous in determining with certainty such factors associated with self-censorship.

4.6 CONCLUSIONS

Informal transnational political conversation, like intra-territorial political conversation, is spontaneous and fluid. It lacks intended goals or structure and arises during an everyday conversation about family or social issues. The information emitted by the media has an important role in the start of the political

theme in both variations of the informal conversation. However, concern as a stimulus for the beginning of the conversation seems to be more relevant in the transnational political conversation since it is present in two usual forms of conversation initiation: comments about the current situation of the country and concern for the well-being of the interlocutor who remains in the country.

The concern for the well-being of the interlocutors in the country of origin is reflected in the concern about how they are affected by political decisions. However, the research participants indicated that Colombia is going through particular political conditions, and, therefore, the possibility cannot be dismissed that the concern is not due to a general or universal characteristic of informal transnational political conversation, but rather a transitory concern associated with the current situation in the country.

On the other hand, most informal intra-territorial political conversations are homogeneous, i.e., they occur between like-minded people exchanging information and opinions. The data collected in this research suggest that migration could affect the homogeneity of interlocutors, creating a space for political disagreement in the transnational informal political conversation.

It is suggested that transnational political conversation, with its own characteristics of informality and lack of structure, could eventually benefit from an increase in the political tolerance of its participants through the impact of migration on political homogeneity, that is, the tendency of migration to make conversation partners more heterogeneous by exposing initially very similar conversation partners, with close social ties, to divergent social and political circumstances. Given that some of the participants in this research showed signs of political tolerance and

that this aspect is outside the initial spectrum of the research, further analysis of the impact of migration on the homogeneity of transnational political conversation partners would be necessary to shed light on these intuitions.

Chapter 5
Migration, information, and political interest

This section approaches the impact of migration on the amount of political information migrants consult. It also addresses the interest in the political affairs of the country of origin after migration and the perception of political conversation partners concerning the migrant's level of information.

In the age of information and technology, the question of what political information is accessible to people living outside their home country seems unnecessary. The internet offers extensive information that can be accessed in real-time from anywhere in the world, which would seem to guarantee a good level of information even when abroad. Indeed, some scholars of extraterritorial voting, such as Lafleur (2013, p. 43), argue that the idea that voters abroad are uninformed about home country politics assumes that distance and time spent abroad limit migrants' access to information about home country politics. Further, this author argues, this view implies that domestic voters are well-informed and, conversely, that voters abroad would be insufficiently informed about what is at stake in a particular election. In contrast, Lafleur (2013) argues, based on the case study of Bolivians in the United States, that new technologies not only allow migrants to access media in their home countries but also to consult ethnic media in the host country.

It is undeniable that the internet and new technologies allow access to information from anywhere in the world. However, the findings of this research indicate that the objectivity of the information and the migrants' interest in the politics

of the country of origin are decisive when elucidating the impact that migration has on the political information addressed in transnational conversation.

5.1 GETTING INFORMATION AFTER MIGRATION

Most of the participants in Canada stated that since their migration, they have increased their search for information about Colombian politics because political information does not come naturally to them outside the country, and they must try to select reliable and objective sources of information. Regardless of the relative amount of information search that participants report after their migration - more, the same or less – they agree on the need to search for alternative information, on the perception of information bias and on the uncertainty regarding the difference between the information consulted outside the country and the reality experienced by their conversational contacts who remain in Colombia. For their part, a significant percentage of participants in Colombia consider that their conversation partners in Canada are less informed about Colombian politics than they are, since they are not in the country experiencing daily life, and also consider the information they have access to outside Colombia is biased.

On the other hand, participants in Canada who decreased the amount of information they sought about Colombian politics indicate that the decrease is due to a sense of disconnection with the reality of Colombia, a feeling of concern when learning about political issues and uncertainty regarding the veracity of the information they access outside the country. According to these participants, both the disconnection with the reality of the country and the allusion to a bias in the

information have been brought up by their political conversation partners in Colombia, at times, as an argument to diminish the weight of their positions.

Increased information seeking

Seventy-nine percent of participants in Canada stated that they have been seeking more information about Colombian politics since their migration. The explanation for this increase is that migrants feel that information does not come naturally to them outside the country and that it is necessary to look for reliable sources of information.

Considering the need to seek information about Colombian politics while outside the country, the statements of Edith and Valeria are presented. Edith believes that living in Colombia meant that she did not have to look for information to be informed:

> *I think that I do have to look for information because it is not going to come to me naturally. When you are in Colombia, living there, sometimes you go around, and the news is on, you also see the newspapers. The information comes a little more naturally, you don't have to look for it. Whereas now, if I want to have information, I have to go and look for it because here in Canada, I will not get information about Colombian politics* (Edith, Canada).

In the same vein, Valeria argues that by being more involved in situations inside the country, she had more information at hand:

> *Being in Colombia, I was more involved in the situations, and I had the information at hand. Now I need to look for other means, videos, and ways to*

get information because I think that being there, the information was more at hand. I was living the situations. So, I think that since I left Colombia, I probably look for more information. I also must search to find media that, in my opinion, are more reliable and give a more accurate idea of the situations and what is happening (Valeria, Canada).

Concerning the need to search for alternative information about Colombian politics, the statements of Martina, who is in Canada, and Nelson, who is in Colombia, are presented. Martina believes that since she is in Canada, she can access a significant number of alternative sources of information:

I would say that I look for more alternative sources than before. When I was in Colombia, I considered there was too much manipulation by the media […] Being abroad, I have realized, I don't know if they evolved in a very short time, there are many other sources, even foreign ones, that look at our country, and now I look at everything; internal and external. Some external people give their opinion about Colombia and Latin America, and I feel that there is a broader vision being here in Canada, with many more elements of judgment than I had when I was in Colombia (Martina, Canada).

For his part, Nelson believes that there is manipulation by the Colombian media:

Here in Colombia, the media belongs to certain elites. For example, there was a serious problem this week that was really impressive, which was the case

of Mancuso uncovering all the things that he knows[14]. *It turns out that the last eight days were dedicated to talking about Laura Sanabria's*[15] *nanny, which is complete stupidity, but with that, they have to cover up the things that really should be important. So that is what they don't have in Canada and in many other places, they don't let them put those stories, and they don't let them put smoke screens as they do here, and they don't let themselves emberracarse (get pissed) to go out to vote and vote emberracados (pissed off) as it happens here in Colombia* (Nelson, Colombia).

Equal and lower volume of information

In another perspective, eight percent of respondents in Canada believe that their interest in information about Colombian politics has remained the same after migration. However, they also look for different sources of information. To illustrate, Darío comments that the volume of information he seeks about Colombian politics

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[14] Salvatore Mancuso was a Colombian paramilitary leader who served time in the United States and was extradited to Colombia. During his interview, Nelson refers to the fact that during the same week that Mancuso was confessing about his links with Colombian businessmen and the military, the media gave greater prominence to a case that, for him, is of lesser relevance. See this article to learn more about Salvatore Mancuso: The Guardian. (May 19, 2023). Colombian elite backed death squads, former paramilitary commander says. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/19/colombia-paramilitary-salvatore-mancuso-auc-death-squads

[15] Laura Sanabria was President Gustavo Petro's chief of staff. She was accused, still under investigation, of using her influence within the government to wiretap her children's nannies illegally and using police polygraph services to try to clear up a money theft that occurred in her home. For more on this scandal, see this article: Moss, Loren. (June 7, 2023). Fast Moving Colombian Scandal May Threaten the Presidency of Gustavo Petro. Finance Colombia. Available in: https://www.financecolombia.com/fast-moving-colombian-scandal-may-threaten-the-presidency-of-gustavo-petro/

is the same as before he migrated to Canada, however, now he consults different media:

No, I think it has remained the same. Now we have much more access to platforms, and it is easy to find out about things, but before, I frequently looked for the source of news and political events through other media. So, the medium may have changed, but the interest and frequency have been the same (Darío, Canada).

