

Disenfranchised Grief and Ambiguous Loss in Migration:

The Experiences of Migrants in Canada

By

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Abstract

This capstone examines how migrants in Canada experience ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief while focusing on the intersection of race, gender, and legal status. A systematic review of 11 peer-reviewed articles (2020–2025), analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2025) six-phase thematic framework, shows three major themes: the layered loss of migration, including identity disruption, cultural displacement, and relational rupture; silenced grief and systemic exclusion; and meaning-making and resilience through cultural continuity practices and adaptive coping strategies. Grounded in a constructivist paradigm, the analysis draws on ambiguous loss theory, disenfranchised grief theory, shattered assumptions theory, and intersectionality to highlight how dominant Western models sometimes misinterpret migrant grief, leading to misdiagnosis and invisibility. The findings highlight the need for culturally responsive, trauma-informed approaches that validate migrant grief, reduce risks of pathologization, and foster resilience. This study contributes to counselling practice by amplifying narratives that are underrepresented, especially those of racialized migrants, and offers recommendations for more inclusive clinical and systemic responses.

Keywords: ambiguous loss, disenfranchised grief, intersectionality, migration, multiculturalism, othering

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This capstone explores the experiences of migrants in Canada living with ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief. These forms of grief are underrepresented in migration studies and insufficiently addressed in counselling practice. Examining the topic within counselling psychology helps to highlight the ways unresolved grief is linked to identity, belonging, and systemic inequities, situating these experiences within broader discussions of adaptation and culturally responsive practice. Despite Canada's multicultural policies (Statistics Canada, 2022), the grief of migrants often remains invisible, leaving counsellors and policymakers without adequate frameworks to recognize or respond to these losses (Killikelly & Maercker, 2023). This gap highlights the importance of a focused study on ambiguous and disenfranchised grief in migration, particularly to inform culturally responsive counselling practices.

The impact of migration has been far reaching with millions of people migrating for several reasons, including economic instability, environmental change, war, and the pursuit of better opportunities (International Organization for Migration, 2024). Migrants make up approximately 23% of the total population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022). Although multiculturalism and inclusion policies exist, many migrant challenges remain unrecognized (Mooten, 2021). Despite the growing diversity, migrant grief in the form of ambiguous and disenfranchised forms of loss remains underrepresented in Canadian counselling research and practice (Mooten, 2021). This gap leaves many migrants' emotional realities unacknowledged and their needs unmet within dominant therapeutic frameworks (Killikelly & Maercker, 2023). These challenges are particularly acute for Black migrant women, who face barriers due to compounding factors of race, gender, and legal status, which increase emotional and social vulnerability (Amoako et al., 2024; Sadiq et al., 2025). In Canada, there is a noticeable lack of

culturally responsive tools such as culturally modified grief scales, migration timelines, or life maps to address the grief experiences of migrants (Killikelly & Maercker, 2023). This gap persists despite statistics that reflect increased diversity (Hajian & Randall, 2025).

There are undeniable positive benefits of migration, including feelings of hope, resilience, and opportunity (Flores et al., 2024; Tsegay, 2023). However, these factors must be weighed against emotional and social costs, such as separation from loved ones, loss of cultural identity, and a lack of professional recognition (Flores et al., 2024; Tsegay, 2023). The reported losses are intensified by factors including, but not limited to, racial discrimination (Caxaj & Weiler, 2025; Ma, 2021; Mason et al., 2022; Tuyisenge & Goldenburg, 2021) and legal precarity (Tulli et al., 2023). This leads to emotional suffering that is sometimes overlooked or misdiagnosed by dominant therapeutic frameworks (Flores et al., 2024; Williams et al., 2022).

The concept of ambiguous loss, posited by Pauline Boss (1999), captures the essence of loss that some migrants face when there is physical absence with psychological presence or psychological absence with physical presence, leaving them in a state of unresolved grief (Boss, 1999). Ambiguous loss may present in diverse ways for migrants, such as separation from children or feeling emotionally displaced in a new country. Another concept that helps to clarify the migrant experience is disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1989). It refers to grief that is unacknowledged or socially sanctioned, leaving individuals to feel like they have no reason to grieve losses such as language or identity (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Correia De Sá et al., 2024).

The purpose of this capstone project is to explore how migrants in Canada experience ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief and to understand how intersecting factors such as race, gender, and legal status impact their emotional well-being and access to culturally

responsive counselling. This study aims to synthesize existing literature through a thematic review to inform counselling psychology practice and contribute to more inclusive, culturally attuned approaches to supporting migrant communities. It offers actionable guidance for mental health professionals, policymakers, and community practitioners by examining how systemic barriers, intersecting identities, and culturally incongruent frameworks shape the recognition and treatment of migrant grief. In this way, the study fills a critical gap by translating theories into strategies that may guide practice in a multicultural context.

Research Problem

Migrants often endure ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief, which are frequently unresolved or lack social validation (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025). These include separation from family, loss of cultural identity, and diminished status (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Boss, 2010; Doka, 1989). Some of the reported symptoms include depression, anxiety, and trauma-related symptoms, which are often misinterpreted based on Western diagnostic models and may lead to misdiagnoses or inappropriate treatment (Flores et al., 2024; Mooten, 2021). The result of misdiagnosis can lead to feelings of marginalization, invisibility, and emotional isolation, especially when loss is misunderstood or overlooked by the host society or by individuals who are unfamiliar with non-death grief (Flores et al., 2024). The consequences for some migrants in minority groups, like Black women, include navigating systemic racism and underemployment, which increase psychological stress while having limited access to culturally appropriate care (Amoako et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025). The emotional realities of migrant grief are not prioritized in research and practice, as reflected through the absence of clinical models that clearly support the needs of migrants dealing with ambiguous grief and loss (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Correia De Sá et al., 2024; Tsegay, 2023). Without a good understanding of the

challenges migrants face, there is a possibility of more damage being done to the affected migrants (Ermansons et al., 2023). The project aims to answer the research question, “What are the barriers to accessing culturally responsive counselling for migrants who experience ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief?”

Contribution to the Field

This capstone contributes to counselling psychology by addressing an underexplored dimension of migrant grief that is often overlooked in dominant therapeutic models. While ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief have been well theorized in bereavement studies (Boss, 1999; Doka, 1989), their application to migration remains underdeveloped (Renner et al., 2024), particularly among racialized populations (Falzarano et al., 2022; Wilson & O’Connor, 2022). This project fills a unique gap by addressing issues that are faced by some migrants and amplifies their concerns by transferring theory into practice. Also, it challenges Western models of grief and emphasizes culturally responsive counselling as essential for ethical, equitable care in Canada.

Methodology Overview

This study is situated within a constructivist paradigm, which suggests that reality is socially and culturally constructed and that knowledge is established based on the interaction among researchers, participants, and texts (Taber, 2024). Based on this explanation, I approach migrant grief as context-dependent rather than a fixed, universal phenomenon, which gives precedence to the narratives, language, and cultural practices that shape how loss is experienced and expressed within both scholarly literature and broader sociocultural structures (Taber, 2024). Importantly, reflexivity and bracketing were applied to ensure that my own background as a

migrant researcher informed the work in an unbiased and critical manner, while allowing the voices and contexts represented in the literature to guide meaning-making.

To address the research question, a thematic literature review was done. I conducted a systematic search across major databases, as well as the university repositories, to identify recent peer-reviewed articles (2020–2025) relevant to migration, ambiguous loss, and disenfranchised grief. I selected 11 articles based on clearly stated inclusion and exclusion criteria, representing qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies. The synthesis of the findings was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2025) six-phase thematic analysis, supported by a deductive, theory-driven lens based on ambiguous loss, disenfranchised grief, shattered assumptions, and intersectionality theories. I used reflexivity and bracketing to strengthen credibility and minimize bias. Notably, full methodological details are provided in Chapter 2.

Justification for Research

This capstone is justified by the need to fill critical gaps in literature regarding the ways migrants experience disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss, as well as offer suggestions for more culturally responsive care to the migrant population within a clinical setting. Despite the undeniable benefits of migration, it sometimes causes painful, unrecognized forms of loss that can remain unresolved for years (Tsegay, 2023). These include separation from family, loss of identity, and disconnection from culture and community (Boss, 2010; Tsegay, 2023).

In Canada, culturally responsive counselling services do not adequately address the ambiguous losses migrants face (Amoako et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025). This results in the unintentional invalidation of disenfranchised grief in community and clinical settings, sometimes leading to increased psychological stress and the avoidance of mental health services in some instances (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Flores et al., 2024). Raising awareness of the

unique losses that migrants experience, such as cultural disconnection and family separation, is important to promoting mental health care that addresses the lived experiences of migrants (Correia De Sá et al., 2024; Doka, 2002).

This capstone offers recommendations for mental health professionals to support more inclusive interventions that recognize and respond to the lived experiences of migrants in Canada. Not only will it highlight migrant grief, but it will also encourage spaces of healing and recognition where that grief can be named and honoured. By examining strategies based on community care and cultural acknowledgement, the study highlights the strengths within the migrant community and points towards more affirming forms of support (Herroudi et al., 2023; Tsegay, 2023). This gap is both academic and clinical, because when migrant grief is overlooked, there is a risk of clients being misdiagnosed or pathologized or their lived experiences being invalidated. Addressing this issue will contribute in a meaningful way to advancing scholarship and practice.

Significance of the Study

In order to be of support, practitioners must understand how ambiguous and disenfranchised losses are experienced within migratory contexts (Boss, 1999; Doka, 2002). Migrants often encounter misrecognition in therapeutic and community settings when their grief is not within the Western models of bereavement, highlighting a need for understanding and cultural sensitivity within the therapeutic space (Crocker et al., 2021). Mental health professionals need to ensure their practice caters to the needs of marginalized vulnerable communities through culturally relevant or inclusive approaches (Canadian Psychological Association [CPA], 2017). Boss (1999) emphasizes that resilience-building is important to helping individuals navigate ambiguous loss. As it relates to migration, this resilience includes

being able to preserve cultural identity, reconstruct meaning, and deal with interrupted attachments (Flores et al., 2022; Herroudi et al., 2023; Sadiq et al., 2025). By illustrating how social conditions contribute to the disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss experienced by migrants, this research supports inclusive therapeutic practices and policies that reduce the risk of complicated grief among migrant populations who have been impacted.

The study also aims to contribute to the longer-term development of counselling psychology by emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive training, curriculum development, and supervision models that acknowledge ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief. It points to opportunities for future research to refine assessment tools, strengthen policy advocacy, and expand interdisciplinary approaches that can support migrant well-being. In this way, the project contributes to present-day counselling interventions and future research on the topic by encouraging systemic and policy discussions regarding integration and mental health equity.

Theoretical Frameworks

This project uses multiple theoretical lenses to capture the challenges of migrant grief. Ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief theories provide a foundation for understanding the unique and often unrecognized dimensions of migrant loss. Intersectionality highlights how race, gender, and legal status intersect to shape vulnerability and resilience in grief experiences. Shattered assumptions theory expands the discussion by showing how migration-related disruptions alter core beliefs about safety, fairness, and control in the world. These frameworks provide a comprehensive overview that links individual emotional experiences with broader systemic and cultural dynamics, ensuring the analysis remains theoretically grounded and practical for counselling in the Canadian context.

Ambiguous Loss Theory

Ambiguous loss, as purported by Pauline Boss (1999, 2006, 2021), refers to a type of loss that is unclear, lacks resolution, and resists closure. When compared to a conventional loss such as death, ambiguous loss remains unresolved, which makes it difficult for individuals to grieve or move forward (Mazzarelli et al., 2021). This type of loss is painful because of the absence of the usual markers of grieving, like finality, acknowledgement, and ritual (Mazzarelli et al., 2021). According to ambiguous loss theory, there are two main types of ambiguous loss. The first type refers to the physical absence of an individual, who remains psychologically or emotionally present. An example of this type of loss includes a migrant who is separated from loved ones but is still thought about and missed. The second type of ambiguous loss involves a person who is physically present but psychologically or emotionally unavailable; for example, where an individual has a brain injury or dementia, the individual's body is present, but their personality or responsiveness is diminished (Mazzarelli et al., 2021). The persistent uncertainty caused by ambiguous loss can lead to emotional paralysis, anxiety, and chronic stress and is relevant in the context of trauma, migration, displacement, and marginalization, where identity disruption, and uncertainty are often ongoing (Mazzarelli et al., 2021). It recognizes that not all losses can or should be resolved in the traditional sense (Mazzarelli et al., 2021).

For some migrants, inability to fully grieve can heighten anxiety and depression, so validating these experiences is important in providing emotional and psychological support (Mazzarelli et al., 2021). Migrants may endure the first type of ambiguous loss when they are physically separated from loved ones. Although these loved ones are still alive, the separation is sometimes indefinite or often lacks clarity, which makes it difficult to grieve the absence or imagine a future reunion (Mazzarelli et al., 2021). The loss may be further compounded when

communication is limited or impossible. As a result, there is deepening of the psychological and emotional disconnection (Mazzarelli et al., 2021). The second type of ambiguous loss can also impact migrant families. For example, after extended periods of separation and cultural dislocation, there may be emotional distance or change, which may evoke a sense of loss despite physical presence (Mazzarelli et al., 2021).

Shattered Assumption Theory

While ambiguous loss highlights the unresolved nature of separation and absence, shattered assumption theory helps explain the deeper psychological impact of how these unresolved experiences disrupt migrants' core beliefs about fairness and belonging in the world (Haeny et al., 2023). Based on Janoff-Bulman's (1992) shattered assumptions theory, individuals have important assumptions about themselves and the world. These assumptions allow them to function in a healthy way, reflecting a world in which they are competent and worthy, which not only influences their self-esteem but also makes them feel invulnerable (Haeny et al., 2023). If they experience an event that negatively impacts their worldview, like experiencing unresolved grief due to migration, their worldview becomes shattered, and they start feeling vulnerable and incompetent (Haeny et al., 2023). As such, many may no longer feel safe in the world and view the world as unkind, terrifying, and confusing while in this helpless state (Haeny et al., 2023). This level of vulnerability can sometimes lead to anxiety and physiological reactivity, which may develop into post-traumatic stress disorder (Haeny et al., 2023). During these moments, the individuals who are impacted pay close attention to their mortality (Haeny et al., 2023).

Notably, not all individuals experience shattered assumptions in the same way; intersectionality theory highlights how factors such as race, gender, and legal status influence the intensity of these disruptions as well as access to resources for coping (Rocha-Jiménez et al.,

2025). Although the shattered assumptions theory captures the personal psychological rupture, it does not account for the way overlapping identities impact vulnerability. Intersectionality theory addresses this problem by showing how structural inequities compound migrants' grief experiences.

Intersectionality Theory

Based on Kimberle Crenshaw's (1989) definition, intersectionality speaks to an amalgamation of social identities such as race and ethnicity, gender identification, and socioeconomic status. Intersectionality theory reveals how privilege and oppression are maintained based on various social identities like race, gender, and migration status (Almeida Junco & Guillard Limonta, 2020; Miller, 2025). The intersectional identities give a better understanding of how grief is compounded by systemic barriers and social exclusion (Almeida Junco & Guillard Limonta, 2020). Some navigate grief, where their struggles and feelings are minimized due to societal stereotypes about the mental fortitude of some groups when compared to others (Almeida Junco & Guillard Limonta, 2020; Miller, 2025). Other determinants of how migrants express and experience grief are based on immigration policies, financial instability, and exclusion from social support systems (Almeida Junco & Guillard Limonta, 2020; Miller, 2025). Additionally, they may have limited access to mental health services based on their legal or socio-economic status, perpetuating their feelings of grief and loss (Almeida Junco & Guillard Limonta, 2020).