In contrast, twenty-three percent of participants decreased the volume of information they seek about Colombian politics since their migration to Canada. The reasons for this decrease are the weariness and concern they feel about politics, a sense of disconnection with the reality of Colombia, and uncertainty regarding the veracity of the information they access from Canada. As an illustration, the testimonies of Julio, Álvaro and Paula are presented. In the case of Álvaro and Paula, answers to follow-up questions are also included to provide greater clarity to the context they described.

Regarding a decrease in the search for political information, Julio explains that since Colombia is no longer his primary reality, he tries to avoid politics:

Less, totally less. I think that, in general, politics, not only in Colombia but also in Canada and any other country, is complicated. And I think it wears people out a lot. So, let's say that one of the reasons I choose a government for is that it gives me calm, that I can think: "Well. He's doing things right, he's not stealing anything, and he's executing. Maybe with problems, but it's getting

things done." The current governments have not given me that peace of mind.

With the previous one, I felt very insecure and very dissatisfied. And with this

one, I also feel extremely insecure. So, since it is not my primary reality now

that I am here in Canada and my life plans are to stay here in the country, I

don't feel it anymore. I don't want it anymore. I try to avoid it a little bit (Julio,

Canada).

Álvaro, for his part, considers that he seeks less information about Colombian politics because, living outside the country, he feels a certain disconnection. With migration, he explains, he has lost the possibility of daily feedback that arises only in the context of everyday life:

I think there is a certain level of disconnection when living outside the country.

You lose, let's say, that daily feedback that arises with co-workers, family, and

friends. That cross-pollination, so to speak, is lost. Now I only have

information through the Internet, including social media in those sources. And

often, I have difficulty or no way to discuss the topic with someone who has

also read it. So, I think that can negatively affect me because I don't enrich

my political experience with the comments and discussions generated by

sharing with other people on the same topic (Álvaro, Canada).

According to Álvaro, his political conversation partners in Colombia have used the argument that there is a difference between reading the news and living it to undermine his positions:

Sometimes they make me understand that reading the news is not the same as living it there. It's like knowing the theory but not knowing what it's like in practice. So, in a way, it has been used as an argument to diminish the weight of my positions (Álvaro, Canada).

In harmony with the above, Álvaro considers that following Colombian politics while living in Canada has both positive and negative aspects, and he also comments that being in Canada, he can perceive polarization from some of the media:

It is more difficult in the sense that there are not so many people to discuss, analyze, and share points of view. You can access information through the internet, but in any case, you can see that there are some media outlets that are polarised. And that would be the difficult thing. And the easy thing would be that when you leave Colombia, the very fact of not being immersed in that daily discussion makes you start to have your reflections and not just keep repeating what you heard from someone else (Álvaro, Canada).

In the same vein, Paula comments that since she has been in Canada, she wonders if what she reads in the news is true or if it does not correspond to reality:

Every time I see a news item, I read it, but it is difficult because sometimes I wonder if what I am reading is true or how they are living it there. I question if the information I get is in line with reality. So that's when I start talking to the family and asking questions. For example, I tell them: "I read this. It looks good what they are going to do," they tell me: "No, it is not like that. They said they were going to do that, but what is happening is this other thing." So, I

search and find out some things, but I think that the information I get is not

always like the information they have over there (Paula, Canada)

As in the case of Álvaro, Paula's conversation partners in Colombia have repeatedly

told her that there is a difference between what she reads in the news and what they

experience inside the country:

They have told me: "No matter what they tell you or what you see, things are

not like that." Obviously, since one is not there, the information is just what

one can see or imagine, but it is not living it as such. It happened to me, for

example, when I travelled to Colombia during a strong political moment, and

it was very sad to find it like that. I said: "I knew it was like this, but really living

things are worse," that is, when you are there, the feeling is stronger. It is

different. So, they are absolutely right when they say that if I have an opinion

about something, living it increases or decreases that opinion (Paula,

Canada).

5.2 PERCEPTION FROM COLOMBIA

Fifty-six percent of participants in Colombia consider that participants in

Canada are not better informed about Colombian politics than they are. The

explanation for this perception is that participants in Colombia consider that their

conversation partners in Canada, outside the country, do not know the Colombian

reality as well as they do. Additionally, the information to which they have access

outside Colombia is biased. For illustration, the testimonies of César, Wilson, Mateo

and Osvaldo are presented. To begin with, Cesar comments briefly: *"Oops. I wouldn't*

know. No, I would think not" (César, Colombia). Wilson, on the other hand, argues:

"I don't think so because I live the issues daily because I am located here in the country. I live them more deeply daily" (Wilson, Colombia).

In the same vein, Mateo indicates that being outside the country means that his conversation partner is no better informed than he is, although he considers that living in Canada has made his conversation partner have a constant need to be informed about what is happening in Colombia:

I don't think he is better informed about it than I am, and that has several explanations, not only for the fact of living in another country or living in the country. I also think that, in that sense, the professions we both have make me a little more aware of Colombian politics in certain areas and him less so. But what I do feel, and what I can say about it, is that I consider that the fact of living in another country has generated in him a need to be constantly updated in terms of what is happening in our country (Mateo, Colombia).

Osvaldo, for his part, believes that his conversation partner in Canada is informed, but her information is not first-hand and is possibly biased by receiving it abroad:

No. I think she is informed, but I think I have more first-hand information. Often the information that reaches those outside the country is biased information about what one is really living in the country. So, I think I am the one who has more information at the moment (Osvaldo, Colombia).

When Rosa is asked if she believes that her conversational contact in Canada is better informed than she is about Colombian politics, she answers yes because she believes her contact is more interested in politics than she is: *"Maybe yes. Yes, because the truth is I'm not much into politics, I'm not much into that. I sometimes watch the news about the things that are happening, but I think he pays more*

attention to that than I do” (Rosa, Colombia). In a similar vein, Marta explains: *“Let's say that there is more willingness on his part to take an interest, and it's not that I don't have it, but that he leads and all that”* (Marta, Colombia).

Regarding the conversation partner's access in Canada to other sources of information, Lisa comments:

> *Let's say yes, in a sense. It's just that because of certain occupations, and sometimes it's like I can't be so aware of things. And she likes journalism, which is not traditional journalism. She likes to look for second opinions regarding journalism, not always resorting to the traditional media. There are also times when the situation is relevant here, and she was very busy and has not heard about it, so I comment to her. But generally, it is more her in this sense these days* (Lisa, Colombia).

For his part, Nelson refers to the biases of the Colombian media:

> *I think so because unfortunately here in Colombia they blindfold us. They make us blind. Blind to what the media wants us to believe. So, he does not get his information from the Colombian media, but normally from other visions that are much broader, so he can have a different vision of things than we do* (Nelson, Colombia).

Similarly, Julián is unsure whether his conversation partner in Canada is better informed about Colombian politics than he is. However, he does notice that she is interested in the subject: *“I don't know how her information is, whether higher or lower, but I have seen that she is very interested in the subject and talks about it a*

lot with me, since I am here and I can also vote, now that I am old enough" (Julián, Colombia).

It is worth mentioning that most of the participants in Colombia, including those who consider that their conversation contact in Canada is not better informed than they are regarding Colombian politics, recognize the interest of their conversation contacts in Canada to keep abreast of the Colombian reality and consider that migration has promoted a greater interest in learning about the country's politics.

5.3 INTEREST IN COLOMBIAN POLITICS POST-MIGRATION

Thirty-eight percent of the participants in Canada consider that with migration to Canada, their interest in Colombian politics has increased. As an example, we present the testimony of Jaime, who considers that his experience in Canada, precisely the democratic response of Canadians, has prompted him to learn more and increase his interest in Colombian politics: *"It has increased one hundred percent. I am constantly informed. I hear more news from Colombia than from Canada. I have become more involved in learning how democracy is exercised, as a citizen, what you are entitled to and what you can demand."* (Jaime, Canada).

On the other hand, thirty-one percent of participants in Canada consider that their interest in Colombian politics remained the same after migration. To illustrate, Darío comments that his interest in Colombian politics has not changed after his migration, but rather, he has broadened his interest towards politics in Canada and other countries. Similarly, Darío comments that due to changes in the political position of his conversational contacts in Colombia, his interest in talking to these

people has diminished[16]: *"I think it has remained the same. I have broadened my political interest in Canadian and other countries' affairs. Still, as for the country and Colombia's political situation, I think it has remained the same"* (Darío, Canada).

In another perspective regarding maintaining the same interest in Colombian politics after migration, Edith comments that she has probably maintained her interest in Colombian politics because she still has close people living in Colombia:

*I think it has remained the same. I compare myself with other people who live here, and many people who live here simply do not go to vote or are not aware of who some of the representatives are or who won. So, I feel that I have the same interest because I have participated in as many elections as possible. Before voting, I search for information. I check the news daily. So, I feel that I am at the same level of interest, if not higher (*Edith, Canada).

In Valeria's case, she considers that her interest has been maintained, but she does not have enough time to keep herself informed and being far from the country means that she does not feel involved in the reality of what is happening:

My interest has remained the same, but sometimes due to lack of time, I get behind in the news, and I must do a weekend marathon watching and listening to the news. It sounds like a joke, but yes, I suddenly don't find out about some things one week, and the next week I'm looking for someone's podcast or watching the news of some independent media (Valeria, Canada).

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[16] To delve deeper into the impact of migration on the homogeneity of the political conversation group, refer to Chapter 4.

Finally, Santiago and Martina agree that their interest in Colombian politics has remained the same after migration, and they have even experienced some change in their perspective due to the arrival of the new government.

I think it increased a little because of last year's elections. One reason is that for the last elections, there was a candidate who attracted more attention from me, and now he is president, so that has made me get closer and accompany more on political issues (Santiago, Canada).

I think it has remained the same, only now I see it a little more positive than in the past, perhaps because I see that there have been changes. I think that the intention or desire and the interest are the same, but the vision has changed (Martina, Canada).

Twenty-three percent of participants in Canada consider that after their migration to Canada, their interest in Colombian politics has decreased. According to them, the reasons for this decrease are a greater interest in Canadian politics and a desire to leave Colombian politics aside. However, in both cases, participants say they try to keep abreast of major changes or reforms that may affect their relatives living in Colombia. For example, Álvaro comments that he is more interested in local politics: *"I would say that it has diminished a little because I am more interested in local politics. However, I try to keep abreast of major changes, proposals, or reforms to find out how they might affect my family"* (Álvaro, Canada). In the same sense, Paula comments that she does not follow any Colombian news channels and has disassociated herself somewhat:

My interest has diminished, and I think it's because politics was one of the things I didn't like about my country, so I tried to put it aside. I talk about politics from what I know through news and social networks: news sources and newspapers, but I think I have detached a little bit. In fact, I don't follow any Colombian channel to watch the news, but I try to find out what affects. That is to say, my motto is if it affects my family, I pay attention to it, and if not, no, because I precisely wanted to detach myself from that which I felt did not fill me, that I did not like about Colombia (Paula, Canada).

Most participants in Colombia, including those who consider that their conversational contact in Canada is not better informed about Colombian politics than they are, recognize the interest of their conversational contacts in Canada in keeping abreast of the country's reality and consider that migration has fostered in them a more significant interest in the country's politics.

In this sense, among the participants in Canada, both those who express a greater interest and those who have experienced a decrease in interest affirm that their interest in Colombian politics is maintained, albeit in a global manner, because they are interested in the well-being of those close to them who remain in the country.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research indicate that the quality of information and migrants' interest in the politics of the country of origin are decisive in determining the impact that migration has on the political information discussed in a transnational conversation. For migrants, staying informed while abroad requires a more significant effort, as they have to search for information that does not come naturally

to them and consult various sources of information to get an idea of what is happening in the country.

Most participants in Colombia consider that migration has promoted an increased interest in Colombian politics among their conversation partners in Canada and recognize in them an interest in keeping abreast of the country's reality. In cases where migrants experience a decrease in interest in Colombian politics, the reasons are to be found in the sense of disconnection with the reality of the country, a feeling of concern when learning about political issues, and uncertainty regarding the veracity of the information to which they have access. Participants in Canada, including those who have experienced a decline in interest, state that they want to remain informed about Colombian politics because they care about the well-being of their contacts who remain in the country.

The evidence indicates that it is not possible to determine whether the migrant conversation partner is better informed about their country's politics solely by their level of interest and volume of information they consult, but that it is necessary to know the level of interest and volume of information of the conversation partner in the country of origin. Participants in Colombia who consider that their interlocutor in Canada is better informed about Colombian politics than they also think their interlocutor in Canada has a greater interest in Colombian politics than they do. These participants in Colombia also perceive that their conversation partner in Canada have access to other sources of information. In contrast, the evidence indicates that unless the conversation partner in Colombia has less interest in politics and seeks less information than the conversation partner in Canada, they tend to

give greater relevance to their day-to-day experience than to information their political conversation contact can access from outside the country.

Following Lafleur (2013, p. 132) in his analysis of the influence of information technologies on the political opinion formation process of migrants, this research confirms Lafleur's findings that technology allows immediate and direct access to the media in the country of origin and also enables migrants to share their political opinions and engage in debates with other voters in the host and home societies. In the specific case of transnational conversation, research participants widely used the Whatsapp application. The application is used to hold political conversations via video calls or text messages.

Chapter 6
Expertise, trustworthiness and status

This section analyses the impact of migration on expertise and trustworthiness within transnational political conversations. These two aspects are relevant in the light of this research since the perception of expertise and trustworthiness of the source determines the acceptance of the message issued by an interlocutor (Alt et al., 2016, p. 329). The acceptance of the message potentially implies influence. Thus, establishing the expertise and trustworthiness of migrant participants allows us to approach the question of the impact of migration on status within the transnational political conversation.

The implications of loss or enhancement of status within a political conversation are related to whether migrant political voice increases or decreases. Political voice refers to any activity by citizens to influence and participate in the electoral process directly or through the expression of preferences (Schlozman et al., 2018, p. 24). Thus, enhanced status within the political conversation implies greater chances of adding votes for candidates or issues of interest, while diminished status implies lower chances of influencing political decisions (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998, p. 64).

Expertise refers to the degree of perceived political knowledge of the interlocutor. Trustworthiness refers to the degree to which statements made are considered valid and the general feeling that the source can be trusted (Wallace et al., 2020, p. 440). Perceived expertise transcends the informational component and includes the ability to foresee the consequences of political decisions made (Lupia

& McCubbins, 1998, p. 20), whereas trustworthiness derives from the listener's perception that he and the interlocutor have common interests (Lupia & McCubbins 1998, p. 68). Such interests do not refer to having the same political affiliation, but to the perception that the outcomes of decisions similarly affect them, and therefore, they share an interest in the same outcomes.

At the end of this chapter, general results are presented regarding the status within the transnational political conversation of Colombians in Canada with their conversation partners in Colombia.

6.1 EXPERTISE

Eighty-five percent of participants in Canada consider that they do a better analysis of Colombian politics after migration. Among the reasons expressed are that the experience of living in Canada allows them to compare and understand other forms of government; they have a more objective and broader view of Colombian politics; and they are more interested in Colombian politics and better informed than before migration.

To illustrate how the comparison between Canada and Colombia helps participants in Canada to make a better political analysis than before their migration, the testimonies of Álvaro and Darío are presented.[17] Álvaro states that in Canada, he has understood other forms of government and their advantages and

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[17] Other participants consider that since migration to Canada, they have a better analysis of Colombian politics because they can make more objective judgements. Paula, Valeria, Martina and Federico also made similar comments during their interview.

disadvantages, and this has served as a point of comparison to analyze Colombian politics:

I think so because I already have points of comparison. Before, I only knew about Colombian politics and didn't really understand the dynamics of other countries. And now, living in Canada, I have understood other forms of government and their advantages and disadvantages, which serves as a point of comparison to analyze Colombian politics (Álvaro, Canada).