Disenfranchised Grief Theory

Kenneth Doka's disenfranchised grief theory (1989) explains how grief becomes unrecognized when society denies individuals the right, need, role, or capacity to grieve. Many migrants experience this type of grief based on the emotional and psychological impacts of

leaving one's home, culture, family, identity, and community (Barros-Lane et al., 2025). Based on disenfranchised grief theory, grief associated with migration is worthy of validation, support, and appropriate treatment (Barros-Lane et al., 2025).

Researcher Positionality

It is important to situate the researcher's voice, noting how my experiences inform the lens through which this work was undertaken. My interest in this topic is based on personal and communal experience. With intersecting identities as a Black woman and migrant, I have experienced layers of grief associated with leaving one's culture and home while navigating unfamiliar systems. In my situation, migration has disrupted family, community, language, and self, resulting in feelings of loneliness, especially when the grief and loss are misunderstood and unacknowledged. As a student therapist, I have developed awareness of how grief manifests differently in racialized migrant communities. I have interacted with clients whose pain is misread, minimized, or entirely unacknowledged because of limited culturally grounded frameworks. There are so many individuals who are unfamiliar with terms like ambiguous loss or disenfranchised grief, yet their stories reflect those exact experiences.

Despite my firsthand experience, I recognize that the experiences of some do not reflect the experiences of all migrants. While researching and engaging with the literature, I had an interest in studies that focused on active meaning-making and culturally embedded forms of grief expression. Importantly, reflexivity made me reflect on the reasons some frameworks resonated more deeply than others. To mitigate bias, I engaged in bracketing, which is the process of identifying and setting aside one's individual experiences, beliefs, and assumptions that could impact data collection or interpretation (Dörfler & Stierand, 2021). I also engaged in journaling

to maintain an objective, ethically bound stance. My aim is that this research contributes in a meaningful way to spaces where migrant grief can be validated.

I remain mindful that my own experiences as a Black migrant woman have influenced the questions I ask and the frameworks that resonate with me. I also acknowledge that the themes addressed in this capstone, regarding migration, grief, and loss, may be emotionally sensitive for some individuals. I invite readers to engage with the material in a manner that feels safest for them so that the work is received in an appropriate and acceptable manner.

Definitions of Terms

Ambiguous Loss

This is a form of grief that remains unclear and lacks closure (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025). This may make it difficult for individuals to process or resolve their emotions when compared to traditional losses, where there is a definitive absence (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025). It creates a state of uncertainty, as the person or connection may be physically present but emotionally or psychologically distant, or vice versa (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025).

Disenfranchised Grief

This is grief that is unacknowledged, socially accepted, or publicly mourned (Barros-Lane et al., 2025). This may leave individuals without the support or recognition typically given to individuals who are grieving (Barros-Lane et al., 2025).

Migrant

Any individual who has relocated or is in the process of relocating across an international border, away from their usual place of residence, despite their legal status, whether the movement is voluntary, the reasons for moving, or the length of the stay (Tsegay, 2023).

Othering

Othering occurs when one group's importance is diminished in favour of another group based on hierarchical structures and dynamics, where the favoured group has greater access to social resources and opportunities (Sadiq et al., 2025).

Racialized Minority

In North America, this refers to non-White people and suggests that race is a concept that is societal in origin. It extends to other categorizations to include Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) (Souissi, 2024).

Capstone Overview

The capstone is organized into three chapters to explore how ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief are experienced by migrants in Canada and examine how these experiences inform counselling practice. Chapter 1 introduces the study, outlines the research problem, and establishes the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. It also positions the researcher's reflexivity and provides a definitions of key terms. Chapter 2 presents both the literature review and the methodology. The literature review synthesizes current information on migrant grief, highlighting how ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief intersect with race, gender, and legal status. It also identifies existing gaps in culturally responsive counselling practices. The methodology section then describes the systematic search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the use of Braun and Clarke's (2025) six-phase thematic analysis. Ethical considerations relevant to research with racialized and vulnerable populations are also addressed.

Chapter 3 explores the thematic findings, which reveal patterns of layered loss, silenced grief within systemic exclusion, and meaning-making and resilience. These findings are discussed based on the guiding theories and their implications for counselling practice and

policy. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and a reflexive account of the researcher's learning throughout the project. These chapters link theory, evidence, and practice, with the aim of encouraging more inclusive and culturally grounded approaches to counselling, while focusing on migrant voices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study addresses the following research question: “What are the barriers to accessing culturally responsive counselling for migrants who experience ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief?” The purpose of the literature review is to synthesize current research, evaluate key theoretical and empirical contributions, and identify gaps that remain unaddressed. The review is organized into four themes that emerged from the literature. The first theme examines how disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss manifest in migratory contexts, focusing on cultural displacement and unresolved separation. The second theme explores disrupted worldviews and shifting beliefs, using shattered assumptions theory to understand how migration impacts identity and safety. The third theme focuses on intersectionality and systemic exclusion in Canada, highlighting the roles of race, gender, and legal status in shaping vulnerability. Finally, theme four reviews theoretical and policy frameworks, including assimilation, transnationalism, and whole-of-community approaches, to assess their relevance for counselling practice. Exploring these themes shows how psychological, cultural, and structural systems influence migrant grief, while also highlighting methodological and conceptual gaps.

Disenfranchised Grief and Ambiguous Loss in Migration

Migratory Context of Disenfranchised Grief

Migrants often experience grief that is sometimes unacknowledged or minimized, which contributes to emotional pain while silencing their suffering. Disenfranchised grief may be defined as grief that is not validated or supported by society (Flores et al., 2024). The experiences of many migrants include a dismissal of the suffering, which is sometimes categorized as illegitimate or inappropriate, delegitimizing their experiences (Flores et al., 2024). They are expected to display gratitude to their host country for the opportunities afforded them

(Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Flores et al., 2024). This crucial point reflects how such a narrative of expected gratitude can result in migrants' pain being minimized or silenced (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Flores et al., 2024). Unacknowledged feelings can turn into an isolating, stigmatized experience that increases mental distress while compounding feelings of grief (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Flores et al., 2024). The impact is greater among undocumented migrants or asylum seekers, whose lack of legal recognition reflects how their emotions go unseen (Flores et al., 2024). Their grief is further compounded because disenfranchised migratory grief is being reflected through systemic neglect being embedded in immigration, healthcare, and social welfare policies (Flores et al., 2024). Despite grief and loss being normal human experiences, the grief process can be exacerbated by previous and ongoing trauma (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025). Grief may be self-imposed because of internalized guilt for choosing to migrate (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025). Sometimes unhealthy cycles arise from this situation where the family members, for example the children, who were left behind, form bonds with their caregivers and may struggle with attachment when reunification occurs (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025). These findings align with the assertion that grief among migrants is magnified by intersecting traumas and policy failures (Flores et al., 2024).

According to Correia De Sá et al. (2024), there is often failure to acknowledge complexities about grief among migrant populations, especially regarding the presentation of grief based on cultural considerations. Dominant mental health frameworks pathologize migrant grief and often obscure the emotional reality of enduring psychological loss that arises because of migration (Flores et al., 2024). When migrants display signs of grief, these signs are usually pathologized as anxiety, depression, and/or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) rather than giving credence to the contextual factors, such as racism, economic exploitation, and social

exclusion (Flores et al., 2024). The recent classification of prolonged grief disorder may result if grief that is expressed or experienced outside of the Western norms is pathologized and is likely to happen when diagnostic tools lack cultural sensitivity (Correia De Sá et al., 2024). As a result, many migrants experience unrecognized and unsupported grief (Correia De Sá et al., 2024).

Correia De Sá et al. (2024) and Mooten (2021) encourage authenticating the mourning processes of migrants based on their individual experiences. Haeny et al. (2023) highlight that trauma must be understood through the lens of worldview disruption and encourage researchers and clinicians to examine the root causes of trauma instead of examining symptoms in isolation (Haeny et al., 2023).

Ambiguous Loss and Cultural Displacement

Migration creates physical and emotional separation, which results in unresolved grief that disrupts family life, a sense of self, and cultural belonging. Ambiguous loss occurs when there is uncertain loss, or a lack of closure, which results from the physical absence of an individual or object without closure or understanding (Jerves et al., 2020). Importantly, it occurs when there is instability that disrupts adolescent identity development in transnational migrant families (Jerves et al., 2020), cyclical separations and reunifications negatively impacting family dynamics (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025), or displacement caused by disasters and the associated implications of the losses associated with displacement and migration (Albayrak Günday & Gülürmak Güler, 2025). These findings reveal the dynamic nature of ambiguous loss being impacted by social and geographic separations.

Within a family unit, the impacts of ambiguous loss can impact how other family members relate (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025). The extensive focus on the experience of loss can be a hindrance to healthy relations in the family unit (Jerves et al., 2020). According to Boss

(2010), the pain of ambiguous loss, because of the ambivalence it brings, is potentially one of the hardest experiences a personal relationship can encounter. For migrants, the experience of physical separation from family, as well as parting ways with one's culture, adds to the stress experienced (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025; Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Jerves et al., 2020). Despite the desire to maintain psychologically presence with family members, the absence garners feelings of uncertainty (Jerves et al., 2020). Migratory grief occurs when various psychological and social losses arise because of migration (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Jerves et al., 2020). This leaves lingering thoughts of whether there will be a reunion with what has been lost and may evoke intense emotions at various times, under different circumstances (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Jerves et al., 2020). The migratory losses can be immediate and recurrent and may be physical, social, or cultural (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Jerves et al., 2020). Physical losses occur where the individual is separated from home, school, and other institutions; social losses occur where they lose connection with their community and people; cultural losses occur where language and customs are left behind; and emotional losses occur where fitting in may be challenging (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Jerves et al., 2020).

Migrants may encounter both types of ambiguous losses, where they are not only impacted by physical absence but also emotional absence (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025). Ambiguity negatively impacts the grieving process, as the looming uncertainties cause deep psychological and physical effects, like stress, confusion, and depression (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025). The associated changes in family roles and relationships also have economic and administrative implications, which can affect individuals, families, and communities alike (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025). The lack of resolution for the

loss can hinder the mourning process for what was lost and can result in various psychosocial problems (Albayrak Günday & Gülirmak Güler, 2025).

Migration encompasses a change in geographical location and involves significant psychological and emotional implications, including social, political, and economic circumstances (Tsegay, 2023). The complexity of describing this phenomenon based on spatial categorizations sometimes leads to the mental and emotional impact being obscured (Tsegay, 2023). Along with spatial relocation, the migration experience sometimes includes a rupture in identity, cultural belonging, and community (Tsegay, 2023). Notably, the prolonged and evolving process of migration, which is influenced by national policies and global inequities, can influence the experiences of migrants (Tsegay, 2023). The losses they encounter result in disenfranchised grief when their grief is unacknowledged. The ambiguous loss they face arises when they are emotionally absent despite their physical presence. These disenfranchised and ambiguous losses disturb basic beliefs about safety and belonging and set the stage for worldview disruption.”

Disrupted Worldviews and Shifting Beliefs

Based on Janoff-Bulman’s shattered assumptions theory (1989), positive beliefs about oneself or the world are challenged because of traumatic events, which result in a psychological shift in how they view the world. Migration is an event that may impact core beliefs about safety, identity, and predictability, and cause emotional distress. Traumatic experiences, like migration, can disrupt individuals’ core beliefs about how safe they feel in the world (Haeny et al., 2023; Nyamnjoh, 2024). Positive worldview assumptions that are challenged are linked to increased risk for mental health challenges (Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Haeny et al., 2023; Theisen-Wormely, 2021). Research conducted by Herroudi et al. (2023) shows that undocumented migrants

experience worse overall mental health and experience higher trauma, anxiety, and depression. It also suggests that more negative worldviews have lower resilience and encounter greater post-migration difficulties, revealing the extent to which post-migration conditions can sometimes negatively impact mental health. Findings suggest that post-migration difficulties have a greater impact on mental health than challenges experienced before migration (Herroudi et al., 2023). Undocumented migrants also tend to be disproportionately impacted by unemployment, social isolation, and constrained access to accurate information (Herroudi et al., 2023). In addition, migrants must navigate inadequate legal protections as well as barriers to safe housing, which increase their vulnerability to exploitation as physical, verbal, psychological, and gender-based abuse (Herroudi et al., 2023). Importantly, these shaken assumptions do not occur in a vacuum but are intensified by intersecting identities and systemic conditions.

Intersectionality and Systemic Exclusion

The framework of intersectionality is a powerful analytical tool for making sense of how interlocking systems of privilege and oppression are experienced by individuals and groups (Sadiq et al., 2025). Based on Kimberle Crenshaw's (1989) definition, intersectionality speaks to an amalgamation of social identities such as race and ethnicity, gender identification, and socioeconomic status. These factors can influence experiences of power, privilege, and oppression (Sadiq et al., 2025). Intersectional frameworks have human rights tools that aim to support equity and diversity (Drazenovich & Mazur, 2022). Although this framework seeks to offer an understanding of the issues people face and determine effective solutions, concerns exist about the ineffective use of the word intersectionality, which may exacerbate the issues of privilege and oppression (Sadiq et al., 2025). Intersectionality gives a better understanding of social identity as the way people see themselves based on their connection to a certain social

group and the value and emotional significance of being attached to that group (Sadiq et al., 2025).

The intersection of multiple identities for minority groups also results in certain needs or values being unmet, which contributes to unresolved conflicts (Sadiq et al., 2025). These negative experiences become heightened when combined with minority identities, such as non-Canadian citizenship status, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, language, and culture (Sadiq et al., 2025). Intersecting power dynamics contributes to structural insecurities for some migrants, due to lack of protective policies implementation and enforcement, against microaggressions and racism (Sadiq et al., 2025).

Demographic Landscape and Migration Trends in Canada

The Canadian demographic landscape is highly influenced by migrants, having far-reaching implications for the society (Zheng et al., 2025). Information from Statistics Canada (2022) indicates that one in four people in Canada is a landed immigrant or permanent resident or has previously identified as such. The multicultural integration policies of contemporary Canada are regarded as more supportive than those in many Western societies, which has contributed to significant increases of migrant populations in recent years and a projected increase of an additional 25–30% by 2041 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Since 2010, Canada has seen its largest numbers of migrants coming from Asia (62%), Africa (15%), Europe (10%), and Central and South America (9%) (Statistics Canada, 2022). Notably, a growing portion of Canada's population includes ethnic–racial demographics with 2.6 million South Asians (7.1%), 1.7 million Chinese (4.7%), and 1.5 million Blacks (4.3%) (Statistics Canada, 2022). The Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese populations account for the remaining 9.1% of visible minority newcomers to Canada (Statistics Canada,

2022). Over recent decades, Canada has implemented stricter policies to regulate the entry and legal status of migrants (Goldring & Landolt, 2022; Villegas et al., 2020). This policy direction has contributed to a greater percentage of the migrant population having precarious legal status, including international students, refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers, and individuals without official immigration status (Goldring & Landolt, 2022; Villegas et al., 2020).