For his part, Darío considers that being away from the country's daily reality allows him to have an impersonal judgment of what is happening:

Yes, I think that the passage of time has allowed me to see Colombian politics more clearly due to various factors. Perhaps the most valid or most representative is because being away from daily life, from the political situation in Colombia, has allowed me to have a judgment, so to speak, impersonal about what happens. Although my family and friends are there, and it also affects me economically, it has allowed me to see what is happening in the country with a greater perspective (Darío, Canada).

Continuing with the perspective of those who consider that after migration, they better analyze Colombian politics, Jaime and Agustín indicate that a greater interest in Colombian politics and the consultation of more information sources has impacted their perception of their analysis of Colombian politics. For example, Jaime believes that nowadays, he tries to keep himself very well informed, and this makes him feel more confident in speaking:

I feel I have more tools, so I feel more confident to be able to speak with more tools. Before, it was probably much more informal and much more based on

instinct, like what everybody says or what you hear from most people or what you hear from the traditional media. But now, I try to keep myself supremely informed so that I can make correct value judgments (Jaime, Canada).

Agustín, for his part, considers that he does more research now than before[18]:

Yes, totally, because before, I didn't investigate as much. When the candidates were campaigning, I knew about their proposals and things, but I didn't do as much research as I do now. Now I am much more concerned and try to investigate and consult things. Now there is much more information on social media. So, let's say that there is much more information and access to information nowadays (Agustín, Canada).

Fifteen percent of participants in Canada did not claim to make a better analysis of Colombian politics after their migration.[19] For example, Edith considers that her specific search for information causes her to be biased in her political perspectives:

That is a good question. I am not sure. I am not sure, to be honest, because let's say I do have a little more maturity to understand politics better, and the fact that I have lived more years and seen different political movements gives me a certain knowledge. But I am aware that being here, I may have a bias. I can be influenced by the information I get on the Internet. And the information I get on the Internet is going to be influenced by what I look for, not by what is reality (Edith, Canada).

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[18] Similar statements were made by other participants, for further illustration see the interviews of Santiago, Cristián and Ramiro.
[19] Cristián also made a statement in similar sense.

Perception of conversation partners in Colombia

Eighty-nine percent of participants in Colombia referred positively to whether their interlocutor in Canada understands Colombian politics better now that they are outside the country. They mention that their conversation partners in Canada have a broader perspective and can compare the two countries. However, except for two participants in Colombia, most of them do not state with certainty that their conversation partner understands Colombian politics better now than before migration. Conversation partners in Colombia recognize an advantage in the impact of migration on their conversation partners in Canada from the point of view of greater interest and perspective. However, this does not seem to indicate that they identify expertise.

For instance, Mateo says his conversation partner in Canada now has a different perception of Colombian politics, and his political interest and awareness have increased. However, he does not commit to saying that his conversation partner understands Colombian politics better than before his migration:

> *I don't know if he understands it better. I think he understands it differently. In that sense, it seems to me that the difference is a gain. I think I could say that he understands it better in the sense of awareness and in the appropriate terms that allow him to have his own reading of it. Now to think in terms of better because he considers one vision, or another vision is not. It is not so. Rather, I consider that the improvement is around awareness, interest, and the search for information about it* (Mateo, Colombia).

Several other participants' comments reflected similar dynamics[20]:

I don't know how her information is, whether higher or lower, but I have seen that she is very interested in the subject and talks about it a lot with me, since I am here and I can also vote, now that I am old enough (Julián, Colombia).

Possibly being there has led him to enter into some comparison, to make some analysis based on how some things happen there in which one does not necessarily agree that they are done better in one place than in another (Marta, Colombia).

In contrast, eleven percent of participants in Colombia think their conversation contacts in Canada do not understand Colombian politics better now that they are in Canada: *"I don't think so, the position remains the same"* (Wilson, Colombia).

Seeking advice

The following answers to the questions related to whom they would turn to if they needed political advice, together with the answer to the question of whether they consider that the interlocutor in Canada understands politics better, can together answer the question related to the perception of expertise that participants in Colombia have of their interlocutors in Canada. As noted in the chapter on political information, the feeling of being better informed is not enough to be considered well-informed. The interlocutor must perceive more significant information and expertise for political influence.

Regarding whom they would ask for advice on a political matter if needed, only one of the participants in Colombia, Julian, said he would seek advice from his

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[20] The statements by Cesar, Lisa, Nelson, Osvaldo and Rosa and are similar to those quoted in the main text.

political conversation partner in Canada. He added that he would still seek information on his own: *"I would ask my cousin, but on my own, I think I would do more research on the Internet"* (Julián, Colombia). For his part, Mateo also mentions that he might consult his conversation partner in Canada. However, he is also emphatic that this would be hypothetical and not real: *"Well, in a hypothetical case, because I don't think I do it. But in the hypothetical case of needing it, I think my brother, because in different issues, and this would not be the exception, he is a good advisor"* (Mateo, Colombia).

Forty-four percent of respondents in Colombia say they would seek political advice from one of their contacts in Colombia. This is reflected in the following statements:

To a contact in Colombia (Wilson, Colombia).

I would ask several friends and my partner. They are in Colombia (César, Colombia).

The truth is that I always vote for the person my son, the one who is here in Colombia, is going to vote for because I don't understand much about politics. I don't know anything about it, so I let him guide me (Rosa, Colombia).

It is not always with the same people. There are regular people with whom one share more, for example, with the wife, with some relatives that one constantly interacts with them. But, for example, work colleagues come and go, so at different times of voting, one talks with them or with others and so on; it is variable (Osvaldo, Colombia).

Thirty-three percent of participants in Colombia make no specific mention of any person they would ask for political advice but would seek information for themselves. This is reflected in the following statements[21]:

Generally, one reads, listens to the debates on TV, and we talk among the family. Generally, we always vote as a block (Lisa, Colombia).

My style is not to ask a person. My style is to find out about the person, to get to know a lot about their approach, their knowledge, etc. And in the same way, to dialogue, to have information or share information with other people (Marta, Colombia).

The evidence indicates that participants in Canada perceive that after migration, they better analyze Colombian politics than while in the country. Many of them referred to the possibility of comparing Colombia and Canada as an advantage for understanding politics, in addition to a greater interest in Colombian politics and the search for information. Conversation partners in Colombia agree that migration has broadened the political perspective of their conversation partners in Canada. However, they do not seem to consider them better informed than they are about Colombian politics (see previous Chapter 5), nor would they turn to them for information on Colombian politics, as evidenced in this section. Thus, migration seems to positively affect some people's gain of information and political interest, without this meaning an acknowledgment of expertise by the transnational political conversation partners in the country of origin.

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[21]Nelson made a similar mention of Lisa and Marta, indicating that he prefers to search for information on his own and not consult others.

As previously mentioned, one of the requirements for a given participant in an informal political conversation to change from participant to opinion leader, i.e., an influential interlocutor, is that the interlocutor perceives expertise in them. It is not enough to be an expert or to consider oneself an expert. The conversation partner must perceive that expertise. To be perceived as an expert, it is not necessary for there to be a close personal relationship between the people interacting through informal conversation, but the opinion leader must be perceived as a reliable source (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, pp. 51). In other words, it must be perceived that the interlocutor knows more and can also make precise analyses of the political environment and the effects of a given decision or action (Lupia & McCubbins, 1998, p. 20). In this sense, for the transnational political interlocutor to increase status after their migration, their knowledge must grow, and this must be perceived by their interlocutor in the country of origin. The interlocutor who remains in the country must perceive that even outside the country, the transnational conversation partner has a higher political knowledge. The political knowledge essential for increasing status in transnational political conversation must be about the country of origin.

The evidence indicates that interlocutors in the country-of-origin value the new information and the capacity of comparison that the migrant conversation partner acquires about the host country's politics. However, this is not enough to replace the knowledge of local reality when the conversation partner in the home country maintains an interest in politics and is updated with daily reality.

The perception of increased migrant conversation partner expertise occurs among the participants in only two scenarios. In the first scenario, there is an increase in political interest and political information in the migrant conversation

partner. In contrast, the conversation partner in the country of origin has little political interest and low political information. In the second scenario, the migrant maintains or increases political information and interest. Moreover, the interlocutor in the home country holds political interest but considers the sources of information available to their interlocutor outside the country to be better, i.e., the conversation partner who remains in the home country does not trust the sources of information available to them and trusts more the sources of information available to their interlocutor outside the country.

6.2 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Data from transnational political conversation partners are taken to analyze trustworthiness. It is worth recalling that trustworthiness refers to the perception of shared interests. That is, the perception that the outcomes of decisions affect them similarly and that they share an interest in the same political outcomes. The results indicate that the impact of migration on trustworthiness within the transnational political conversation tends to be decreasing, with some cases where trustworthiness remains stable. No evidence was found of an increase in trustworthiness after migration. The cases that best exemplify the findings are presented below.

Trustworthiness decreases

Three main reasons were found in cases where trustworthiness decreased after migration: an overall decrease in interest in Colombian politics, non-communication of interests to the transnational conversation partner, and opposing

political ideology. The case of Paula and Osvaldo presents an example of the overall decrease in interest in Colombian politics as a cause of decreased trustworthiness.[22]

Disinterest

Politics was one of the aspects that Paula liked least from Colombia before her migration. This feeling increased once outside the country and has wanted to distance herself even more from Colombian political affairs:

My interest has diminished, and I think it's because politics was one of the things I didn't like about my country, so I tried to put it aside. I talk about politics from what I know through news and social networks: news sources and newspapers, but I think I have detached a little bit (Paula, Canada).

Moreover, Osvaldo, her political conversation partner, considers that in the past, when Paula lived in Colombia, there was perhaps some intention on his part to influence her political decisions. Still, after her migration, the conversation is less relevant to him because although Paula is concerned about her country of origin, the situations no longer govern her and do not affect her directly:

I believe that it has become a conversation where the importance, the relevance, is less because although they care because it is their country of origin, they are not governed by many of the situations; it is not affecting them directly. So, they want to be aware of what is happening, but it is not necessarily for decision-making, unlike before" (Osvaldo, Colombia).

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[22] The case of Julio and his conversation partner in Colombia, Cesar, is similar to the one presented below.

Weak communication

As an example of the decrease in trustworthiness due to the lack of communication of one's interests with the conversation partner, the case of Santiago and his conversation partner Rosa is presented.

The evidence seems to indicate a disruption in the perception of shared interests among interlocutors because self-interest has not been communicated: "*We haven't talked about that. We haven't talked much about those things lately, and I haven't been talking about it for a while. I am worried that soon things could get difficult here in Colombia*" (Rosa, Colombia). For his part, Santiago says that his concerns regarding the future are more medium to long-term than Rosa's:

> *I think we do share some concerns. My concerns are more in the long term because I am not living day to day in Colombia, but perhaps at some point, I will return to Colombia. My concern is not here and now but in the medium or long-term future, whereas the person I talk to in Colombia is thinking more about the here and now because he is living in the here and now. So, I think that would be the main difference* (Santiago, Canada).

Moreover, Rosa does not refer to Santiago in the hypothetical scenario of needing guidance on a political issue, nor does she mention him as a conversation leader or a referent for her last vote*: "The truth is that I always vote for the person my son, the one who is here in Colombia, is going to vote for because I don't understand much about politics. I don't know anything about it, so I let him guide me"* (Rosa, Colombia).

In the last presidential elections in Colombia, Santiago could not vote, but he had a preferred candidate. Rosa voted for this candidate, which, according to Rosa, was probably a coincidence, as she always votes for the candidate suggested by someone she lives within Colombia: *"Well, I think it was like a coincidence. It's just that there are things that one doesn't have very much in mind. I don't remember well, the truth"* (Rosa, Colombia).

Contrary political ideology

As an illustration of cases where trustworthiness decreased due to opposing political ideology, the case of Jaime and his conversation partner in Colombia, Wilson, is presented. The evidence suggests a breakdown in the perception of shared interests between the interlocutors due to their opposing political positions.

When asked about concerns about Colombia's future, Wilson expresses concern about the reforms that are being processed in Congress. He considers that his conversation partner does not share this same apprehension because the root of the worry originates in his political position, and Jaime has a political position contrary to his: *"The concern in Colombia is due to the political position, and the people in Canada have a contrary political position"* (Wilson, Colombia). In addition, Jaime indicates that his concerns regarding Colombia's future are more long-term because he aspires to reach an advanced age where the country can continue to function stably:

> *The concerns are basically the same with respect to the economy, security, etcetera. However, I also think that the vision of the future is different for him at 70 years old. I mean, he is probably not very stressed about what is going to happen in the country 30 or 40 years from now, right? Which it does worries*

me because I aspire to be able to reach an advanced age in which the country

can still be functioning, at least in a stable way (Jaime, Canada).

Regarding Colombia's last presidential elections in 2022, Wilson says he did

not vote. Still, he believes that in the hypothetical case that he had voted, his vote

would be similar to that of his contacts in Colombia: *"It would resemble the vote of*

my contacts in Colombia" (Wilson, Colombia).

Trustworthiness maintained

In cases where trustworthiness was maintained after migration, the evidence

suggests that the political ideology or similar values of the interlocutors lead to the

persistence of a perception of a shared interest[23]. Interlocutors in Colombia referred

to a shared political position or a shared value system where the perception of

trustworthiness was maintained. This aligns with Lupia & McCubbins (1998, p.64),

who affirm that reputation, partisan identification or ideology can be valuable

heuristics for persuasion if they convey information about the interlocutor's expertise

and trustworthiness. To illustrate, the case of Ramiro and his conversation partner in

Colombia, Nelson, is presented.

Ramiro states that his conversation partner is someone he has known for 20

years: *"Yes, he is a person I have known for 20 years, so I think that, in a way, the*

two of us have always been on the same shore, but we have been migrating from a

center-right position to a more center-left position today" (Ramiro, Canada).

Although, according to Ramiro, Nelson has had bigger of a political shift since he

was even a bit more right-wing in the past, over time, they have shifted their political

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[23] The cases of the conversation partners Federico and his conversation partner Marta and Agustín and his conversation partner Mateo are similar to the case presented in the main text.

positions together, moving from centre-right in the past to centre-left today: *"Particularly with him, I think we always reached an agreement because we are not politically antagonistic. However, he was a little more right-wing, so to speak. But through time, we have migrated, and he has had a change, so to speak, a little bit bigger"* (Ramiro, Canada).

Furthermore, Nelson indicates that he tends to agree politically with Ramiro because they share the same political ideology: "*Actually, my friend and I don't have much controversy because we are both* mamertos *(leftists). Even when I work with right-wing people, my thinking is rather non-conformist with the ultra-right, which is so arbitrary with people*" (Nelson, Colombia).

In addition, Nelson considers that he has always given the same relevance to Ramiro's opinions because they are on the same political side: "*It has always been the same. We have always found ourselves at the same point, in what represents, supposedly for the right, the good* mamerto (leftist) *who does not agree with many things*" (Nelson, Colombia).

Finally, regarding his choice of vote, Nelson indicates that his vote is like Ramiro's, given that the people he knows in Colombia are right-wing and he is not right-wing: *"My vote is similar to that of my contact in Canada because the people I know are right-wing, and I am not right-wing"* (Nelson, Colombia).

6.3 STATUS WITHIN THE CONVERSATION

The analysis of transnational political conversation partners indicates that migration alters status within the political conversation in various ways and as a consequence of various causes. The results are presented below in general terms. It is worth mentioning that twenty-two percent of the cases analyzed were

inconclusive, as it was not possible to determine with certainty the perception of the interlocutor in Colombia on either of the two aspects explored.