Many migrants in Canada arrive as economic immigrants who have been selected to contribute to the economy in various ways, as designated through the classification of admission categories (Statistics Canada, 2023). Some key determinants of why migrants move to a specific country include income, employment opportunities, personal safety, and social well-being (Goldring & Landolt, 2022; Park et al., 2024; Villegas et al., 2020). Migration push factors stem from varied reasons, such as economic (i.e., lack of employment, low standards of living, and lack of food and shelter), social (i.e., lack of healthcare and lack of religious tolerance), and political (i.e., aspects of war and terrorism and unfair legal systems) (Urbański, 2022). For some minority migrant groups, their experiences have helped to reinforce individual and social identity, with negative experiences having a harmful effect, while positive experiences encouraged transformation and growth (Sadiq et al., 2025).

Migrants face vulnerabilities including time-sensitive authorization to live, study, or work in the country with the risk of deportation, restricted pathways to permanent residency, and limited access to services that support long-term integration (Goldring & Landolt, 2022; Villegas et al., 2020). Despite some progressive immigration policies, Canada continues to encounter challenges related to immigrant integration, much like other nations; along with the increase in the migrant population, a significant increase in hate- and bias-motivated incidents has also occurred (Drazenovich & Mazur, 2022; Sadiq et al., 2025). Interestingly, there is a historical

trend where increased migration to Canada is met with resistance from factions of the local population, often seen through increased instances of religious and racial intolerance, especially when migrants originate from non-Western countries (Drazenovich & Mazur, 2022).

Racism, Othering, and Socio-Economic Barriers

Intolerance towards and othering particular groups further complicates the concept of intersectionality (Sadiq et al., 2025). Othering occurs when one group's importance is diminished in favour of another group based on hierarchical structures and dynamics; the favoured group has greater access to social resources and opportunities, creating a stigma for the othered groups and aiding in their exclusion (Sadiq et al., 2025). The concept of internalized racism is enmeshed with othering and refers to internalizing unfair treatment and oppression toward one group as opposed to another (Sadiq et al., 2025). Experiences of racial discrimination may contribute to the negative view some individuals have of themselves (Sadiq et al., 2025). Internalized racism creates division within groups, which decreases their power and influence because of their internal fighting and struggles to fit in (Sadiq et al., 2025). Another form of internalized racism is defensive othering, which presents as an adaptive response, where some individuals seek an advantage by categorizing others based on levels of intellect, classifying it as exotic, different, or inferior (Sadiq et al., 2025). This tactic is used to separate themselves from their own cultural group, so that they can be seen more favourably or accepted by the dominant group (Sadiq et al., 2025). An example of defensive othering would be for a wealthy migrant to describe a less wealthy migrant as lazy, perpetuating the cycle of preconceived notions held about that group and trying to distance themselves from a stereotype held about that group (Sadiq et al., 2025).

In Canada, migrants are expected to adjust their behaviours and values or risk being left out for failure to comply with the expected standards of the Canadian majority (Sadiq et al., 2025). Migrants may also feel dissonance between the actual experience of migrating and the migrants' preconceived notions of what the migratory experience would be like (Japaridze & Kaplan, 2023; Sadiq et al., 2025). This results in some migrants experiencing a challenge to navigate the dominant group's culture in Canada, where policies and practices disinherit people who do not meet the stereotype of being an English-speaking, White, heterosexual, upper-class, Christian citizen (Japaridze & Kaplan, 2023; Sadiq et al., 2025). According to one participant in the Hajian and Randall study, "I am bullied for being different and having a difficult name for them to pronounce" (2025, p.13). The barriers to integration have resulted in some migrants leaving because of the challenges of navigating the sociocultural landscape, while those who do adapt and remain have a similar experience, despite the challenges (Sadiq et al., 2025). An individual's personality could influence the migration experience, reflecting the importance of patience and flexibility after migrating to a new country (Hajian & Randall, 2025).

The pressures of conforming to the norms, values, and behaviours of the dominant group to gain acceptance are often overlooked (Sadiq et al., 2025). Being forced to fit in can result in the erasure of cultural differences, where unique cultural expressions are sometimes downplayed (Sadiq et al., 2025). This dynamic plays out in certain spaces and reinforces the power dynamic that benefits those who conform (Sadiq et al., 2025). Findings show psychological well-being and productivity for racialized individuals are disturbed by racial and gender-based microaggressions. Amoako et al. (2024) reveals how Black African immigrant women in Ontario are negatively impacted by their experience of racialized gender discrimination and precarious legal status within the working environment. Their study highlights how participants navigate

exclusion, like being overlooked for promotions, being subjected to persistent microaggressions, and experiencing skepticism about their educational credentials. These experiences result in feelings of invisibility and professional stagnation and show how microaggressions are structurally embedded, contributing to disenfranchised grief when migrant women's professional identities are continually invalidated (Amoako et al., 2024). Systemic neglect further intensifies the grief, as workplace cultures often fail to acknowledge the intersectional realities of migrant workers (Amoako et al., 2024). Structural exclusion contributes to emotional disenfranchisement in migrants' daily lives and undermines the agency of migrants and their will to integrate (Amoako et al., 2024; Sadiq et al., 2025).

Structural racism and institutional gaps present as socio-cultural barriers that influence migrants' ability to adapt and thrive; for example, discrimination faced by those who wear hijabs regarding the admission process to some academic programs (Hajian & Randall, 2025). Institutional barriers reflect how socio-cultural challenges negatively impact daily interaction, where failures in education and employment hinder positive change. These educational barriers include lack of access to detailed information to complete the necessary steps to matriculate into certain programs, reliance on unofficial information from peers or friends, mounted frustrations about the rigours of being tested, the burden of exam fees, and living expenses (Hajian & Randall, 2025). Some individuals describe testing methods to be culturally insensitive, as they lack hands-on experience with some testing methods or are unfamiliar with some of the concepts being used: "Even in pharmacology, the medications and management are different and complicated. The drug names don't always match what we learned back home" (Hajian & Randall, 2025, p.11). Others believe that the low passing rates are gatekeeping tactics mirroring

the business of education to the disadvantage of those who were failing (Hajian & Randall, 2025).

Other socio-cultural challenges include language barriers, experiences of racism and discrimination, and distress from being separated from home. There is a contrast felt in the experience of being in their home country with their experience of living in Canada, “In Iran, they talk in your own language, and you’re raised there, and a strong bond with your homeland is always there” (p.11). Participants from the Hajian and Randall study share the challenges of communicating in English upon arrival to Canada and the importance of improving their language skills for ease of communication, “As Iranians, we don’t get to speak English in our community or have proper English education in our home country” (p.12). The COVID-19 pandemic is referenced to highlight challenges to making social connections, especially because of language barriers:

It is exceedingly difficult for me to speak on the phone, to make an appointment or booking request for personal services. But I was able to join a volunteer research activity, and it was extremely useful for me until COVID happened. (p. 14).

Through the intersectionality lens, understanding these barriers and exclusions give a better understanding of migrant social identity. Considering the intersectional pressures, policy frameworks become decisive in either validating or silencing grief.

Theoretical and Policy Frameworks

To gain a better understanding of the emotional and psychological impacts of migration pertaining to disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss from a Canadian perspective, it is crucial to reflect on the theoretical frameworks of assimilation, transnationalism, and the community as a whole approach. The literature reflects a shift from a rigid model of integration to a more

dynamic and accommodating approach. The key frameworks of assimilation, transnationalism, and community-as-a-whole approach will be discussed.

Assimilation, as purported by sociologists Park and Burgess (1921), supports a melting pot ideology in which migrants were expected to adopt the cultural identities of the dominant society while shedding their cultural identities, revealing the preferred ideals of cultural conformity and unity (Barber, 2024). Notably, this notion is critiqued for failing to consider the structural inequalities, racial hierarchies, and the emotional cost of cultural erasure rendering grief invisible (Barber, 2024). Transnationalism recognizes the connections that migrants maintain with their countries of origin, reflective of cycles of growth and loss. Considering the limitations of assimilation theory, focus is shifted to the work of Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, who explored transnationalism as a more fluid and multidimensional framework (Barber, 2024). This concept unearths the familial, economic, political, and cultural ties migrants maintain with their home country after migrating, which continue to influence their identities and emotional lives even after resettlement (Barber, 2024). Transnationalism helps to explain how migrants may be impacted by ambiguous loss, as they are sometimes filled with uncertainties, shifting identities, and chronic grief (Barber, 2024). It allows them to exercise agency over their emotions, after leaving home and settling in their new country, while emphasizing that identity, belonging, and loss are not confined to geographic borders (Barber, 2024).

The community approach focuses on the local and multilevel dimensions of integration and views integration as a shared process of community-making, focusing on the role of migrants, government, and other stakeholders within the society (Barber, 2024). It gives an understanding of how local contexts in Canada shape migrant grief and healing. Some small communities often lack the requisite resources to support culturally responsive mental health

care (Barber, 2024). On the contrary, some towns may have strong networks of informal support in the form of community organizations or religious groups (Barber, 2024). This model does not treat integration as a uniform national experience and shows how integration is woven into local governance structures, funding availability, and the willingness of local leaders to engage in multilevel governance (Barber, 2024). It recognizes that migrant well-being is influenced by institutional arrangements and power dynamics at various scales (Barber, 2024). In terms of disenfranchised grief, this reflects how local policies and social attitudes can validate or suppress migrant expressions of loss (Barber, 2024).

Migration Trends, Integration and Policy Implication in Canada

Migration policies have not always been seen as fair or inclusive within Canada (Hajian & Randall, 2025). This section examines how Canada's approach to immigration has impacted who gets to come and stay and what challenges many migrants still face today regarding finding work and feeling truly accepted. Canada's migration policies have evolved from being exclusionary frameworks to more skills-based and regionally targeted initiatives (Barber, 2024). Early policies, such as the 1885 Chinese Exclusion Act and the Order-in-Council, which sought to prevent migration of African Americans from the United States of America, systematically limited non-European immigration (Barber, 2024). These laws reflect Canada's settler-colonial foundations by prioritizing migrants from specific countries, races, and social classes (Barber, 2024).

Using the points-based immigration system to attract migrants, based on the 1976 Immigration Act, led to an increased intake of migrants and indicated an important policy shift that focused on the skills, education, and work experience of the migrants instead of their race or country of origin (Barber, 2024). Despite the policy shifts that increased intake of migrants from

Asia, Africa, and Latin America, systemic barriers persist, especially regarding the non-recognition of foreign credentials (Barber, 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025). The resultant underemployment and overqualification of many skilled migrants contribute to feelings of grief and loss by reinforcing cycles of economic disenfranchisement (Barber, 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025).

Multiculturalism: Promise Versus Practice

Although Canada's multiculturalism policy was adopted in 1971 and reinforced in 1988 to promote cultural pluralism and equal participation in Canadian society, there is a discrepancy in how the policy implementation is portrayed in literature (Barber, 2024). Some researchers highlight the progressive nature of Canada's multicultural model in comparison to other Western countries, which encourage integration among migrants (Statistics Canada, 2022; Zheng et al., 2025). However, others deem the policies as symbolic rather than substantive, as key issues like systemic racism and other structural barriers that contribute to exclusion are not always effectively addressed (Barber, 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025; Japaridze & Kaplan, 2023).

To illustrate this, while Statistics Canada (2022) reports an increase in levels of cultural diversity as evidence of multiculturalism's success, Barber (2024) indicates that its application varies by province and does not focus on issues like employment discrimination or lack of culturally appropriate mental health services; instead, it highlights diversity based on performative celebrations. This shows how multiculturalism, despite being well-intentioned, contributes to the emotional disconnection and disenfranchised grief experienced by many migrants. Addressing disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss requires critical engagement with these structures to facilitate transformative, community-based responses (Hajian & Randall, 2025; Japaridze & Kaplan, 2023).

Literature Gaps and Areas of Concern

Although Canada's multiculturalism and integration policies are deemed as inclusive, the lived experiences of some migrants, especially those from minority groups, reflect a different reality. While policies operate as a guiding force to impact positive change, systemic barriers, underemployment, and credential non-recognition negatively impact the experiences of migrants, leading to feelings of grief and loss (Barber, 2024; Japaridze & Kaplan, 2023). For example, while multiculturalism is supposed to facilitate cultural pluralism, there are structural inequities that reinforce grief and exclusion (Hajian & Randall, 2025; Japaridze & Kaplan, 2023). Additionally, insufficient attention is given to unique experiences of migrants, as literature often describes the experiences in a monolithic way. Notably, there is a lack of research examining the experiences of Black migrants to Canada and their experiences of ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief, as existing research often focuses on larger, more studied populations such as South Asian or Middle Eastern migrants (Flores et al., 2024; Statistics Canada, 2022).

Also, integration models that encourage societal integration and community-building sometimes do not address the affective toll of cultural erasure that some migrants experience while attempting to conform (Sadiq et al., 2025). These contradictions reveal a gap between the actual reality that migrants grapple with and policy ideals. There is a need to emphasize the importance of research through intersectional lenses that focus on the emotional, psychological, and intergenerational impacts of migration. Despite policy evolution, existing contradictions between rhetoric and lived experience reveal specific gaps in scholarship and practice.

Methodology

The methodology outlines the strategy for conducting the literature search and thematic analysis approach used to address the research question: "What are the barriers to accessing

culturally responsive counselling for migrants who experience ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief?” It begins by discussing the methods used in the present study, followed by a critical examination of the methodologies used in the 11 included articles, and concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations, based on guidelines for Canadian research standards.

Systematic Literature Review Procedures

In preparing for the thematic analysis, I conducted a systematic literature review to identify relevant articles. The primary databases searched included PsycINFO, PubMed, SAGE Premier, and ProQuest. This literature review attempted to find all relevant articles that captured the themes associated with ambiguous loss, disenfranchised grief, intersectionality, migration, and multiculturalism. To ensure comprehensive coverage, I accessed the library repositories of City University and Athabasca University. Additionally, I searched Google Scholar, but no additional peer-reviewed articles were found. Key terms and phrases used to explore the databases included “ambiguous loss,” “ambiguous loss theory,” grief, “grief experience,” “disenfranchised grief,” “physical ambiguous loss,” “loss,” “migration,” “migratory loss,” and “intersectionality.” I included international research when it provided transferable theoretical frameworks, conceptual insights, or comparative perspectives. This helped to enhance the understanding of grief experienced through migration. These included studies from countries such as the United States, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

I used a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria to guide the selection of the literature regarding the research topic (See Table 1). Sources were chosen from the last five years (2020–2025) based on their relevance to the experiences of migrants based on the emotional, cultural, and systemic impacts, contributing to disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss. Although there was a comprehensive search strategy, very few articles directly addressed the intersection of

ambiguous loss, disenfranchised grief, and migration. Additionally, some potentially relevant articles of interest were inaccessible due to database restrictions. The limited availability and accessibility of peer-reviewed studies on this topic limited the breadth of evidence that could be included. To address this gap, the review focused on the most current and relevant articles that were accessible and met the inclusion criteria.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Peer-reviewed studies using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods of data analysis, published between 2020–2025	International literature that lacked applicability to Canadian migration experiences
Focus on migrant experiences involving grief, ambiguous loss, identity disruption, or integration	Research that did not address migration, grief, ambiguous loss, or integration experiences
Research topic(s) of the intersection of race, gender, and legal status, and/or systemic and structural influences on migrant well-being	Research that did not explore intersections of race, gender, and legal status or failed to address systemic and structural influences on migrant well-being
Literature available in English	Literature unavailable in English
Emphasis on barriers to culturally responsive support	Narratives lacking theoretical or policy relevance

Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 11 articles remained to inform the thematic analysis (see Table 2). The 11 articles comprised a range of qualitative (n = 8), quantitative (n = 2), and mixed-methods (n = 1) approaches to the research.