In general terms, post-migration status declined due to a lack of interest in Colombian politics or the affectation of one of two characteristics: expertise or trustworthiness. The evidence seems to indicate that, in most cases, migrants diminish their status within the transnational political conversation. Therefore, while they remain outside the country, their possibilities of influencing politics in their countries of origin diminish.

In cases where the status within the conversation decreased, it was found that twenty-two percent of migrants decreased their status within the conversation of their own desire because their interest in Colombian politics declined. Additionally, thirty-four percent of participants had their status in the conversation affected after migration by a decrease in one of two characteristics, either expertise or trustworthiness. In this group, cases were found where migrants' self-perceived expertise differed from the expertise their interlocutors in their country of origin perceived. That is, the participants in Canada considered that they had increased their expertise. However, their conversation partners in Colombia, although they perceived some improvement in this regard, did not consider that the expertise of their conversation partners in Canada about Colombian politics was superior to that of them.

In contrast, twenty-two percent of the migrants increased their status within the transnational conversation by increasing their expertise and maintaining

trustworthiness through a shared political ideology with their political conversation partners in the country of origin.

Chapter7
Conclusions

This research examined the impact of emigration on status within informal political conversation. It was investigated whether, when leaving the country, migrants increased or decreased their status within the conversation with their contacts in the country of origin. It was hypothesized that the implications of a change of status within the conversation were related to changes in expertise and trustworthiness within the political conversation; both aspects were necessary to influence other interlocutors politically. The research results were expected to fluctuate around two extremes: moving from being a follower in the country of origin to an opinion leader after migration or reducing status within the group from being a political opinion leader in the country of origin to a follower after migration.

The evidence seems to indicate that, in most cases, migrants diminish their status within the transnational political conversation. Therefore, while they remain outside the country, their possibilities of influencing politics in their countries of origin diminish.

The findings indicate that migration impacts status within the political conversation because it impacts the interest and search for political information. In the first instance, there is a decrease in expertise and trustworthiness within the political conversation as a result of a lack of interest of the migrant in the politics of the country of origin. This desire for disconnection is also perceived by conversation partners in the country of origin who notice a decline in expertise and shared interests, i.e., trustworthiness, within the transnational political conversation.

On the other hand, migration could impact the interest in the politics of the country of origin, generating greater interest and an increase in the volume of information consulted. However, in the case of Colombians in Canada, these increases in interest in the politics of the country of origin and the greater search for information cannot be attributed directly to migration since the political context of the country has generated greater political interest also in Colombians who remain within the country.

The evidence suggests that the migrant's perception of their expertise is insufficient for it to be recognized by their conversation partner. It is identified that migration increases the migrant's self-perception of expertise concerning the home country's politics, while this is not always perceived by the conversation partner in the country of origin due to a tendency to value more the permanence in the country as a condition for expertise. In some cases, it was evidenced that the conversation partner in the country of origin acknowledges an increase in the political understanding of the migrant conversation partner but considers that it is necessary to live the country's daily reality to have a superior knowledge of it.

Concerning the above, it is worth mentioning that the results of this research indicate that for migrants, staying informed abroad requires a greater effort, since they have to look for information that does not come naturally to them and consult various sources of information to get an idea of what is happening in the country.

Conversely, concerning trustworthiness, no evidence was found of an increase in trustworthiness after migration. The impact tends to be decreasing, with some cases where trustworthiness remains stable. In cases where trustworthiness

was maintained after migration, the evidence seems to indicate that the political ideology or similar values of the interlocutors make the perception of a shared interest persist. Interlocutors in Colombia referred to a shared political position or a shared value system where the perception of trustworthiness was maintained. In contrast, trustworthiness declined when the interlocutor in Canada had the opposite political position of the interlocutor in Colombia.

One of the most relevant findings of the thesis is that migration not only affects the political conversation from the point of view of internal dynamics of influence but also affects the participants in the conversation, changing, in some cases, the homogeneity of their characteristics and their political interest in the country of origin. While domestic political conversation usually occurs between people who are similar in many personal and ideological ways, transnational political conversations involving immigrants alter this pattern by exposing one of the interlocutors to a very different "shock" of great magnitude in their personal circumstances. This creates unique circumstances where political heterogeneity can occur, thus potentially nurturing tolerance and democratic values.

7.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitation of this research is related to the sample size and the generalizability of the results. This is a limitation because although the results of this research are the product of the detailed analysis of the data obtained, the migrant population in Canada and the phenomenon of global migration is wide and diverse. Therefore, the findings of this research are closely linked to the characteristics of the population examined at the conjunctural political moment in which they were

addressed by the research, as well as the characteristics of the country to which they migrated. This limitation means that the results should not be considered as findings applicable to all migrants in Canada who discuss politics with contacts in their country of origin, and even less as results that can be generalized to migrants in other countries.

Another limitation is related to the generalization of the findings regarding conversation partners. Twenty-two people participated in this research: thirteen in Canada and nine in Colombia. Participants from Colombia came to the study through participants from Canada because they were their political conversation partners. In total, nine transnational political conversation pairs were formed. Participation was free and voluntary, and it was not a condition to participate in the research to have a political conversation partner in Colombia from the beginning; thus, despite having been invited, four conversation partners in Colombia did not participate. This is a limitation because it does not allow us to have the perspective of all conversation partners in Colombia regarding the expertise and trustworthiness of conversation partners in Canada. The perspective of peers is relevant because, as previously indicated in Chapters 2 and 6, the possibility of influence arises not from self-perceived expertise and trustworthiness but from the interlocutor's recognition of these two aspects. The absence of some conversation partners limits the contrast of information provided by participants in Canada about their expertise and trustworthiness.

Another limitation of the research is related to establishing what political conversations were like before migration. Some participants stated that before

migration or the current government, they did not talk about politics or were not interested in it. This is a limitation of the research because it did not allow us to know the dynamics of all participants' political conversations before the migration.

From the theoretical point of view, one limitation is the lack of a specific literature regarding transnational political conversation. This is a limitation because this research based its theoretical framework on the findings of the informal political conversation in the domestic environment, and a specific theoretical framework of transnational political conversation could allow further delimitation of the findings. It could allow us, for example, to separate the general features of the transnational political conversation from the specific findings related to the transnational political conversation of Colombians in Canada.

7.2 FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES

When Colombians arrive in Canada, they face several aspects different from their country of origin. To mention the most obvious: the change of political system from a presidential republic to a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy, the change from a unitary to a federal government, and the economic change from a developing to a developed country. Because the differences between Colombia and Canada are marked, future research on transnational political conversation could address other migrant populations more similar to Canada as a case study to identify characteristics that overlap and those that differ from the transnational political conversation of Colombians in Canada. Populations with markedly different characteristics to those of Latin American countries, for example, the British in Canada, because they have the same political system, language and economic

stability as Canada. Alternatively, one could also consider the analysis of transnational political conversation among people from more reserved cultures than the Colombian one, where conversation of all kinds, not only about political issues, is present in the daily lives of all citizens.

Another possibility for future research stems from research outcomes. The findings seem to indicate that migration alters the homogeneity of the transnational political conversation group, leading to heterogeneity in the conversation and thus creating a space for political tolerance. This research did not include the analysis of political tolerance or homogeneity in the transnational political conversation. However, a future study could determine whether, through increased heterogeneity, the transnational political conversation is closer to the deliberative democratic ideal while remaining informal, unstructured and spontaneous. Furthermore, the analysis of heterogeneity in transnational political conversation and political participation could significantly nurture understanding of the effects of transnational political conversation. Findings from the domestic research indicate that heterogeneity is a double-edged sword. Mutz (2006) and Schmitt-Beck and Lup (2013) have drawn attention to the tension inherent in heterogeneous political conversation: while it contributes to citizens' political sophistication and tolerance, it also discourages participation (Schmitt-Beck & Lup, 2013, p. 529). Political participation was not specifically assessed in this research, but there was evidence of self-censorship after migration. Future research could help to elucidate whether self-censorship in transnational political conversation might be a consequence of the heterogeneity brought about by migration.