Table 2*List of Articles Included for Analysis*

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Type
Albayrak Günday, E., & Gülirmak Güler, K. (2025)	Learning to Live with the Unresolved Grief of Migration: The Ambiguity of Leaving Behind After the Earthquake and Adaptation	<i>International Journal of Social Psychiatry</i>	Qualitative
Amoako et al. (2024)	“It is Not Just About My Work, My Identities Count”: The Influence of Intersectional Identities on the Employment Experiences of Black African Immigrant Women in Ontario, Canada.	<i>Journal of International Migration and Integration</i>	Qualitative
Berger Cardoso et al. (2025)	Central American and Mexican Mothers and Youth Migration- Related Separations and Reunifications.	<i>Journal of Loss & Trauma</i>	Qualitative
Flores et al. (2024)	Migration-Related Trauma and PTSD among Latinx parents in the Southeast during COVID	<i>Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy</i>	Mixed Method
Haeny et al. (2023)	The Associations of Racial Discrimination and Neighborhood Disadvantage with World Assumptions Among Black, Latine, and Asian Young Adults	<i>Journal of Interpersonal Violence</i>	Quantitative
Hajian, S., & Randall, G. E. (2025)	Evolving Global Migration Trends: Post-Migration Experiences of Iranian Dentists Attempting to Obtain Credential Recognition in Canada	<i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i>	Qualitative
Herroudi et al. (2023)	A Post-Migration Journey: Asylum, Trauma and Resilience, Different Trajectories – A Comparison of the Mental Health and Post-Migration	<i>International Journal of Social Psychiatry.</i>	Quantitative

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Type
	Living Difficulties of Documented and Undocumented Migrants in Belgium.		
Jerves et al. (2020)	Ambiguous loss in transnational families' adolescents: An exploratory study in Ecuador.	<i>Family Process</i>	Qualitative
Nyamnjoh, H. (2024)	'I wish I had listened and not come to South Africa': fantasies, expectations, and trajectories of migration among Ethiopian unaccompanied children-migrants into South Africa.	<i>Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies</i>	Qualitative
Park et al. (2024)	The economic decision of international migration: Two empirical evidence from the United States and Canada.	<i>Economies</i>	Qualitative
Sadiq et al. (2025)	"How much of myself do I have to erase to be Canadian?" South Asians and Arabs in the workplace.	<i>Consulting Psychology Journal</i>	Qualitative

Data Analysis Procedures

To examine disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss based on the experiences of migrants in Canada, I conducted a thematic analysis of 11 selected articles using Braun and Clarke's (2025) six-phase framework. This flexible framework made it possible to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning within datasets (Ahmed et al., 2025) and facilitated the integration of empirical literature and conceptual insights from diverse sources. The analysis used a deductive, theory-driven approach based on ambiguous loss theory, disenfranchised grief, shattered assumptions theory, and intersectionality, which allowed the researcher to share their interpretations of how the data explains the key issues in the research question.

I engaged in reflexivity to promote transparency, ethical integrity, and credibility (Walsh, 2025). I reflected through journaling to examine my personal reactions to the data and how these

reactions may influence how I code the data set. This enabled me to witness how my worldview, lived experiences, and values might have influenced my approach while reviewing and interpreting the data (Oliphant & Bennett, 2020). Also, I was able to bracket my own experiences (Walsh, 2025) from those of the data set after engaging in fruitful discussions with my peers about information presented in the data set that reflected some of my own experiences. These exercises encouraged deep reflection on my biases and helped me to exercise an objective approach in analyzing the data.

The first step included thoroughly reading each of the 11 articles, which included peer-reviewed studies. Additional information such as policy reports and theoretical literature was also read to broaden my understanding of the topic. I made notes based on recurrent patterns and conceptual threads pertaining to grief, loss, migration, and systemic marginalization based on intersecting identities. This phase was crucial in identifying preliminary ideas that would later inform code development. Using a deductive lens, I open-coded excerpts from the results, discussions, and arguments across the selected articles. Codes captured emotional and structural experiences pertaining to migrant grief and ambiguous loss. I used a coding matrix (see Table 3) to record the codes, which allowed for comparison and clustering across studies to be done.

Table 3

Coding Matrix of Migrant Grief and Ambiguous Loss

Author(s)	Theme	Subtheme	Working Definition	Data Excerpts	Cultural Responsiveness
Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler (2025)	Layered loss of migration	Ambiguous loss (place & people)	Unresolved losses of people, places; grief “frozen” by uncertainty.	Ambiguous losses are often more traumatic... grief processes... freeze individually	Use Boss- informed ambiguity tolerance work; rituals for “unmarked” losses (home, status).

Author(s)	Theme	Subtheme	Working Definition	Data Excerpts	Cultural Responsiveness
Amoako et al. (2024)	Layered loss of migration	Identity disruption & deskilling	Loss of professional identity/status; forced role change.	and systematically. Black African immigrant women... experienced challenges... coerced into low-wage precarious jobs.	Map identity losses (work, language, belonging); advocacy letters; connect to credential-bridging programs.
Amoako et al. (2024)	Silenced grief, systemic exclusion	Direct racism & gendered bias	Racial/sexist abuse at work compounds loss.	Oh, you black girls... black monkey... / I was not picked for a job because I'm a woman...	Trauma-informed care with racial stress processing; workplace accommodation letters; referral to rights resources.
Barber (2024)	Meaning making and resilience	Whole-of-community integration	Integration framed as multilevel, local, dynamic-not forced assimilation.	Whole-of-community approach suits small centres; emphasizes local context and multi-level governance.	Build cross-sector care teams; align counselling goals with local support.
Haeny et al. (2023)	Silenced grief, systemic exclusion	Assumptive world shattered	Racism & neighborhood disadvantage alter core beliefs about safety/control.	Racial discrimination negatively impacted world assumptions...	Incorporate cognitive work on assumptive world; community safety planning; peer grief circles.
Hajian & Randall (2025)	Layered loss of migration	Credential barriers & mental load	Institutional credentialing blocks produce	Participants faced significant challenges...	Screen for financial stress, adjustment disorders; refer

Author(s)	Theme	Subtheme	Working Definition	Data Excerpts	Cultural Responsiveness
			economic strain and distress.	navigating the credential recognition system... with negative economic and mental health impacts.	to legal/bridging supports; document impacts for accommodations.
Herroudi et al. (2024)	Silenced grief, systemic exclusion	Undocumented precarity	Post-migration difficulties predict worse mental health, reduced control/resilience.	Undocumented migrants... higher trauma, anxiety, and depression... more negative assumptive world.	Low-barrier, status-safe services; avoid documentation risk; prioritize safety, stabilization, and resource brokerage.
Sadiq et al. (2025)	Silenced grief, systemic exclusion	Language, accent as othering	Accent triggers racialized devaluation; grief becomes harder to express.	They're shocked that you have such good English... I'm born and raised here.	Offer interpreter-informed options without pathologizing accent; address microaggression and strengthen voice/agency.
Sadiq et al. (2025)	Meaning making and resilience	Cultural continuity practices	Using language, ritual, community as resilience.	Policies must consider the intersectionality of identity... fear of retaliation and deportation.	Invite preferred rituals/collective practices into therapy; safety-planning around disclosure at work/school.

Related codes were categorized based on meaning and theoretical alignment and included interpreting how migrants' experiences of loss and marginalization were framed in various sources. Notably, emerging patterns indicated shared experiences of disrupted identity, invisible grief, and culturally embedded coping. I examined each theme with the aim of facilitating

consistency and coherence across the dataset. Some codes were reclassified to give a better reflection of distinct aspects of migrant grief. I attempted to ensure that the themes accurately represented the underlying data and clearly defined the finalized themes and named them to reflect their central organizing concepts, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Finalized Themes and Subthemes of Migrant Grief and Ambiguous Loss

Theme	Subthemes	Description
Layered loss of migration	Identity disruption; Cultural displacement; Relational rupture	Migrants face overlapping layers of loss, including loss of professional or personal identity, separation from familiar cultural contexts, and fractured relationships with family or community left behind.
Silenced grief, systemic exclusion, lack of cultural recognition	Direct racism and gendered bias; Credential and legal barriers; Undocumented precarity; Language/accents as othering; Shattered assumptive world	Grief is invalidated or overlooked due to systemic inequities. Discrimination, lack of recognition, and structural barriers amplify feelings of invisibility and hinder adaptive grieving.
Meaning-making and resilience	Cultural continuity practices; Whole-of-community integration; Coping and adaptation strategies	Migrants draw on cultural practices to re-establish meaning and resilience, often through community bonds and reframing of loss.

The last step involved integrating the themes into a coherent analytical narrative that addressed the research question. I tried to ensure that reflexivity was embedded throughout this process. This included important reflection on gaps in literature and commentary on underrepresented populations like Black migrants and contradictions in policy compared to the

lived experience of migrants. Reflexivity and peer consultation were maintained to try to ensure ethical interpretation of the data and enhance credibility of the findings.

I reviewed each article and attempted to ensure there was methodological congruence with the data collection and analysis to determine whether the articles found were suitable to be included in the study (Braun & Clarke, 2025). This approach highlights potential limitations that could impact the interpretation of the data and gives insight regarding the reliability of the sources. This following sections outline the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches relevant to the study, and discusses the role of the researcher, sampling and recruitment strategies, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Qualitative Studies

The beliefs and assumptions that create structure for research are known as a paradigm (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Turin et al., 2024). Identifying the underlying paradigm in each study is important to evaluate the methodology appropriately (Turin et al, 2024). This includes how the researchers interpreted the data, or arrived at a certain conclusion (Turin et al., 2024).

Interpretivist Paradigm

The interpretivist research paradigm highlights how important it is to understand human experiences based on subjective and context-dependent interpretations (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2024). It posits that reality is socially constructed through language, culture, and lived experiences (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2024). This approach aims to explore how and why some social phenomena occur the way they do and acknowledges that knowledge is co-created based on interactions between participants and researchers (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2024). Owing to this, narrative inquiry, case studies, ethnography, and in-depth interviews are often used to garner knowledge about the perspectives and meanings held by individuals (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2024).

Researcher subjectivity is a crucial part of the research process, and researchers who are considered active participants in the research process must engage in reflexivity (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2024). This paradigm is useful for exploring social issues, including those embedded in cultural and institutional contexts (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2024).

Of the 11 articles reviewed, five of them are rooted in an interpretivist paradigm (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025; Amoako et al., 2024; Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Hajian & Randall, 2025; Jerves et al., 2020). These studies called attention to how migrants constructed meaning based on their experiences regarding grief, loss, identity, and structural exclusion. For example, Albayrak Günday and Gülırmak Güler (2025) examine how forced migration and natural disaster contribute to unresolved grief based on the participants' subjective narratives of their experiences of trying to adapt within a host country. Similarly, Berger Cardoso et al. (2025) explore how migratory family separations impact the emotional and relational experiences of mothers and youth. Hajian and Randall (2025) highlight the lived experiences of Iranian dentists who had challenges with credential recognition in Canada, while Jerves et al. (2020) reveal how individuals from transnational families, especially adolescents, experience ambiguous loss due to parental migration. Amoako et al. (2024) explore how Black African immigrant women in Ontario describe their employment experiences through intersectional lenses of race, gender, and migration status. These studies use qualitative methods, such as thematic or narrative analysis, to interpret meaning based on social and cultural contexts. These methodologies are appropriate when exploring grief and migration, as they allow researchers to grasp context specific interpretations without reducing them to generalized outcomes.

Social Constructivist and Critical Paradigms

Social constructivist research seeks to gain clarity of the participants' experiences, which have been influenced by their cultural and contextual backgrounds (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From this approach, researchers use inductive reasoning to understand the meaning behind participants' narratives, which enables them to generate theories explaining the phenomena under study. Owing to this, broad, open-ended approaches should be used to allow participants to share their stories with minimal influence from the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Two of the articles reflect social constructivist and critical worldviews (Nyamnjoh, 2024; Sadiq et al., 2025). Nyamnjoh (2024) uses a phenomenological approach to explore the fantasies and expectations of migration. It emphasizes the co-construction of meaning between researcher and participant, recognizing the personal, social, and cultural reasons for migrating. Exploring the hopes and dreams of the participants through open-ended interviews and narrative analysis unearths the anticipated possibilities, the shared cultural meanings, and the conflicted feelings of migration. Sadiq et al. (2025), on the other hand, adopts a critical paradigm. This study focuses on critically examining the workplace experiences of South Asian and Arab migrants in Canada. It shows how power dynamics, and systemic discrimination, results in the suppression, or erasure of cultural identities of racialized minority groups within dominant norms. These two studies highlight approaches that prioritize context, complexity, and a link between social forces and personal meaning, which are important in understanding migrant grief and identity.

Post-Positivist Paradigm and Pragmatic Approach

Three of the studies align with a post-positivist paradigm, and one aligns with a pragmatic approach (Flores et al., 2024; Haeny et al., 2023; Herroudi et al., 2023; Park et al., 2024). According to Syed and McLean (2022), post-positivist studies use empirical methods to identify measurable patterns and causal relationships while acknowledging the limitations of

objectivity. For example, Haeny et al. (2023) uses statistical analyses to explore associations between racial discrimination and neighbourhood disadvantage among racialized youth, using quantifiable indicators to reveal systemic stressors of migration. Similarly, Herroudi et al. (2023) compares the mental health trajectories of documented and undocumented migrants, using standardized tools to assess trauma, resilience, and post-migration difficulties. Park et al. (2024) uses an empirical economic analysis to examine the decision-making processes of migration to Canada and the United States. In contrast, Flores et al. (2024) adopts a pragmatic mixed-methods approach to examine trauma caused by migration among Latinx parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Integrating both qualitative and quantitative data facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the participants' lived experiences as well as the statistical outcomes. These mentioned paradigms offer important contributions in understanding the psychological and structural dimensions of migrant grief and loss, whether through generalizability and empirical rigour or methodological flexibility and practical relevance.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher extends beyond that of an observer to include collecting data, interpretation, and using the participants' narrative to construct meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Montgomery et al., 2022). This facilitates reflexivity to ensure the researcher's ongoing reflection of how their worldview impacts the research process (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Seven articles explicitly acknowledge the role of the researcher in influencing the data collection and interpretation. For example, Nyamnjoh (2024) describes her identity as a migrant and academic with permanent residency and reveals how these identities affected trust, access, and interpretation in conducting the research. She practices reflexivity throughout the study, reflecting on how her language limitations and professional status could impact her

interactions as well as the data collected. Likewise, Berger Cardoso et al. (2025) and Jerves et al. (2020) describe how they establish rapport with participants while remaining sensitive to power dynamics, especially when interviewing mothers and youth who experienced grief and loss due to migration. Correia De Sá (2024) emphasizes the use of reflexive journaling to bracket her own assumptions to be able to focus on participants' experiences instead of imposing preconceived interpretations.