Slightly related to the above, another future avenue might relate to migrants' self-censorship in informal transnational political conversation. Some participants who mention self-censorship also mention political polarization in Colombia (15%). This issue was discussed in Chapter 3. Half of the people who mentioned self-censorship also mentioned decreased interest in Colombian politics, a topic discussed in Chapter 5. However, the relationship between self-censorship and the country's political polarization is inconclusive. The causes of self-censorship could be a reduced interest in the country's politics, a desire to maintain relations with the outside world, or a consequence of heterogeneity, as mentioned above. Because self-censorship was not initially raised in the research and is beyond the scope of the research, the evidence available to suggest a more accurate research path is limited.

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Appendix

THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON STATUS WITHIN THE INFORMAL POLITICAL CONVERSATION

By © Natalia Urrego Guzmán

A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Appendix

INTERVIEW SCRIPT – PARTICIPANT IN CANADA (MIGRANT DISCUSSANT)

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this research, which is about informal political conversation and addresses Colombians in Canada as a case study. This interview follows the ethical research protocols of Memorial University and will be recorded and stored for verification purposes.

Your identity will be kept confidential, and only your answers (without your real name) will be transcribed in the result of the research.

Considering the above, I would like to confirm that you authorize the conversation to be recorded and that you wish to continue with the interview.

- To begin with, I would like to ask you some general questions:
  - Do you keep in touch with someone in Colombia?
  - Do you usually talk about Colombian politics with them?
  - Please mention the person you talk to the most about Colombian politics.
  - What kind of relationship do you have with he/she, i.e., friends, family, former co-workers, former classmates, etc.?
  - Who starts the conversation when you talk about politics with him/her?
  - Does either of you lead the discussion in any way? Who?
  - Do you believe your opinion is taken into account in these conversations?
  - Do you usually agree with each other on political issues?
  - When there is disagreement, how do you solve it? Does either of you change your mind? Who?

- Now, if you try to remember what these conversations were like before living in Canada when you were in Colombia,
  - Did you talk about politics with the same person?
  - Who used to start the political conversation back then?
  - Were your opinions considered at that time?
  - When there was a disagreement, how was it resolved? Does either of you change your mind? Who?

- Let's go back to the present moment,
  - Since you have been in Canada, has your interest in Colombian politics increased, decreased, or remained the same?
  - Do you now search for more information about Colombian politics than before coming to Canada?
  - Do you have better political judgment now than before coming to Canada?
  - Has your experience in Canada somehow impacted your perception of Colombian politics?
  - Have you ever brought up any aspect of politics in Canada as an example or comparison in a conversation about Colombian politics? Has this been well received by your interlocutor in Colombia?

- There were presidential elections in Colombia this year. Did the person you talk to about Colombian politics vote for the same candidate as you?
- Do you share the same concerns about Colombia's future as your contact in the country?

- Before we finish, some general questions:
  - How old are you?
  - What is your level of education? (Elementary school, High school, Undergraduate, Master, Doctorate, Post-doctorate) Was any of this education acquired in Canada?
  - What languages do you speak besides Spanish?
  - Regarding your status in Canada, are you a permanent resident or a Canadian citizen?

- Thank you for your time and your contribution to this research.

INTERVIEW SCRIPT – COLOMBIAN DISCUSSANT

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this research, which is about informal political conversation and addresses Colombians in Canada as a case study. This interview follows the ethical research protocols of Memorial University and will be recorded and stored for verification purposes.
Your identity will be kept confidential, and only your answers (without your real name) will be transcribed in the result of the research.
Considering the above, I would like to confirm that you authorize the conversation to be recorded and that you wish to continue with the interview.

- To begin with, I would like to ask you some general questions:
    - Do you have contact with someone in Canada?
    - What kind of relationship do you have with them, i.e., are friends, family, former co-workers, former classmates, etc.?
    - Do you usually talk about Colombian politics with them?
    - If you have more than one contact in Canada, which of your contacts in Canada do you talk to the most about Colombian politics?
    - Who starts the conversation when you talk about politics with your contact in Canada?
    - Does either of you lead the discussion in any way? Who?
    - Do you think your opinion is considered in these conversations?
    - Do you usually agree with each other on political issues?
    - When there is disagreement, how do you solve it? Does either of you change your mind? Who?

Now I'm going to ask some questions about the past. When this person lived in Colombia,
    - Did you also talk about politics with him/her?
    - Who used to start the political conversation back then?
    - When there was a disagreement, how was it resolved? Does either of you change your mind? Who?
    - When your contact in Canada used to live in Colombia, was his/her opinions about Colombian politics just as important to you as they are now? Or if it has changed somehow?

Let's go back to the present moment,
    - Do you think that now that he/she is in Canada is better informed about Colombian politics than you?
    - Do you think your contact in Canada understands Colombian politics better since he/she is outside the country?

- Do you think this person's experience in Canada has impacted his/her perception of Colombian politics? What are your thoughts about this?
- Has this person ever brought up any aspect of politics in Canada as an example or comparison in a conversation about Colombian politics? What do you think about this?

Thinking about your daily life,
- Do you talk about Colombian politics with other people who are in Colombia?
- Do you discuss more Colombian politics with people who are in Colombia or with your contact in Canada?
- In the hypothetical case you look for advice regarding a political issue, for example, to help you decide on a Colombia presidential election; who would you ask? Why this person?
- Whenever you seek a political opinion, have you contacted the same person or, in the past, consulted someone else?
- There were presidential elections in Colombia this year. Does your vote look more like the people you talk to about politics in Colombia, or is it more like your contact's vote in Canada?
- Does your contact in Canada share the same concerns about the future of Colombia as you?

- Before we finish, some general questions:
  - How old are you?
  - What is your level of education? (Elementary school, High school,
  - Undergraduate, Master, Doctorate, Post-doctorate) Was any of this education acquired outside of Colombia?
  - Do you speak any languages besides Spanish?
  - In which city in Colombia do you currently live?

Thank you for your time and your contribution to this research.