Notably, Albayrak Günday and Gülirmak Güler (2025) and Amoako et al. (2024) indirectly address the researcher's role and outline ethical considerations, participant trust-building strategies, and interpretive lenses. This indicates their recognition of how researcher identities can shape data in meaning-making and impact the relational dimension of qualitative inquiry. Importantly, Park et al. (2024) and Sadiq et al. (2025) offer limited detail on the researcher's influence, despite using qualitative methods. Although there was methodological transparency, discussions on reflexivity and positionality are minimal or omitted entirely, highlighting a limitation based on the subjective nature of their inquiry. In the mixed-method study by Flores et al. (2024), there is no mention of reflexivity.

Engaging in self-disclosure can foster trust between the researcher and the participants; however, the researcher's perspective should never take precedence over the participants' voice (Robertson et al., 2025). In the study by Nyamnjoh (2024), the researcher's self-disclosure about her migrant identity facilitates rapport with participants who occasionally seek guidance or relate to her status as a migrant. If the researcher shares a similar experience to the participant, personal bias may impact the integrity of the information collected. As a precaution, they should keep focused on the participants experiences and understandings, regardless of how challenging it may feel (Robertson et al., 2025).

Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to garner firsthand information of the studied phenomenon from the participants in a study (Andrade, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Across the 11 qualitative studies, some authors use purposeful, snowball, or convenience sampling to reach participants who are experiencing grief, loss, or marginalization because of migration. Jerves et al. (2019) and Nyamnjoh (2024) use purposeful sampling to interview unaccompanied migrant adolescents and youth regarding their experience with migration and transnational family separation. Also, Correia De Sá (2024) uses purposive sampling to access professionals and community members who support grieving migrants. Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler (2025) and Berger Cardoso et al. (2025) use snowball sampling, where participants recommend others who have a similar migration-related grief experience to participate in the research. This strategy helps to include participants who would be possibly excluded, like undocumented migrants and those affected by trauma. Convenience sampling is used by Park et al. (2024) and Sadiq et al. (2025), as participants were selected from accessible settings like the workplace, community organizations, or academic institutions. Importantly, these strategies may impact generalizability, especially when samples reflect only certain regions or subgroups.

According to Saunders et al. (2018) and Tight (2024), although there is debate about the ideal qualitative sample size, much of this discussion centres on how and when data saturation is reached rather than on a fixed numerical threshold. Some scholars suggest that saturation can be overused and may not fully capture the diversity of lived experiences, while others argue that smaller samples of nine to 17 interviews, or four to eight group discussions can still yield depth if they allow for a rich analysis (Guest et al., 2020; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Some research

reveals that saturation encompasses theoretical, code, and meaning saturation based on epistemological stance (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024). This suggests that adequacy should be judged by analytic depth and reflexivity rather than by numeric limits (Ahmed, 2025). Based on this, Jerves et al. (2019) exemplify methodological transparency by showing how data saturation was achieved through iterative coding and thematic recurrence in their study of migrant families. The authors describe how themes related to identity reconstruction, family separation, and adaptation repeat across interviews. This indicates sufficient depth and supports the credibility of their findings. Notably, most studies do not explicitly share if saturation was achieved. This omission may influence confidence in the comprehensiveness of their thematic findings. Interestingly, Correia De Sá (2024) and Sadiq et al. (2025) incorporate experiences from both migrants and support professionals, which allow for a more holistic understanding of institutional and cultural barriers, while strengthening their thematic depth.

Most researchers rely on community-based or institutional partnerships to recruit participants who have experienced grief and loss due to migration, as this facilitates rapport building (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For example, Albayrak Günday and Gülirmak Güler (2025) recruit participants through psychosocial support centres where they have access to a population gravely impacted by forced migration and can establish trust due to the centres' established presence in the community. Also, Amoako et al. (2024) and Sadiq et al. (2025) recruit participants through immigrant service organizations and professional networks to recruit participants, which helps with more targeted recruitment of individuals relevant to the research. In Berger Cardoso et al. (2025), recruitment occurs through schools and community-based programs that work with migrant mothers and youth. This helps with establishing trust within that populations, as they were vulnerable to legal and cultural marginalization. Jerves et al.

(2019) conduct recruitment directly in educational institutions in Quito, Ecuador, targeting adolescents with transnational family experiences and allowing researchers to connect with participants in a familiar and structured environment (Jerves et al., 2019). Nyamnjoh (2024) employs a community-based recruitment technique that engages churches, migrant shelters, and local families that are impacted by migration while making it accessible to hard-to-reach participants such as unaccompanied minors and returnee migrants.

Across all included studies, eligibility criteria carefully align to the research questions. Participants are selected based on their migration experiences, age, and legal status. There are no inconsistent inclusion/exclusion criteria, and this encourages methodological rigour based on the interpretive paradigms. Importantly, relying on a single primary recruitment source could limit the diversity of participant voices (Robertson et al., 2025). Only Berger Cardoso et al. (2025) and Nyamnjoh (2024) use multiple recruitment streams, potentially improving the quality of the perspectives shared.

Data Collection

Data collection primarily relies on in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which is a suitable method for exploring the deeply personal nature of grief, loss, and identity disruptions related to migration. These interviews facilitate direct engagement with the participants' lived experiences, making it possible to explore narrative-based accounts that quantitative approaches may overlook (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These approaches reveal how participants feel a sense of trust and empowerment when effective data collection techniques are used to understand their lived experiences (Amoako et al., 2024; Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Correia De Sá, 2020; Jerves et al., 2020; Nyamnjoh, 2024; Sadiq et al., 2025).

Berger Cardoso et al. (2025) and Jerves et al. (2020) conduct interviews with mothers and youth to explore transnational separation, while Amoako et al. (2024) and Sadiq et al. (2025) use interviews to highlight intersectional identities. Qualitative interviewing allows the researchers to explore and adapt to the participant's story while ensuring consistent themes using interview guides. Correia De Sá (2020) and Nyamnjoh (2024) use ethnographic and narrative techniques, like focus groups and art-based storytelling, to encourage engagement, especially with the younger participants. Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler (2025) use field notes and reflexive journaling, contributing to an in-depth understanding of the structural, emotional, and interpersonal dimensions of loss in migration. Robust data collection generates themes while co-constructing meaning with participants to ensure that the findings reflected the complexity of migrant grief and loss (Robertson et al., 2025).

Demographic Information

The qualitative studies, as well as the mixed-method study, collect demographic information to add context to the lived experiences of migrants. Included countries are included Canada (Amoako et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025; Sadiq et al., 2025), Turkey (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025), Ecuador (Jerves et al., 2020), the United States (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025), and South Africa (Nyamnjoh, 2024). Participants' gender and age are included in the studies, and several of them highlight the experiences of women and adolescents (Amoako et al., 2024; Jerves et al., 2020). Employment experiences as well as socioeconomic status are documented in studies regarding credential recognition, underemployment, and racialized barriers (Hajian & Randall, 2025; Sadiq et al., 2025). Educational background and immigration status are documented as determinants that influenced integration outcomes and psychological well-being. Berger Cardoso et al. (2025) and Jerves et al. (2020) provide details on

family structure and roles, which were important in studies examining transnational family separation and ambiguous loss. The demographic diversity across the studies reveals how identities of age, gender, race, and legal status influence migrants' experiences of grief and loss as well as access to resources.

Data Analysis

Most of the included qualitative studies use a thematic approach to interpret participants' narratives and identify patterns of grief and loss (Wolgemuth et al., 2024). Eight of the qualitative studies (Albayrak Günday & Gülürmak Güler, 2025; Amoako et al., 2024; Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Hajian & Randall, 2025; Jerves et al., 2020; Nyamnjuh, 2024; Park et al., 2024; Sadiq et al., 2025) and the mixed-method study (Flores et al., 2024) use inductive or deductive thematic analysis to examine the emotional and structural impact of migration on migrants. Themes in these studies are analytical tools used to highlight processes such as separation, ambiguous loss, systemic challenges, and disruptions in belongings (Wolgemuth et al., 2024).

Thematic analysis provides methodological flexibility for researchers across different epistemological paradigms (Wolgemuth et al., 2024). For example, Albayrak Günday and Gülürmak Güler (2025) highlight how they can explore the impact of forced migration, which contribute to the migrants' grief narrative of ambiguous loss. Amoako et al. (2024) use intersectional lenses to examine the employment experiences of Black African immigrant women, which show how their different identities intersect to shape structural exclusion. Hajian and Randall (2025) also use a thematic approach, guided by interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, to unearth how Iranian dentists in Canada navigate barriers that impede integration based on post-migration credential recognition.

In contrast, Sadiq et al. (2025) employ a critical framework to highlight racialized erasure in Canadian workplaces. Their analysis reflects an interpretivist tradition that emphasizes participants' subjective experiences while acknowledging the circumstances and conditions under which these experiences arise. Jerves et al. (2020) frames ambiguous loss as both psychological and familial by applying a socio-cultural lens to analyze how transnational grief evolves over time. Although it is not explicitly stated, several studies integrate elements of narrative analysis by revealing how participants constructed their stories around loss, resilience, and adjustment after migration (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Nyamnjoh, 2024). For example, participants describe being screened out for lacking so-called Canadian experience (Hajian & Randall, 2025), having ideas credited to White colleagues, or being urged to Anglicize their names (Amoako et al., 2024); and transnational parents mark birthdays over video calls while oscillating between hope and grief (Barber, 2024). Park et al. (2024) uses narrative coding of participant decision-making to explore reasons for migration. No alternative qualitative methods such as grounded theory, phenomenological analysis, or ethnography are used in the studies.

Most studies follow common procedures as posited by Creswell and Poth (2018), which reflect methodological rigour in qualitative research. These include data transcription, multiple readings, systematic coding, theme generation, and narrative synthesis. In some studies, themes are supported by verbatim quotations given by participants, which enhance the validity of the shared experiences. Albayrak Günday and Gülırmak Güler (2025), Amoako et al. (2024), and Berger Cardoso et al. (2025) describe a systematic coding process, conducted by multiple researchers, which enhances credibility and help to reduce interpretive bias (Wolgemuth et al., 2024). Even though there is no mention of the use of coding software in the studies, the structure and clarity of their reported themes suggest organized manual coding, often using structured

templates or spreadsheets (Wolgemuth et al. 2024). Hajian and Randall (2025) include reflexivity in their study. They address the impact of researcher positionality, sharing that interpretation is influenced by their own experiences within the Canadian migration and credentialing context. This reflexive stance reduces the risk of unexamined bias distorting findings (Walsh, 2025). Notably, none of the studies explicitly reports member checking or participant validation, which limits the confirmability (Urry et al., 2024).

Additionally, while Berger Cardoso et al. (2025) and Nyamnjoh (2024) reference context-specific documentation and different stakeholders to enhance their analysis, the studies only rely on participant interviews. Notably, only Jerves et al. (2020) integrate multiple data sources, enhancing the understanding of grief experienced by adolescents in transnational families. Park et al. (2024) adopt an analytic approach that limits participant perspectives and thematic depth. While most studies incorporate best practices like coding, interpretive depth, and theme saturation in qualitative data analysis, few provide details about coding frameworks or transparency about theme development as outlined by Braun and Clarke's (2025) six-step model. The lack of methodological detail may affect replicability, but clear narratives and direct quotes support credibility (Walsh, 2025).

Quantitative Studies

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), quantitative research is grounded in a post-positivist paradigm, which assumes that reality can be measured through empirical observation and statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With this paradigm, standardized instruments are used to test hypotheses and identify relationships between variables across populations (Syed & McLean, 2022). The two quantitative studies by Herroudi et al. (2023) and Haeny et al. (2023) use validated psychological scales to explore how structural and

psychosocial factors impact individuals' worldview and mental health. These studies explore patterns and associations among trauma exposure, legal status, discrimination, resilience, and assumptions about the world.

Both studies use cross-sectional survey designs, using structured questionnaires to collect data at a single point in time. Importantly, although Haeny et al. (2023) do not examine migrants specifically, their study conceptualized how racial discrimination and structural disadvantage within a Black community in the United States can disrupt individuals' fundamental beliefs. These findings reflect Janoff-Bulman's (1989) shattered assumptions theory, offering a connection to the psychological distress many racialized migrants experience when systemic barriers and discrimination impact their sense of belonging and emotional security in the host country. The other quantitative study by Herroudi et al. (2023) reveals that migrants with uncertain legal status report more anxiety, depression, and disrupted worldviews, revealing how structural factors contribute to psychological distress and emotional struggles following migration. These studies affirm that migratory grief and trauma are shaped by institutional and social forces that reinforce this study's focus on ambiguous loss, intersectionality, and migrant well-being.

Role of the Researchers

In quantitative studies, the aim is to maintain objectivity by using statistically valid measurement tools and analysis procedures to explore relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The influence of subjective choices made during study design, like determining which variables to prioritize, which populations to sample, and how to operationalize constructs, exists in quantitative research (Jamieson et al., 2023). Based on the post-positivist paradigm, neither Haeny et al. (2023) and Herroudi et al. (2023) include explicit

statements regarding the researchers' positionality or personal connection to the topic, reflecting the traditional stance of quantitative research that deems such disclosures as unnecessary or potentially biasing. For example, Haeny et al. (2023) examines how racial discrimination impacts world assumptions within a Black community, which reflects assumptions about the intersection of environment and cognition among that group. Similarly, Herroudi et al. (2023) examines specific post-migration experiences, such as asylum status and housing insecurity, as key predictors of psychological trajectories among migrants. Importantly, acknowledging the researchers' theoretical or sociopolitical orientations could enhance transparency. Including reflexivity, especially when studying politically charged or sensitive topics like migration and race, can reveal how the research lens was shaped, strengthening the credibility and ethical grounding of the study (Jamieson et al., 2023).

Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

Both quantitative studies (Haeny et al., 2023; Herroudi et al., 2023) use convenience sampling. This non-probability method facilitates researchers accessing participants based on availability and willingness (Burgess et al., 2023). Although this approach is efficient and is useful when working with vulnerable populations such as racialized individuals or asylum seekers, it does not ensure generalizability, which may result in sampling bias (Burgess et al., 2023). In both cases, convenience sampling enabled researchers to capture relevant data from specific populations. However, transferability of the findings must be interpreted with caution (Burgess et al., 2023).

Haeny et al. (2023) and Herroudi et al. (2023) also use diverse recruitment strategies tailored to their target populations. Haeny et al. (2023) recruit participants through an online crowdsourcing platform known as Amazon's Mechanical Turk. This platform provided a broad,

self-selecting participant pool of Black American adults for their study on racial discrimination and neighbourhood disadvantage. However, there may be sample bias that occurs because of self-selection and demographic limitations typical of online labour platforms. Herroudi et al. (2023) conduct large-scale recruitment in five European countries, and target individuals seeking asylum. This is carried out through asylum reception centres and non-governmental organizations that work with refugee populations. Importantly, these settings facilitate direct engagement with migrants who may otherwise be difficult to reach.

Inclusion criteria for both studies are based on self-identification with a specific racial or migrant background. Haeny et al. (2023) include Black Americans, while Herroudi et al. (2023) include adult asylum seekers from different European countries, requiring informed consent and the ability to participate in interviews or questionnaires. Exclusion criteria are not always clearly outlined, though language is an implied consideration. While both studies use appropriate recruitment methods for their sample populations, each method has limitations regarding potential response bias as well as representation.

Data Collection

Both quantitative studies, Haeny et al. (2023) and Herroudi et al. (2023), use standardized questionnaires to measure psychological constructs relevant to their populations to assess associations between variables such as racial discrimination, exposure to trauma, legal status, and mental health outcomes. Haeny et al. (2023) administer their survey through Amazon Mechanical Turk to Black American adults, and all measures indicate acceptable internal consistency (Jahrami et al., 2024). Their questionnaire includes the World Assumptions Scale, which measures individuals' worldview after experiencing trauma, and the Daily Life Experiences subscale, which assesses frequency of racial microaggressions.

Herroudiet al. (2023) uses translated and validated instruments to survey adult asylum seekers. Included in the study are the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire, and the Hopkins Symptom Checklist. These instruments are used to measure symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as psychological resilience based on trauma exposure. The surveys are available in multiple languages to accommodate the needs of the participants and ensure conceptual and linguistic accuracy by incorporating a standard forward–backward translation (McAllister et al., 2021). Although the authors report good reliability across most instruments, they do not share if the pilot testing is conducted in all languages or country contexts. Both studies demonstrate appropriate use of validated quantitative measures within a cross-sectional design. However, inconsistencies with reliability testing, translation, and adaptation show the importance of transparency and consistent methods with diverse populations (McAllister et al., 2021).

Flores et al. (2024) conduct a mixed-methods study among Latinx immigrant parents in mixed-status families and incorporate psychological testing using standardized self-report instruments to assess PTSD symptoms. They utilize the PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5), which measures posttraumatic stress symptoms. Although the article references using the tool, there are no specific reliability or validity statistics from their sample within the article. Notably, across broader literature, the PCL-5 is known for strong psychometric properties, including strong internal consistency and convergent validity with other PTSD measures. Despite this, the absence of discussion regarding cultural or linguistic adaptations of the measure for this Latinx sample limits the ability to assess the appropriateness of the tool in this setting. The study also includes the Policy Vulnerability Scale but provides minimal details regarding the psychometric properties or validation procedures. Careful consideration of the cultural relevance and

interpretive validity of psychological assessments is important (McAllister et al., 2021).

Including such reflections could have strengthened the methodological transparency in the mixed-method study.

Descriptive statistics are provided for the samples in the two quantitative studies (Haeny et al., 2023; Herroudi et al., 2023) and one mixed-methods study (Flores et al., 2023). Each of the studies contributes uniquely to the understanding of disenfranchised grief and loss in the context of migration. In the study by Haeny et al. (2023), 269 Black American adults (69.5% female, mean age = 36.28 years, SD = 10.91) are included in the sample. From the sample, the participants are from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, with 62.5% completing some college or higher education, and the majority are employed. The key variables of racial discrimination and neighbourhood disadvantage are assessed regarding participants' core world assumptions. Although the focus of the study is not on migrants per se, its emphasis on racialized stressors and shattered worldviews provides transferable perspectives regarding the emotional toll of systemic oppression and exclusion, particularly relevant to migrant populations who experience racialized loss and grief of belonging. In the Herroudi et al. (2023) study, there are 395 asylum seekers and refugees sampled with a mean age of 31.9 years (SD = 7.5). Participants originate primarily from conflict-stricken areas like Sudan and Afghanistan. Approximately 82% were male, with more than 70% completing secondary or higher education. Trauma exposure (M = 5.1 events) and time since arrival (M = 3.5 years), are included in the descriptive data. Participants are categorized by mental health trajectories, based on their scores across PTSD, anxiety, and depression inventories. These findings reveal the psychological consequences of post-migration loss and uncertainty among migrants. In the mixed-methods study by Flores et al. (2024), there are 27 Latinx immigrants (mean age = 36.4 years; 66.7% female), primarily from Mexico, El Salvador,

and Guatemala. The average time of the participants living in the United States was 12 years. Importantly, 59% report undocumented status and have exposure to immigration-related trauma. These statistics contextualize the participants' structural vulnerability and highlight how precarious legal status and discrimination significantly contributed to psychological strain. Participants disclose grief related to family separation, marginalization, and status insecurity, highlighting the emotional consequences of migration, especially when losses go unacknowledged by the dominant culture.

These studies provide clear indicators of intersectional stressors. The intersectional stressors in these studies show how legal status, racialization, and trauma contribute to disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss in migrant communities, even when the terminology is not explicitly used. The characteristics of each sample population reflect challenges that influence how migrants navigate systemic exclusion.

Data Analysis

The quantitative and mixed methods articles use different approaches to quantitative data analysis, including multinomial logistic regression (Herroudi et al., 2023), latent class analysis (Herroudi et al., 2023), multivariate linear regression (Haeny et al., 2023), moderation analysis using interaction terms within regression models (Flores et al., 2024), and bivariate correlation analysis (Flores et al., 2024). They combine quantitative moderation analysis with thematic analysis using MAXQDA (Flores et al., 2024). Their regression models include post-hoc probing, highlighting the relationship vulnerabilities between immigration policies, migratory trauma, and PTSD symptoms. Although effect sizes and significance levels are mentioned, there is no indicator of confidence intervals for key regression findings, and there is no discussion of assumption testing or outlier handling. The thematic analysis framework posited by Braun and

Clarke (2025) informs the thematic analysis. There is team-based coding and consensus discussion supporting analytic credibility, though inter-rater reliability is not reported (Flores et al., 2024).

These studies highlight how trauma, discrimination, and systemic stressors influence mental health outcomes in migrant populations. Their analytic approaches reveal the role of structural inequalities that shape experiences of disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss. Notably, there are gaps in methodological reporting, like insufficient detail on data distribution, assumption testing, or transformations, that limit the scope of transparency. Both Herroudi et al. (2023) and Flores et al. (2024) use forward-backward translation procedures to ensure linguistic validity of their measures, addressing cultural and contextual factors. Flores et al. (2024) also focuses on cultural stigma surrounding mental health in Latinx communities and notes limitations in generalizability because of regional recruitment, highlighting the need for more culturally expansive research.

Strengths and Limitations of Methodological Findings

In this review, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies demonstrate sufficient methodological rigour for thematic analysis and synthesis. Importantly, most aligned well with their stated paradigms and research aims. Although qualitative and mixed-method studies show strong interpretive depth, some lack detail on coding or validation. Quantitative studies use appropriate measures; however, transparency on assumptions and cultural adaptation vary.

Qualitative Research

The qualitative studies (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025; Correia De Sá, 2023; Japardize et al., 2023; Sadiq et al., 2025) offer narrative and phenomenological insights into

migrant grief, cultural dislocation, and the psychosocial toll of ambiguous loss. A major strength lies in the use of reflexive thematic analysis (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025), discourse analysis (Sadiq et al., 2025), and critical cultural framing (Japardize et al., 2023), which allows for detailed contextualization of migrant narratives. These studies reveal how grief is shaped by sociopolitical erasure, racialization, and gendered exclusions, which are central to the concept of disenfranchised grief (Boss, 2006; Doka, 2002). However, there are limitations regarding generalizability and transparency. Most studies use purposive or convenience sampling from specific cultural or occupational groups (for example, Iranian dentists in Canada in Correia De Sá et al., 2023; multicultural professionals in Park & Park, 2022), which limits transferability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although there are good descriptions present in some studies (e.g., Sadiq et al., 2025), others lack detailed demographic breakdowns, which makes it difficult to fully interpret the intersectional experiences of migrants (Crenshaw, 1989). Also, few studies address researcher reflexivity, potential bias, or inter-rater validation, which are important when analyzing trauma-laden narratives (Hays & McKibben, 2021). There is limited discussion of whether interviews conducted in participants' first language undergo back-translation or cultural validation, and it reveals the inconsistencies in language translation procedures, which is necessary to capture the emotional depth of the migratory experience (McAllister et al., 2021).

Mixed Methods Research

Flores et al. (2022) used both standardized mental health measures and semi-structured interviews to conduct the mixed-methods study on trauma, social support, and resilience in Latinx immigrants. An important strength of this design is methodological triangulation, which combined PCL-5, Patient Health Questionnaire-9, and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support scores. This reveals rich qualitative themes on family separation, border violence,

and ambiguous familial loss, clearly reflecting the central themes of ambiguous loss (Boss, 2006; Danon et al., 2025). While this integrative approach gives a good understanding of migrant grief, there are limitations. The study uses a non-random, small sample ($N = 38$), and this limits the statistical power and generalizability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although materials are provided in English and Spanish, the study does not explicitly describe translation validation or cultural adaptation of tools, which can impact construct validity across linguistic and cultural groups (Cruchinho et al., 2024).

Quantitative Research

The quantitative articles (Haeny et al., 2023; Herroudi et al., 2023) use robust statistical approaches to examine the mental health consequences of displacement, discrimination, and legal precarity. Herroudi et al. (2023) use latent class analysis to distinguish patterns of post-migration adjustments among migrants. The model is evaluated using interpretability of class profiles, which helped in evaluating heterogeneous migrant responses to trauma and ambiguity, Bayesian Information Criterion, and entropy scores. Haeny et al. (2023) applies multiple linear regression to examine how racial discrimination and neighbourhood disadvantage predict and impact world assumptions, a commonly used indicator of shattered assumptions in trauma studies (Janoff-Bulman, 1989).

Both studies rely on non-probability samples and cross-sectional designs. This limits causal inference and population-level generalizability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For example, in the study by Herroudi et al. (2023) a sample is drawn from French asylum centres, and Haeny et al. (2023) studies U.S.-based Black Americans, which are groups highly relevant to systemic grief and racialized loss but do not reflect the experiences of all migrants experiencing ambiguous or disenfranchised grief. Importantly, neither article discusses assumption testing,

data transformations, or outlier handling, which is important for ensuring latent class analyses or valid regression (Sinha et al., 2021). Software, like SPSS and Mplus, is not always reported. Also, cultural adaptation of tools such as the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire or World Assumptions Scale is insufficiently addressed and may affect measurement reliability and content validity when used with diverse migrant populations (Yang et al., 2024).

Cross-Cutting Limitations

The risk of recall bias, social desirability and overreporting is introduced across all designs, based on reliance on self-report data (Ojala et al., 2024). This is especially relevant to trauma research, where stigma, linguistic barriers, or undocumented status influence how individuals narrate loss (Ojala et al., 2024). Qualitative studies are better suited to capturing culturally nuanced grief narratives of migrants, but their findings have limited generalizability. Finally, few studies explicitly engage ethical reflexivity, including the emotional risks of participation and informed consent in multiple languages. While several articles explore the challenges of grief invisibility in migration (Flores et al., 2022; Sadiq, 2025), few translate that awareness into protective or culturally responsive research practices.

Ethical Considerations

Psychologists in Canada are ethically responsible to advance psychological knowledge by developing, evaluating, and refining approaches to serve diverse communities through ongoing research (CPA, 2017). Research on any human subject must be compliant with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (TCPS2) (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [CIHR et al.], 2022). The guiding ethical principles of respect, concern for welfare, and justice from the TCPS2 are to ensure the safety of participants, while acknowledging

potential benefits of scientific inquiry (CIHR et al. 2022). The ethical standards applied in this review are informed by the CPA's *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*, as well as the TCPS2. Article 2.1 of the TCPS2 outlines that any research involving living human participants must receive approval from the institutional Research Ethics Board (REB) (CIHR et al., 2022). The REB determines whether the proposed study meets the ethical standards outlined in the TCPS2 and the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (CCEP), paying close attention to potential risks, benefits, and broader ethical implications of the research (CIHR et al., 2022; CPA, 2017, p. 15).

The REB reviews studies for ethical compliance, to determine potential risks, benefits, and broader implications (CIHR et al., 2022; CPA, 2017, p. 15). Eight of the 11 articles explicitly reference ethical protocols like the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, REB, informed consent, and participant protections (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025; Amoako et al., 2024; Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Flores et al., 2024; Haeny et al., 2023; Hajian & Randall, 2025; Herroudi et al., 2023; Jerves et al., 2020). Three articles (Nyamnjoh, 2024; Park et al., 2024; Sadiq et al., 2025) have no mention of ethical approval or procedures, which limits transparency and raises concerns about adherence to ethical norms in migration-related research.

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Projects

Ethical research requires respecting participant autonomy, with the TCPS2 and the CCEP stipulating that consent should be freely given, continuous, and fully informed before collecting any data (CIHR et al., 2022; CPA, 2017). Six of the 11 studies clearly indicate informed consent and ethics approval (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025; Amoako et al., 2024, Flores et al., 2024; Haeny et al., 2023; Hajian & Randall, 2025; Herroudi et al., 2023). The other studies

(Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Jerves et al., 2020; Nyamnjoh, 2024; Park et al., 2024; Sadiq et al., 2025) do not clearly report consent or ethics approval, limiting the assessment compliance with TCPS2 and the CCEP. Article 3.1 of the TCPS2, as well as the CCEP, highlights that participants must be made aware of their right to withdraw at any point without consequence (CIHR et al., 2022; CPA, 2017). While several studies (Albayrak Günday & Gülirmak Güler, 2025; Amoako et al., 2024; Flores et al., 2024; Haeny et al., 2023; Herroudi et al., 2023; Hajian & Randall, 2025) report obtaining informed consent and receiving ethics approval from institutional review boards, they do not explicitly address participants' right to withdraw or describe safeguards to minimize coercion or power imbalances during recruitment. These omissions reveal a gap between ethical expectations and research reporting.

Prospective participants must receive comprehensive information about the study, such as the purpose, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality, data use, and their right to withdraw at any time (CIHR et al., 2022; CPA, 2017). Although Albayrak Günday and Gülirmak Güler (2025), Amoako et al. (2024), Flores et al. (2024), Haeny et al. (2023), Hajian and Randall (2025), and Herroudi et al. (2023) indicate that participants provided informed consent and ethics approval was obtained, they do not clearly state whether all elements recommended by Article 3.2 of the TCPS2 were addressed. The lack of discussion on safeguards such as offering time for reflection or assessing understanding raises questions about whether consent processes adhered to the ethical standard of participant autonomy, ensuring robust and culturally sensitive consent practices. Based on Article 3.3 of the TCPS2, ongoing consent throughout the research process is important (CIHR et al., 2022). None of the studies addresses the process of reconfirming consent at later stages of the study. A lack of check-ins or updates indicates a broader need for more

transparent documentation of ethical procedures related to participant autonomy throughout the research period.

Ethical Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

In Chapter 4 of the TCPS2, there is emphasis on ethical obligation to ensure that there are equitable opportunities for participation, despite a person's culture, language, gender, race, ethnicity, age, or disability (CIHR et al., 2022, p. 66). Based on Article 4.1, if there is any intentional exclusion of groups, it should be clearly justified in relation to the study's scope and objectives. Notably, Albayrak Günday and Gülirmak Güler (2025), Amoako et al. (2024), and Herroudi et al. (2023) outline inclusion criteria aligned with their research goals, focusing on relevant characteristics such as migration history, racial identity, or legal status. However, Berger Cardoso et al. (2025) and Nyamnjoh (2024) do not provide detailed justification for participant selection outside of general accessibility or geographic presence, limiting transparency regarding equitable selection in the sampling process.

Research Involving Vulnerable Populations

Guidelines emphasize the need to protect vulnerable populations like migrants and those with histories of trauma or displacement who are included in research (CIHR et al., 2022; CPA, 2017; Taki et al., 2022). These individuals may be susceptible to emotional, psychological, or systemic vulnerabilities that require additional ethical considerations (Taki et al., 2022). It is seen throughout the studies that several authors give attention to vulnerability. Albayrak Günday and Gülirmak Güler (2025) address institutional ethics approval and ensure informed and voluntary participation from individuals affected by displacement and disaster. Amoako et al. (2024) highlight intersecting identities and systemic inequities faced by Black African immigrant women and frame these as important to their research ethics and inclusion criteria. Flores et al.

(2024) indicate verbal informed consent from Latinx parents who are negatively impacted by migration-related trauma, as well as linguistic and structural barriers. Notably, few studies describe cultural accommodations or steps to reduce harm and foster trust. Omitting detailed procedures to address power imbalances, emotional risks, or cultural misunderstandings may impact the ethical robustness of research involving vulnerable migrant populations (Davidson et al., 2024).

Privacy and Confidentiality

The TCPS2 (Article 5.1) and the CCEP (I.39–I.44) address the importance of privacy, which requires researchers to protect personal data, limit data collection to only what is relevant, anonymize participant information, and securely store and destroy it when no longer needed (CIHR et al., 2022; CPA, 2017; Government of Canada, 2025). Several of the articles provide clear descriptions of privacy and confidentiality measures. Both Flores et al. (2024) and Herroudi et al. (2023) mention IRB approval and verbal or written consent, which usually includes discussion of confidentiality protocols. Although Haeny et al. (2023) indicates adherence to IRB guidelines, there is no specific mention of data protections. Despite indicating ethics board approval and institutional affiliation, there is no elaboration on confidentiality safeguards in Albayrak Günday and Gülırmak Güler (2025), Amoako et al. (2024), and Hajian and Randall (2025). Many of the studies have no mention of how electronic data are stored, if access is restricted, or how long data are kept.

The ethical integrity of research can arise depending on affiliation with or receiving funding from some organizations, especially when this affiliation influences the research design or reporting (CIHR et al., 2022; CPA, 2017, III.19). Few of the studies provide explicit statements about conflicts of interest or disclose institutional affiliations or funding sources.

Only Haeny et al. (2023), Herroudi et al. (2023), and Flores et al. (2024) include formal declarations regarding ethics approval and university or health agency affiliations. None of the articles indicate whether authors have conflicts of interest or received funding. Based on ethical standards, studies involving vulnerable groups, such as migrants, require keen attention to confidentiality and transparency to uphold respect, safety, and trust throughout the research process (Davidson et al., 2024).

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter explored disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss in migration through intersectional and structural lenses. It revealed that migrants' coping strategies are influenced by their emotional, cultural, and systemic realities. Contributory factors to disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss include social invisibility, cultural disconnection, and lack of institutional support. Additionally, intersecting factors such as race, gender, and legal status are determinants of how migrants experienced and expressed grief. Despite the challenges, migrants rely on cultural values, transnational ties, and inner resilience to navigate their emotional pain. The findings show the importance of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed approaches that authenticate migrant loss and support healing within the community. By examining themes including, but not limited to, assimilation, transnationalism, and whole-of-community approaches, the literature highlighted the challenges regarding migrant grief in Canada. To enhance the interpretation of the findings, theories of ambiguous loss, disenfranchised grief, and shattered assumption world theory were used to discuss the themes. This chapter also presented the search strategy and thematic analysis of 11 peer-reviewed articles that contribute to addressing the research question. Methods for source selection and analysis were described, along with a critique of the methodological strengths and limitations present across the literature.

These findings highlight the need for an inclusive counselling framework that can bridge theory and practice and will be addressed in later chapters through the development of the Culturally Responsive Ambiguous Loss Counselling (CRAL-C) model.

Chapter 3: Discussion, Applied Practices, and Recommendations

This capstone examined the question: “What are the barriers to accessing culturally responsive counselling for migrants who experience ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief?” The findings show that a lack of recognition and systemic barriers hinder support for the unique losses migrants face. These losses are often shaped by dominant Western grief models that may pathologize or overlook their experiences. This project synthesizes findings across 11 peer-reviewed studies published between 2020 and 2025, integrating theoretical frameworks such as ambiguous loss, disenfranchised grief, shattered assumptions, and intersectionality. The review also includes perspectives of assimilation, transnationalism, and whole-of-community approaches. These frameworks highlight how migratory grief extends beyond individual experiences, encompassing cultural dislocation, systemic exclusion, and fractured worldviews.

This chapter focuses on the clinical implications of the study’s findings on migrants’ experience of disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss. It explores the importance of clinical support for individuals navigating migratory losses and focuses on addressing and reducing barriers to culturally responsive care, increasing understanding of ambiguous and unrecognized grief, and helping clients to make meaning of ongoing or unresolved losses. The chapter concludes by reflecting on how these findings may influence practices across community, organizational, and systemic settings that serve migrant populations.

Discussion

The review of literature highlights that grief in migration takes multiple forms, especially through disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Flores et al., 2024; Jerves et al., 2020). Migration disrupts worldviews and shatters assumptions, leaving migrants vulnerable to distress, and intersecting identities and systemic exclusion influence how

grief is recognized, expressed, or silenced (Haeny et al., 2023; Herroudi et al., 2023). These points reflect the need for counselling approaches that move beyond universal Western grief frameworks toward practices that are culturally responsive and context dependent (Barber, 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025). Disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss are key features of migrant experiences across the literature. Migrants sometimes experience invisible losses that are often minimized or overlooked, including the loss of homeland, cultural belonging, and professional identity (Flores et al., 2024; Tsegay, 2023). Ambiguous loss is evident in contexts where family separation is prolonged or unresolved due to migration policies, political violence, or deportation (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025; Crocker et al., 2021). These findings indicate that migrant grief hardly follows a linear path of resolution. For counsellors, this reflects the importance of validating diverse grief expressions and resisting the pathologizing of prolonged or culturally specific mourning practices.

Shattered assumptions and disrupted worldviews further explain challenges faced by some migrants. Migration sometimes challenges people's fundamental beliefs about safety, belonging, and predictability in the world (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Wilson & O'Connor, 2022). When these assumptions are negatively impacted, migrants may face existential insecurity and heightened risks of anxiety and depression (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025). Importantly, the literature also shows that many migrants engage in meaning-making processes that help them reconstruct disrupted worldviews and foster resilience (Amoako et al., 2024). In counselling, this reflects the value of narrative and meaning-making approaches that help migrants re-establish and redefine their identity and lived experience.

Intersectionality and systemic exclusion have a noticeable impact on how grief is experienced. Migrants who encounter racism, gender-based discrimination, and precarious legal

status often compound the pain of loss (Amoako et al., 2024; Crenshaw, 1989). An example of this is seen when Black migrant women in Canada report disproportionate burdens of workplace discrimination and institutional exclusion, which intensifies their sense of disenfranchised grief (Amoako et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025). These findings emphasize that migrant grief cannot be understood in isolation from social structures. For counsellors and policymakers, this means employing an intersectional lens that considers overlapping oppressions and acknowledges the role of systemic barriers in shaping grief experiences.

Finally, theoretical frameworks of assimilation, transnationalism, and whole-of-community approaches provide useful, yet contrasting, perspectives. Notably, assimilation theory points to how pressures to conform to dominant cultural norms can erase identity and further disenfranchise migrants (Barber, 2024; Crul, 2024). Transnationalism, by contrast, emphasizes the protective role of maintaining cross-border ties and continuing bonds (Barber, 2024). Whole-of-community approaches explain grief and adaptation as collective responsibilities, calling for collaborative, culturally grounded responses (Sadiq, 2025). These frameworks suggest that effective counselling practice must go beyond an individualistic focus to integrate community, cultural continuity, and systemic advocacy.

The review reveals structural inequities that may impact migrant grief and adaptation in Canada. One of the most noticeable tensions in the literature is the gap between multicultural ideals and lived realities. Although Canada promotes multiculturalism as a cornerstone of national identity, the research demonstrates that migrants often face systemic barriers in healthcare, education, and employment that undermine this vision (Hajian & Randall, 2025). Language barriers further compound these challenges, limiting access to services and social integration while reinforcing feelings of exclusion (Hajian & Randall, 2025). Migrants are

expected to assimilate or show gratitude, even when policies and practices reinforce exclusion. This contradiction highlights how multicultural rhetoric can obscure the disenfranchisement migrants experience daily.

Studies tend to prioritize dominant migrant groups such as South Asian or Middle Eastern populations, while other groups, including Black migrants and other racialized subgroups remain critically underexamined (Flores et al., 2024; Statistics Canada, 2022). As a result, the development of culturally attuned clinical interventions is needed to serve the needs of these underrepresented communities. While these contributions are valuable, they leave important gaps. Black migrants in Canada, particularly African and Caribbean communities, remain underrepresented, even though they face intersecting forms of discrimination that intensify disenfranchised grief (Amoako et al., 2024). Their absence in the research reinforces a pattern of erasure and limits the ability of scholarship to capture the full spectrum of migrant experiences. Notably, the findings from existing studies cannot be fully generalized across all migrant populations, as they primarily reflect the experiences of more frequently studied groups. The underrepresentation of Black, African, and Caribbean migrants constrains the applicability to the broader migrant context. The absence of diverse and intersectional sampling offers only a partial understanding of how disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss manifest across different cultural and racial groups (Amoako et al., 2024; Flores et al., 2024).

Methodological patterns also restrict the field. The dominance of qualitative approaches, such as semi-structured interviews and ethnographic studies, gives insight about personal narratives but leaves fewer opportunities for large-scale or comparative analyses (Crocker et al., 2021). Quantitative and mixed methods design remain limited, which constrains generalizability and weakens policy impact. Short-term or cross-sectional studies do not adequately describe the

prolonged emotional stresses associated with ambiguous loss (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Boss, 2010; Jerves et al., 2020). A lack of longitudinal data leaves clinicians without an adequate framework to anticipate delayed or reactivated grief, particularly when resettlement challenges persist or intensify over time (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Boss, 2010; Jerves et al., 2020). These methodological and sampling limitations further restrict the generalizability of the findings and highlight the need for broader, more inclusive research.

In addition, the reliance on Western constructs like prolonged grief disorder risks pathologizing migrant grief that does not follow linear timelines or culturally normative expressions (Boss, 1999; Doka, 2002). Also, many studies do not apply intersectional frameworks in their methodological design or data interpretation despite its relevance (Scheurich & Mason, 2024). Although intersectionality is frequently referenced in theory, few articles consider how multiple, overlapping systems of oppression, such as race, gender, and legal status, interact to influence grief responses or access to support (Drazenovich & Mazur, 2022; Sadiq et al., 2025). This narrows the clinical use of these studies, as they fail to offer guidance on how to tailor therapeutic approaches to intersecting identities.

Based on the literature, migrants' grief and loss cannot be adequately understood through pathologizing lenses as opposed to a structural context (Correia De Sá et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025). It is important to reassess how grief is recognized, assessed, and addressed in therapeutic settings, as many migrants may not label their emotional distress as grief, especially when their losses are because of displacement, cultural disconnection, or systemic exclusion (Correia De Sá et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025). As a result, practitioners may pathologize normal grief responses as symptoms of depression or anxiety (Correia De Sá et al., 2024). For instance, this may arise in situations where a migrant presents with panic symptoms and may be

grieving separation from their children, home country, or the loss of their professional identity (Flores et al., 2024; Herroudi et al., 2023); or Black migrant women in professional roles are overlooked for advancement and treated as invisible, resulting in grief over unfulfilled potential and a loss of self-worth (Amoako et al., 2024). This raises concerns about diagnostic overreach and the marginalization of alternative cultural frameworks for mourning. However, the shortage of literature that explores effective models of culturally responsive grief interventions for migrants leaves practitioners to adapt generic models with limited cultural relevance (Correia De Sá et al., 2024; Flores et al., 2024; Mooten, 2021).

This gap indicates a need for more intervention-oriented research that can offer grounded, replicable approaches for clinicians working with diverse migrant communities. Despite the literature providing an important foundation for understanding migrant grief, its limitations reveal an urgent need for more inclusive, intersectional, and clinically actionable research. Future studies should try to close these gaps in representation, engage with structural realities, and focus primarily on migrant voices in both research and clinical design.

Applied Practices

This capstone proposes the CRAL-C model to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This model reflects the literature on ambiguous and disenfranchised grief (Boss, 1999; Doka, 2002; Flores et al., 2024), shattered assumptions (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Janoff-Bulman, 1992), and intersectionality (Amoako et al., 2024; Crenshaw, 1989) into a structured approach for counselling migrants in Canada. The CRAL-C model is organized around the three themes identified in Chapter 2. Each theme informs a corresponding practice application and is based on empirical and theoretical evidence. The framework is designed to validate invisible

losses, encourage meaning-making, and connect clients with systemic and community resources, (see Table 5).

Table 5

Culturally Responsive Ambiguous Loss Counselling (CRAL-C) Model

Theme	Practice Applications	Supporting Evidence
Migration as Layered Loss	Use of migration timelines to identify ambiguous and disenfranchised losses; explicit validation of invisible losses; resistance to pathologizing.	Boss (1999); Doka (2002); Flores et al. (2024); Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler (2025)
Grieving in the Margins	Narrative and ritual-based practices, including “before-during-after” storytelling, and meaning-making strategies; family and group interventions for role renegotiation.	Janoff-Bulman (1992); Wilson & O’Connor (2022); Berger Cardoso et al. (2025); Levitt & Glick Schiller (2004); Crocker et al. (2021)
Meaning-Making and Resilience	Advocacy and systemic linkages: space to process racialized harms; use of advocacy letters; referrals to status-safe services; partnerships with stake holders like, settlement agencies, schools, and faith groups.	Crenshaw (1989); Amoako et al. (2024); Hajian & Randall (2025); Sadiq (2022)

CRAL-C Model: Migration as a Layered Loss

Migration involves multiple, intersecting layers of loss that often result in disruptions of family roles, professional identities, cultural belonging, and home landscapes, resulting in both visible and invisible forms of grief (Albayrak Günday & Gülırmak Güler, 2025; Flores et al., 2024). These losses are cumulative rather than isolated and interact with structural and psychological factors to shape the overall migratory experience. For example, Albayrak Günday and Gülırmak Güler (2025) describe how displaced individuals face grief where there is a lack of emotional closure due to prolonged uncertainty and cultural dislocation. Similarly, Flores et al. (2024) note that migrant grief is often compounded by social exclusion, precarious employment,

and racialized stressors that prevent adaptation and healing. From a theoretical standpoint, Boss's (1999, 2010) ambiguous loss theory provides clarity regarding the tension between the presence and absence of who or what is lost and what remains psychologically present. Migrants may continue to feel connected to family and their home country while being physically separated. According to Doka (2002), this unresolved grief is intensified by the absence of societal acknowledgment. These frameworks reveal how migration can shatter core assumptions about identity, stability, and control, as explained by Janoff-Bulman's (1992) shattered assumptions theory, which explains how trauma and displacement destabilize fundamental beliefs about safety and justice in the world.

Importantly, other empirical findings further explain these theoretical dynamics. Berger Cardoso et al. (2025) highlight how separation and reunification cycles in transnational families can create ambiguity that disrupts attachment bonds. Similarly, Jerves et al. (2020) reveal how some adolescents in transnational families experience identity instability and navigate their new life experiences after migration. The psychosocial cost of such experiences indicates that migration can result in a profound emotional and existential rupture. These findings suggest that grief in migration cannot be fully understood through Western diagnostic categories that frame adjustment challenges as pathology (Correia De Sá et al., 2024; Flores et al., 2024). Instead, it should be contextualized as a normal response to change in circumstances associated with migration.

In the context of counselling, this understanding highlights the importance of a paradigm shift from pathology to meaning-making. The CRAL-C model suggests that counsellors should conceptualize migration as a multi-layered process of cumulative losses. Through tools such as the migration timeline (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Jerves et al., 2020), clients are invited to

chart critical transitions such as departures, separations, identity shifts, and points of resilience across their migration journey. This process can help counsellors to identify ambiguous and disenfranchised losses that might otherwise remain invisible, such as the loss of language, social networks, or professional recognition (Amoako et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025). Beyond assessment, the migration timeline facilitates therapeutic dialogue about grief that is culturally situated (Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Jerves et al., 2020). It legitimizes forms of mourning expressed through silence, spiritual practice, storytelling, or transnational communication, allowing counsellors to validate resilience alongside loss (Flores et al., 2024; Tsegay, 2023). By acknowledging these culturally embedded ways of coping, practitioners can foster a more inclusive therapeutic alliance that honours both the pain and the strength embedded in migrant narratives (Amoako et al., 2024; Sadiq et al., 2025). This shift transforms the counselling space into one of recognition rather than correction, which aligns with Boss's (2017) call for "ambiguous resilience," where healing occurs not through closure, but through acceptance of complexity.

CRAL-C Model: Grieving in the Margins

The theme of migration as a layered loss focuses on the personal and relational dimensions of loss within the migration journey. The theme of grieving in the margins reflects how social structures, institutions, and public discourses suppress or delegitimize those private losses. Migrants' grief is filtered through a system that determines whose pain is visible and whose remains unheard (Amoako et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025; Wilson & O'Connor, 2022). Research shows that institutional racism, legal precarity, and professional gatekeeping often render migrants' emotional suffering invisible (Amoako et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall,

2025; Sadiq et al., 2025). Whereas the first theme explored the internal layers of loss, this second theme analyzes the external mechanisms of silencing that prevent acknowledgment and healing.

Based on Doka's (1989) theory of disenfranchised grief and Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework, these studies reflect how intersecting identities of race, gender, and immigration status shape access to empathy and support. For example, Amoako et al. (2024) reveal how Black African immigrant women encounter both sexism and racism in Canadian workplaces, forcing emotional suppression to maintain employability. Also, Sadiq et al. (2025) describe the experiences of South Asian and Arab professionals who must mute cultural expressions of distress to conform to Canadian workplace norms. These experiences convert grief into silence, which acts as a coping mechanism that protects social standing but intensifies internal isolation. At a structural level, credential recognition systems, language barriers, and healthcare inequities perpetuate exclusion (Flores et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025). Correia De Sá et al. (2024) argue that when Western diagnostic frameworks pathologize culturally rooted mourning, they institutionalize silence by redefining grief as dysfunction.

Clinically, the CRAL-C model will position counsellors as mediators between individual pain and systemic denial. Interventions such as narrative reconstruction, cultural validation, and advocacy dialogues invite clients to name experiences of discrimination and to transform silence into story (Flores et al. 2024; Tsegay 2023). Rituals and transnational ties operate as protective factors, which allow migrants to sustain bonds with both past and present communities (Flores et al. 2024; Tsegay 2023). Counsellors may apply narrative and ritual-based practices, such as before-during-after storytelling, to help clients reconstruct coherence and maintain continuing bonds. In family or group contexts, these practices may also support renegotiation of roles after prolonged separations (Crocker et al., 2021). This process can deepen the counselling

relationship so that marginalized grief gains voice. This shift reframes therapy in a personal and political way by challenging the structures that sustain exclusion while restoring dignity to the migrant experience.

CRAL-C Model: Meaning-Making and Resilience

During loss and systemic adversity, many migrants demonstrate the capacity for meaning-making and resilience (Flores et al., 2024). These processes allow them to re-author their narratives and restore coherence to disrupted identities (Flores et al., 2024). The literature shows that resilience is an active and relational process, which is influenced by culture and community (Flores et al., 2024; Tsegay, 2023). Instead of coping in a passive sense, migrants reinterpret suffering through culturally meaningful frameworks that transform grief into growth and renewed purpose (Flores et al., 2024; Tsegay, 2023).

Boss's (2017) concept of ambiguous resilience helps to explain how healing arises from the acceptance of uncertainty. According to Berger Cardoso et al. (2025), migrants who live with unresolved separations, precarious status, or ambiguous belonging often cultivate strength by integrating both absence and continuity into their self-story. Transnational families sometimes maintain bonds through digital rituals and shared narratives that preserve emotional connection despite distance (Jerves et al., 2020). Hajian and Randall (2025) describe how professional migrants reclaim agency by aligning their identities with values of persistence and adaptability. This helps them by redefining success beyond Western credentialing norms (Hajian & Randall, 2025). These acts of reinterpretation show meaning making as a form of resistance and an insistence on self-definition within exclusionary contexts (Jerves et al., 2020; Hajian & Randall, 2025).

At the cultural level, spirituality, collective storytelling, and community networks are viewed as central pathways of resilience (Amoako et al., 2024; Tsegay, 2023). Spiritual and communal practices provide continuity despite displacement, while validating emotions that formal institutions often overlook. Flores et al. (2024) reveal that many Latinx migrants use family solidarity and faith narratives to transform trauma into a shared story of endurance. Collective meaning-making situates resilience within belonging rather than individual achievement and aligns with whole-of-community approaches that emphasize interdependence and social repair (Flores et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025; Tsegay, 2023). Intersectional analysis reveals how overlapping identities of race, gender, and legal status intensified disenfranchised grief (Amoako et al., 2024; Crenshaw, 1989). Black migrant women, for example, reported disproportionate burdens of workplace discrimination and credential barriers, which compounded experiences of invisible loss (Amoako et al., 2024; Hajian & Randall, 2025). These inequities reinforce that grief is inseparable from structural barriers.

The CRAL-C model seeks to help clients link personal meaning to cultural narrative. Counsellors will invite migrants to articulate stories of endurance through expressive activities such as journaling, art, music, or cultural ritual that reflect their heritage and worldview. Through guided dialogue, clients identify values and sources of strength that transcend systemic limitation. Counsellors may create space for processing systemic harms, including racialized microaggressions and status-based exclusions. They may also use advocacy tools, such as letters for credential recognition or workplace accommodations, and facilitate warm referrals to status-safe services. At a systemic level, practitioners may partner with schools, settlement agencies, and cultural organizations to implement whole-of-community supports (Amoako et al., 2024; Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Hajian & Randall, 2025; Sadiq, 2025). By honouring migrants'

agency to assign meaning, counsellors nurture resilience that is both personal and collective, rooted in culture and sustained through connection (Amoako et al., 2024; Berger Cardoso et al., 2025; Hajian & Randall, 2025).

This theme therefore redefines resilience as the reclamation of voice, identity, and purpose amid uncertainty. As the first theme examines the layers of personal loss and the second theme addresses structural silencing, this theme highlights the transformative potential that arises when migrants reinterpret grief through cultural wisdom and community solidarity. It completes the framework for the CRAL-C model and shows that healing is the restoration of meaning despite the challenges faced.

Contribution and Implementation Phases

The CRAL-C model is organized into three phases (see Table 6). The CRAL-C model may contribute to Canadian counselling psychology by addressing the gaps identified in Chapter 2. It focuses on a culturally responsive, intersectional, and systemic framework. By mapping layered losses, validating silenced grief, facilitating narrative reconstruction, and building systemic linkages, the model can provide counsellors with concrete tools for supporting migrants whose grief has sometimes been marginalized. These phases enable counsellors to assess, intervene, and advocate systematically. Phase 1 focuses on assessment and stabilization, Phase 2 emphasizes narrative and ritual work, and Phase 3 advances systemic advocacy and community linkages.

Table 6

Implementation Phases of the CRAL-C Model

Phase	Key Strategies
Phase 1: Assessment and Stabilization	Develop migration timelines to validate invisible and disenfranchised losses; link clients to immediate supports and resources.

Phase	Key Strategies
Phase 2: Narrative and Ritual Work	Use narrative exercises like before-during-after migration stories; integrate cultural practices.
Phase 3: Advocacy and Community Linkages	Provide space to process systemic harms; use advocacy letters for credential recognition/workplace accommodations; offer status-safe referrals; build community partnerships with various stakeholders like schools, settlement agencies, and faith organizations.

Clinical Recommendations

Three main recommendations emerge for practitioners working with migrants who have been impacted by ambiguous and disenfranchised grief in Canada. The first recommendation is recognition of invisible losses. Clinicians should acknowledge that some migrants experience grief that is unrecognized owing to cultural, legal, or systemic invisibility. Although some migrants may grieve the loss of home, identity, or community, these losses are rarely validated within traditional mental health systems. Participating in professional development relating to ambiguous loss, disenfranchised grief, and structural competency may help clinicians to be better able to recognize and respond to these experiences. Using tools such as migration timelines, culturally adapted grief assessments, and narrative therapy can help uncover and validate overlooked emotional pain and prevent misdiagnosis.

Secondly, through culturally responsive approaches, counsellors should integrate rituals, storytelling, and community-based practices into therapy to support grief processing in culturally appropriate ways. Treatment goals should focus on identity reconstruction, emotional safety, and resilience. Counsellors should hold space for both grief and hope while reinforcing cultural strengths for those migrants who experience unresolved separations or credential non-recognition.

Thirdly, practitioners should recognize how intersecting identities such as race, gender, and legal status shape migrant grief. Clinicians should adopt a collaborative approach. One that validates grief outside dominant clinical norms while engaging in ongoing self-reflection, supervision, and bias awareness.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study also identifies several areas for future research. Importantly, focus needs to be given to underrepresented populations, particularly Black migrants in Canada, whose grief experiences are often overlooked. Studies should explore how race, gender, and legal status intersect to shape migrant grief and coping strategies. Also, future studies could explore how grief unfolds across different settlement stages, starting from arrival to integration to long-term adaptation. Notably, longitudinal and mixed-method designs would capture changes in identity, belonging, and well-being over time. Finally, research is also needed on the effectiveness of culturally specific interventions, collective rituals, and peer-support groups. Evaluating these practices will help to provide evidence-based models for supporting migrant grief.

Reflections and Personal Learning

As a Black migrant woman, this research was meaningful in highlighting feelings of grief and loss experienced by migrants. Choosing to focus on disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss was not arbitrary but was influenced by individual experiences and experiences of others in my community. Not only did I examine literature, but I also critically engaged with the often-invisible dimensions of grief, expressed through silence, invisible wounds, and quiet resilience.

My migration story reflects feelings of joy and sorrow. Cultural foundations such as community care and ancestral lessons have shaped how I understand and cope with loss. These forms of coping and knowledge are not always recognized. This positionality informs my

perspectives and helps to create a platform that highlights narratives that are frequently silenced or pathologized. As a migrant and an academic researcher, I had to approach the topic with ethical responsibility. I attempted to ensure that I was reflexive to the material presented to me. I did this by engaging with my supervisor and peers, journaling, and having conversations with trusted members of my community. Bracketing and reflexive questioning prevented a projection of my own experiences onto those whose lives were reflected in the literature.

My intersecting identities shaped the way I interacted with the literature. When reading about the unfortunate experiences of some professional Black women, I reflected on my own experiences, recalling moments when my grief felt unacknowledged. Learning the terms ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief was affirming, as these concepts were once unnamed in my life. This research was conducted in hope of shifting clinical frameworks toward greater recognition of grief in all forms. I aimed to create a space where the grief of migrants could be seen and addressed with care.

In reviewing the literature, it was frustrating to see migrant experiences of grief and loss sometimes being overgeneralized or oversimplified. As a continuing academic researcher coupled with my passion for this capstone project's topic, I intend on going into this field to further strengthen the narratives that my research participants share with humility and grace, as so often goes unseen in this industry. Also, it was noticeable that there was a scarcity of material to address their experiences of disenfranchised grief and loss based on the intersecting identities of race, gender, and legal status. This reflected how groups of individuals can sometimes be rendered invisible. From a reflexive standpoint, this research identifies how personal and social identities shape research. While I understand that my interpretations are informed by lived experience, I regard reflexivity as an ethical necessity.

I experienced a shift in both my knowledge based on the literature I reviewed, and my professional perspective. Initially, I experienced emotions and thoughts that were nameless until I discovered the theoretical constructs, which validated the concepts as lived realities that required validation in counselling spaces. Creating the CRAL-C model made me reflect on how counsellors can integrate cultural rituals, narrative practices, and advocacy into therapy. This journey also revealed tensions, as I felt the urge to include more community perspectives than a literature-based capstone could allow. In sum, reflecting on my identity and experiences offered a better understanding of the topic of migrant grief and loss. This research process supported the aim to bring awareness to the ways migrants experience grief and encouraged more culturally sensitive clinical practices. It highlighted the importance of reflexivity to ensure ethical and culturally informed research was done. It also encouraged personal reflections, strengthening my identity as an aspiring clinician who is committed to culturally responsive and socially just practice.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings, outlined clinical recommendations, and identified directions for future research. The project aimed to answer the research question: “What are the barriers to accessing culturally responsive counselling for migrants who experience ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief?” The analysis revealed that migrant grief is complicated, often silenced or misunderstood, and impacted by systemic inequities within immigration, health care, and social policy. Disenfranchised and ambiguous grief were highlighted as key frameworks for understanding how migration disrupts identity, belonging, and psychological safety. The study also highlighted critical gaps by recognizing that many studies relied on generalized narratives and often overlooked the experiences of underrepresented groups, particularly Black migrants in

Canada. Importantly, intersectionality was frequently mentioned but rarely applied in a meaningful way within research design or analysis. These gaps suggest that there is a need for more inclusive, culturally grounded approaches in both research and practice.

In sum, this capstone reveals that ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief impact the emotional lives of migrants in ways that are often invisible to dominant systems. This study contributes to the development of culturally responsive and intersectional approaches to counselling by synthesizing current literature, identifying gaps, and proposing clinical and research recommendations. The CRAL-C model offers a framework for validating invisible losses, encouraging meaning-making, and systemic advocacy. These contributions reflect the importance of recognizing and addressing migrant grief in both clinical and community contexts, in a bid to advance counselling psychology in Canada toward more inclusive and socially just practice.

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