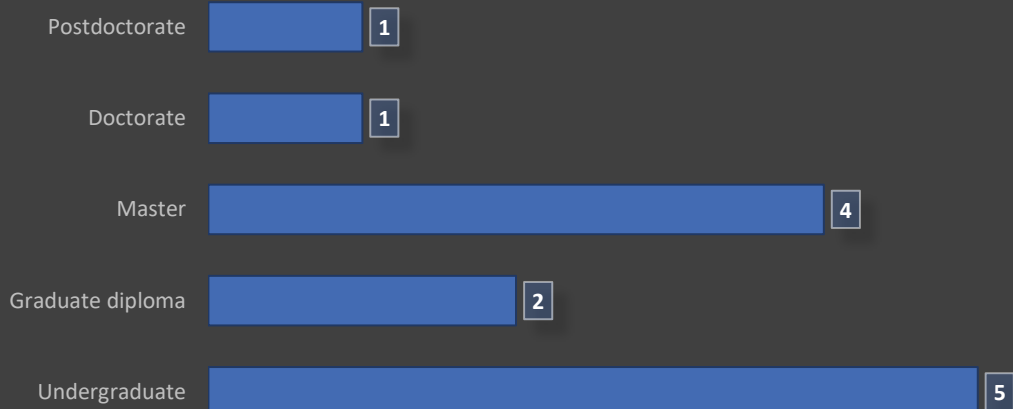# Demographics of participants

CANADA

AGE RANGE OF PARTICIPANTS

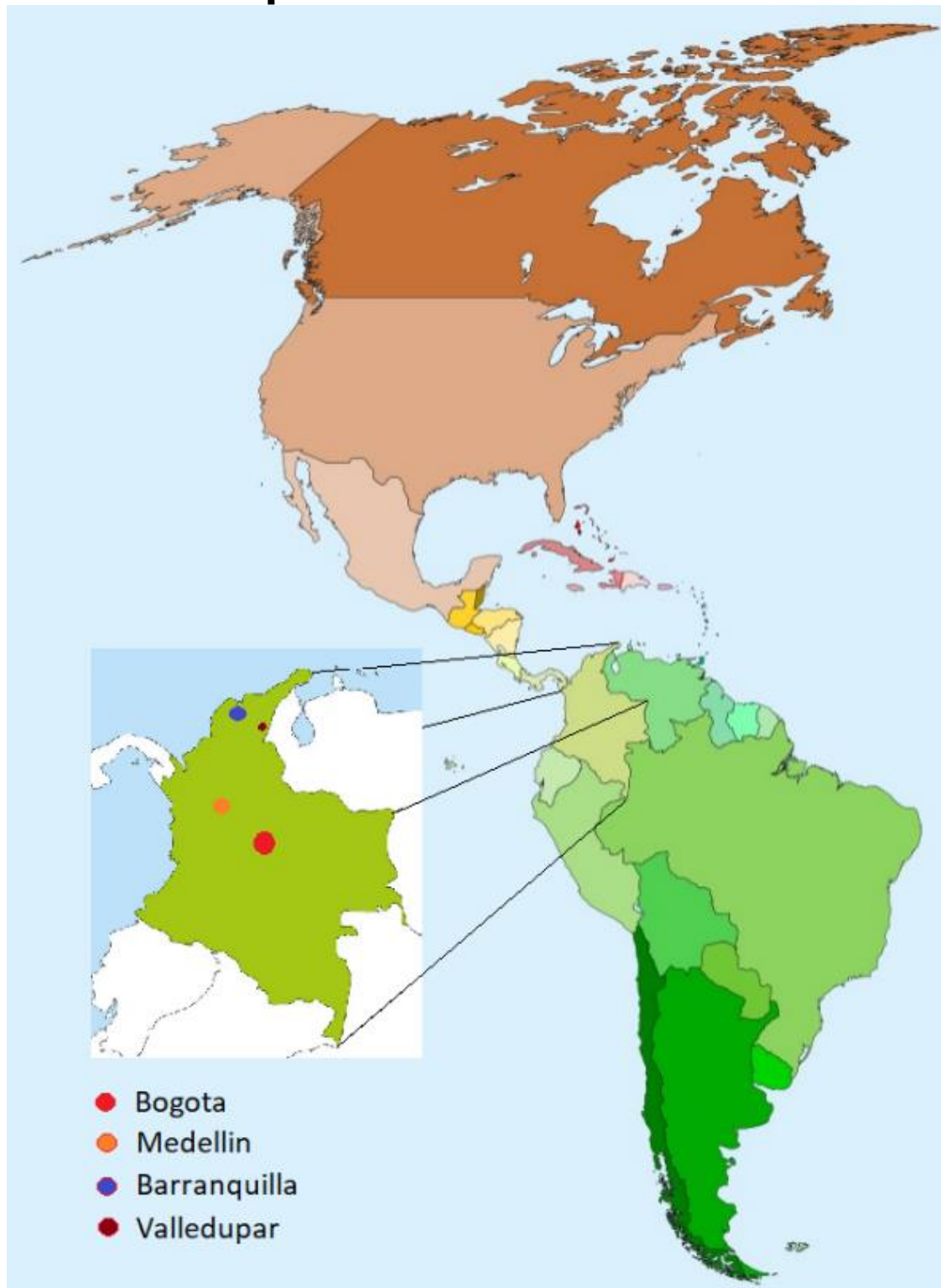|	30 < years old ≤ 40	40 < years old ≤ 50	years old ≥ 50
■ Participants	8	4	1

CANADA

EDUCATION LEVEL OF PARTICIPANTS

	Undergraduate	Graduate diploma	Master	Doctorate	Postdoctorate
■ Participants	5	2	4	1	1

Participants' cities in Colombia

- ● Bogota
- ● Medellin
- ● Barranquilla
- ● Valledupar

Demographics of participants

COLOMBIA

AGE RANGE OF PARTICIPANTS

	years old ≤ 30	30 < years old ≤ 40	40 < years old ≤ 50	years old > 50
■ Participants	1	2	2	4
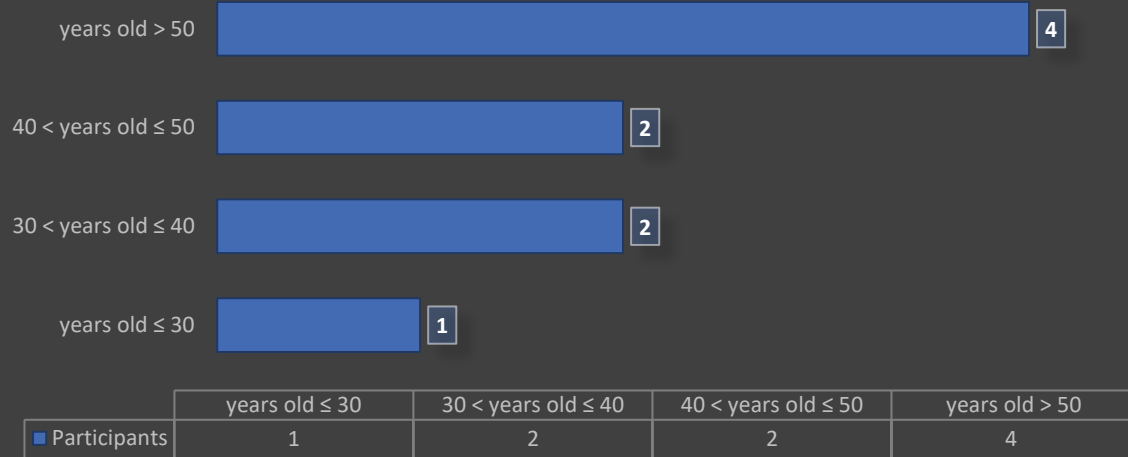
COLOMBIA

EDUCATION LEVEL OF PARTICIPANTS

	High School	Undergraduate	Graduate diploma	Master
■ Participants	1	3	4	1
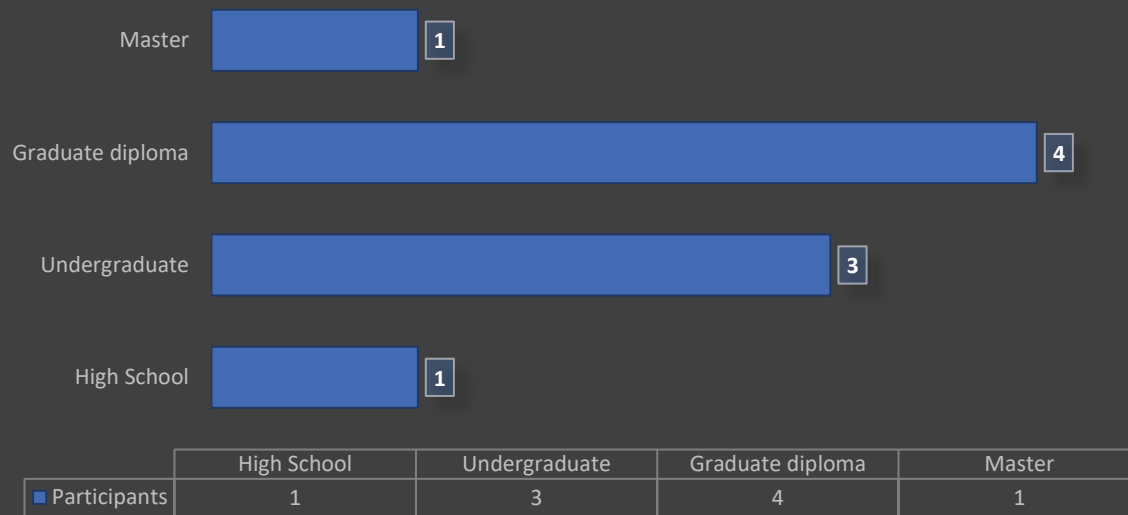
GRAPHIC DESIGNS OF THE CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

FORM HEADERS DESIGNS

English

Spanish

English

Spanish

Investigación sobre migración y conversación política

Los interesados por favor contactar a **Natalia Urrego**

✉ nurregoguzma@mun.ca

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY