

Voices in Transit: Communication, Identity, and the Politics of Belonging in Migration

Conceptual-Empirical

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ABSTRACT

This study develops a conceptual framework to examine how communication shapes identity formation and the politics of belonging within contemporary migration, with a particular focus on the Canadian context. Migration is not merely a physical movement across borders but also a communicative and cultural transition through which migrants negotiate language, identity, memory, and social recognition in unfamiliar environments. Despite the growing scholarship on migration and multiculturalism, limited attention has been paid to the ways communication mediates experiences of inclusion, exclusion, and belonging in everyday migrant life.

The study adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach through a critical synthesis of interdisciplinary literature drawn from migration studies, communication studies, cultural theory, and gender studies, alongside Canadian immigration and multicultural discourses. The paper examines how linguistic barriers, cultural dislocation, racialization, gendered experiences, and social perceptions influence the communicative realities of migrants in host societies. Equal attention is given to the experiences of migrant women, whose negotiations of identity and belonging are often shaped by intersecting layers of marginalization and cultural expectations.

The paper argues that migrant voice operates within a persistent tautness between expression and silence, visibility and anonymity, acceptance and alienation. In multicultural societies such as Canada, belonging is shown to be an evolving process. The study further proposes a conceptual linkage between communication, identity, voice, and belonging, demonstrating how these dimensions collectively shape migrant experiences.

By foregrounding communication as central to migration, this study contributes to emerging interdisciplinary conversations on identity, cultural negotiation, and belonging in increasingly diverse societies.

Keywords: Belonging, Canada, Communication, Identity, Migration, Migrant voice, Multiculturalism, Women.

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1. Introduction

Migration has remained one of the defining realities of human civilization, shaping societies, cultures, and systems of belonging across historical periods. From the movement of populations along ancient trade routes to contemporary transnational mobility, migration has continuously transformed social identities and intercultural relations, yet migration is not solely a geographical or demographic phenomenon. It is equally a communicative and cultural process through which individuals negotiate language, identity, memory, and belonging within unfamiliar social environments. The migrant experience therefore extends beyond physical relocation, involving continuous interaction between self and society, inclusion and exclusion, and visibility and silence.

In recent decades, globalization and increased human mobility have intensified discussions surrounding migration and multicultural coexistence. These developments have also expanded scholarly interest in understanding how migrants adapt to new linguistic, cultural, and social realities while preserving aspects of their original identities. Migration frequently places individuals within liminal spaces where identities are neither entirely abandoned nor fully assimilated into dominant cultures. Consequently, migrants often inhabit what may be described as “in-between” spaces characterized by negotiation, hybridity, and emotional uncertainty (Bhabha, 1994). Such experiences demonstrate that migration is deeply tied to questions of communication and recognition, particularly within societies that publicly endorse diversity yet continue to reproduce subtle structures of exclusion.

Within multicultural nations such as Canada, these tensions acquire particular significance. Canada has historically positioned itself as a nation shaped by immigration and cultural plurality. Immigration policies introduced during the administration of Sir Clifford Sifton under Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier encouraged organized settlement and demographic expansion, contributing to the long-term transformation of Canadian society. The official adoption of multiculturalism in 1971 further reinforced Canada’s international image as a culturally inclusive nation committed to diversity and coexistence. Contemporary Canada continues to experience substantial immigration flows, resulting in increasingly multilingual and transnational communities that contribute to the nation’s social and cultural fabric.

However, multicultural representation does not necessarily ensure meaningful belonging or social inclusion. While official multicultural policies promote diversity, many migrants continue to experience

communicative barriers that shape their everyday realities and social positioning (Bannerji, 2000). These barriers are not confined to language proficiency alone but also emerge through accent discrimination, racialization, institutional norms, cultural stereotyping, and unequal systems of representation (Couldry, 2010). Communication thus functions not merely as a practical means of interaction but also as a symbolic marker of legitimacy, acceptance, and visibility within host societies. The capacity to speak does not automatically guarantee the capacity to be heard.

The concept of “voice” therefore occupies a central place within migration discourse. Voice extends beyond verbal expression and encompasses recognition, participation, representation, and the ability to articulate identity within institutional, social, and cultural structures of power (Couldry, 2010). Migrants may formally participate within social systems while simultaneously experiencing forms of symbolic marginalization. In many cases, migrants encounter a paradoxical condition in which they are publicly acknowledged as contributors to multicultural diversity yet remain socially peripheral within dominant narratives of national belonging. Such tensions reveal that belonging is not solely determined by citizenship or residency status but is continuously negotiated through everyday communicative encounters, institutional recognition, and meaningful social participation (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

The experiences of migrant women further complicate these dynamics. Women migrants frequently negotiate multiple and intersecting expectations associated with gender, ethnicity, family responsibilities, religion, employment, and cultural adaptation (Crenshaw, 1991). Their communicative experiences are shaped by both external societal expectations and internal cultural responsibilities, often placing them within layered forms of marginalization that influence agency, visibility, participation, and access to opportunities (Mohanty, 2003). As a result, the politics of belonging for women migrants cannot be separated from broader questions surrounding representation, identity, and social voice.

Scholars across migration studies, sociology, communication studies, and cultural theory have increasingly emphasized the fluid and constructed nature of identity within transnational contexts. The idea of identity is often conceptualized not as a fixed essence but as a continuous process of becoming shaped by historical and cultural positioning. Similarly, Bhabha (1994) argues that intercultural encounters generate hybrid spaces in which identities are continuously negotiated and reconstructed. Questions surrounding representation, marginality, and the possibility of speaking from positions

of exclusion have also been explored by Spivak (1988), whose work highlights the structural dimensions of voice and silencing. Collectively, these perspectives provide important conceptual foundations for understanding migrant communication and belonging within multicultural societies.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on migration and multiculturalism, communication itself often remains insufficiently theorized within migration discourse. Existing studies have frequently concentrated on demographic change, migration policy, settlement patterns, or social adaptation while paying comparatively less attention to communication as a site where identity, recognition, and belonging are actively negotiated (Georgiou, 2006). Yet communication remains the principal mechanism through which migrants encounter institutions, negotiate identity, establish social relationships, and seek recognition within host societies. Despite this centrality, communication has rarely been positioned as the primary analytical lens through which migration itself may be understood.

Ultimately, this study argues that belonging cannot be understood solely through legal inclusion or multicultural representation. Belonging is communicatively produced, negotiated, and contested through everyday interactions that determine whether migrants feel recognized, heard, and socially present. By foregrounding communication as central to migration experiences, this study contributes to expanding interdisciplinary discussions on identity, voice, and belonging within increasingly mobile and culturally diverse societies.

This study therefore seeks to conceptualize migration through the interconnected lenses of communication, identity, and belonging within the Canadian multicultural context. Rather than approaching communication merely as a functional tool of adaptation, the study positions it as the central mechanism through which migrants negotiate visibility, cultural recognition, and social participation. It examines how communicative experiences shape migrant realities across linguistic, cultural, racialized, and gendered dimensions while revealing broader structures of inclusion and exclusion. In doing so, this study contributes to migration scholarship by proposing the **Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework for Migrant Voice**, an integrative conceptual model that explains how communication mediates identity formation and the politics of belonging within multicultural societies.

2. Background

2.1 Migration and Identity Formation

Migration scholarship has evolved considerably over the past several decades, extending beyond demographic

and economic explanations to encompass questions of identity, communication, belonging, and cultural negotiation. Contemporary migration is increasingly understood not merely as the movement of people across national borders but as a multidimensional social process through which individuals continuously negotiate relationships with both their societies of origin and their host communities. As international migration has expanded in scale and complexity, scholarly attention has increasingly focused on the cultural, psychological, and communicative dimensions of migrant experiences (United Nations, 2024).

Within this broader body of scholarship, identity formation has emerged as one of the principal concerns of migration studies. Rather than conceptualizing identity as fixed or predetermined, contemporary scholars regard identity as fluid, relational, and continuously reconstructed through social interaction, cultural experience, and transnational engagement (Hall, 1990). Migrants frequently renegotiate their sense of self while adapting to unfamiliar linguistic, cultural, and institutional environments. This process reflects an ongoing effort to reconcile continuity with change, preserve cultural heritage while adapting to new social realities, and establish a meaningful sense of belonging within host societies.

These theoretical developments provide an important foundation for understanding migration beyond physical mobility. They shift attention towards the lived experiences of migrants, emphasising how communicative dimensions of belonging intersect throughout the settlement process. The following discussion examines key theoretical perspectives that have shaped contemporary understandings of hybridity, transnationalism, multiculturalism, and identity formation within migrant communities.

The notion of hybridity becomes particularly relevant within these migratory experiences. Bhabha (1994) argues that migrants frequently inhabit a “third space” situated between homeland and host society, where identities are reconstructed through processes of adaptation, negotiation, and cultural interaction. Within this intermediary space, migrants often develop hybrid identities that are neither entirely rooted in their place of origin nor fully assimilated into the host culture. Such identities remain fluid, contested, and continuously evolving. Migrants therefore exist within a state of diasporic liminality characterized by simultaneous attachment and displacement, belonging and estrangement.

This liminal condition is particularly visible among transnational communities that maintain social, cultural,

emotional, and political connections with their countries of origin while establishing affiliations within host societies (Vertovec, 2009). Migrants often carry with them memories, cultural practices, languages, cuisines, attire, festivals, and religious traditions that become symbolic expressions of identity and belonging. These cultural markers function as communicative extensions of migrant identity, enabling individuals to preserve continuity amidst displacement while also negotiating recognition within multicultural societies. These migration patterns have further intensified discussions surrounding multiculturalism, integration, identity, and belonging within Canadian society.

2.2 Communication and Voice in Migration

Communication occupies a foundational role within migrant experiences because it mediates social interaction, cultural participation, and symbolic belonging. Language is often the first site through which migrants encounter inclusion or exclusion within host societies. Proficiency in dominant languages frequently determines access to education, employment, healthcare, legal systems, and everyday social participation (Piller, 2017). Yet communication extends beyond linguistic competence alone. Accent, style of expression, non-verbal communication, and cultural codes also influence how migrants are perceived and positioned within social hierarchies.

Couldry (2010) conceptualizes voice as more than the capacity to speak; it involves the recognition that one's perspective matters within broader social structures. In migration contexts, migrants may possess communicative abilities while remaining socially unheard due to institutional barriers, racial prejudice, or dominant cultural narratives. Voice therefore becomes deeply tied to visibility, legitimacy, and participation within public life.

Communication also functions as a mechanism through which belonging is negotiated. Everyday interactions in workplaces, educational institutions, neighbourhoods, and public spaces shape migrants' perceptions of acceptance, recognition, and social inclusion (Georgiou, 2006). Positive communicative encounters can foster trust, intercultural understanding, and a stronger sense of belonging, whereas experiences of misunderstanding, stereotyping, or social exclusion may reinforce feelings of alienation and marginalisation. These everyday communicative experiences significantly influence how migrants perceive their place within the host society and negotiate their identities over time.

The question of voice becomes especially important within multicultural democracies that publicly celebrate diversity. Although migrants are frequently encouraged

to participate in multicultural discourse, their narratives are often filtered through dominant institutional and media frameworks (Couldry, 2010). Certain migrant voices become visible only when they align with state narratives of successful integration, diversity, or resilience, while experiences of discrimination, exclusion, or marginalization may remain underrepresented. Consequently, communication cannot be separated from broader structures of power and representation.

2.3 Politics of Belonging

The concept of belonging has emerged as a central concern within migration and cultural studies because it captures the emotional, social, and political dimensions of inclusion within communities and nations. Belonging extends beyond legal citizenship or residency status; it refers to the feeling of being accepted, recognized, and socially connected within a particular social environment. For migrants, belonging is often uncertain and continuously negotiated through everyday experiences, relationships, and institutional encounters.

Yuval-Davis (2006) distinguishes between belonging as an emotional attachment and the "politics of belonging" as the socio-political processes that determine who is included or excluded within collective identities. These politics operate through boundaries constructed around race, ethnicity, religion, language, culture, and national identity. Migrants frequently encounter situations where formal inclusion coexists with symbolic exclusion, producing feelings of conditional acceptance or partial belonging.

In multicultural societies such as Canada, belonging is shaped by both official diversity policies and everyday social interactions. Canadian multiculturalism has often been praised for encouraging cultural pluralism, inclusion, and peaceful coexistence among diverse communities (Kymlicka, 2012). Nevertheless, scholars have observed that policies promoting multiculturalism do not always eliminate deeper forms of social inequality. While cultural diversity is publicly recognized and celebrated, migrants may continue to encounter barriers associated with racialization, stereotyping, unequal recognition, or limited social inclusion (Bannerji, 2000). Consequently, legal citizenship or residency does not necessarily translate into a strong sense of social belonging, as migrants may continue to negotiate acceptance and recognition within everyday institutional and interpersonal contexts.

Belonging is also deeply connected to space and visibility. Public spaces, workplaces, educational institutions, and media representations influence whether migrants feel socially acknowledged or marginalized (Ahmed et al., 2003). Migrants who visibly

differ from dominant cultural norms through language, dress, religion, or ethnicity may experience heightened scrutiny and symbolic exclusion. The politics of belonging therefore operates not only through formal institutions but also through everyday practices and interpersonal interactions that define who is perceived as “inside” or “outside” the national community.

The emotional dimensions of belonging are particularly significant. Feelings of loneliness, isolation, nostalgia, and displacement frequently accompany migration experiences. Migrants may simultaneously experience attachment to homeland memories and uncertainty within host societies, creating complex emotional geographies of belonging and non-belonging. Such tensions often persist across generations, influencing identity formation and community relations within diasporic contexts.

2.4 Gendered Dimensions of Migration and Communication

Migration experiences are not uniform; they are shaped by intersecting dimensions of gender, ethnicity, class, religion, and culture. Feminist scholars have emphasized that migration studies historically marginalized women’s experiences by treating migration as predominantly male-centred or economically driven. Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that women migrants encounter distinct challenges and forms of negotiation within host societies.

The concept of intersectionality developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) provides an important framework for understanding how multiple systems of inequality intersect within migrant women’s lives. Migrant women may experience marginalization simultaneously through gendered expectations, racialization, language barriers, religious identity, and cultural stereotypes. These intersecting pressures significantly shape communicative experiences and opportunities for participation.

Communication plays a particularly important role in women’s negotiations of identity and belonging. Many migrant women assume responsibilities related to family adaptation, childcare, cultural preservation, and emotional labour within transnational households (Parreñas, 2001). At the same time, they may encounter restrictions within public spaces due to linguistic barriers, patriarchal norms, or institutional discrimination. Their voices are therefore often mediated through both external societal structures and internal community expectations. Consequently, communication becomes a site where women migrants continuously negotiate visibility, self-representation, and social legitimacy.

The Canadian context offers important insights into these gendered realities. Women migrants in Canada contribute significantly to the nation’s multicultural landscape while simultaneously navigating complex experiences of cultural adaptation and belonging. Studies indicate that racialized migrant women often encounter communicative exclusion within workplaces, institutions, and public discourse despite multicultural commitments to inclusion (Ng & Gagnon, 2020). Their experiences demonstrate that belonging is shaped not only by policy frameworks but also by everyday communicative practices that influence recognition and participation.

2.5 Literature Gaps and Conceptual Direction of the Study

Although migration scholarship has expanded significantly across disciplines, several important gaps remain within existing literature. First, communication is frequently treated as a secondary or instrumental dimension of migration rather than as a central framework through which identity and belonging are negotiated. Many studies focus primarily on policy, settlement, demographics, or adaptation while overlooking the symbolic and relational dimensions of communicative experience.

Second, the concept of migrant “voice” remains under-theorized within migration studies. Existing discussions often invoke voice metaphorically without sufficiently examining how structures of power influence whose voices are recognized, amplified, or silenced within multicultural societies. Communication is therefore not neutral but embedded within broader systems of representation and social hierarchy.

Third, there remains limited interdisciplinary integration between migration studies, communication theory, cultural studies, and gender studies. Questions surrounding identity, belonging, and representation are often examined separately despite their interconnected nature within migrant experiences. This fragmentation limits broader theoretical understanding of how migrants negotiate everyday realities across multiple dimensions simultaneously.

Finally, while Canadian multiculturalism has been widely studied, there remains scope for deeper exploration of how migrants experience communicative belonging within everyday social contexts. Official narratives of diversity may not fully capture the emotional and symbolic complexities of migrant life, particularly among racialized and gendered communities.

This study responds to these gaps by conceptualizing migration through the interconnected lenses of

communication, identity, voice, and belonging. Through an interdisciplinary and interpretive framework, the paper seeks to develop a broader understanding of how migrants negotiate social visibility and recognition within multicultural societies, with particular emphasis on the Canadian context.

3. Methodology (Conceptual and Exploratory Qualitative Approach)

3.1 Research Design and Orientation

This study adopts a conceptual and exploratory qualitative research design to examine the interconnected relationship between communication, identity, voice, and belonging within migration experiences, particularly in the multicultural context of Canada. The research is interdisciplinary in orientation and combines theoretical synthesis with an exploratory questionnaire framework designed to contextualize and operationalize key themes emerging from migration and communication scholarship.

The present study therefore does not attempt to establish universal causal claims regarding migration experiences. Rather, it seeks to develop a theoretically grounded understanding of how communication mediates migrant identity formation and the politics of belonging. In migration studies, conceptual inquiry is especially relevant because migrant experiences are shaped by fluid social realities, emotional negotiations, cultural transitions, and symbolic forms of inclusion and exclusion that often transcend rigid empirical categorization (Castles et al., 2014). In addition to conceptual analysis, the study incorporates an exploratory qualitative questionnaire instrument intended to capture migrants' perceptions relating to communication, settlement, identity, belonging, adaptation, discrimination, and social participation. The inclusion of the questionnaire strengthens the applied relevance of the study by demonstrating how the conceptual framework may be extended into future empirical inquiry.

3.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that integrates scholarship from migration studies, communication studies, cultural studies, sociology, and gender studies to examine how migrants negotiate communicative negotiation of identity within multicultural societies. Rather than adopting a single theoretical perspective, the study draws upon complementary approaches to understand migration as a dynamic process of social interaction, cultural negotiation, and identity formation.

The conceptual framework is informed by scholarship on hybridity, identity negotiation,

transnationalism, multiculturalism, migrant voice, and social recognition. Together, these perspectives provide the analytical foundation for interpreting the exploratory questionnaire findings and for developing the proposed Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework, which constitutes the principal theoretical contribution of this study.

3.3 Source Selection and Literature Scope

This study adopts a conceptual study supported by exploratory questionnaire data which is based primarily on interdisciplinary secondary sources selected for their relevance, scholarly credibility, and contribution to understanding communicative practices, identity formation and social belonging within migration contexts. The literature reviewed includes peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, edited volumes, and selected policy and migration reports from recognised academic and international organisations.

The review draws upon scholarship from migration studies, communication studies, sociology, cultural studies, diaspora studies, gender studies, and Canadian immigration research. Particular attention was given to literature addressing identity formation, transnationalism, multiculturalism, communicative inclusion and exclusion, migrant voice, gendered migration, and social belonging, as these themes directly inform the conceptual development of the proposed Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework.

The review also incorporates selected interdisciplinary scholarship published in the [Horizon Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research](#) (Horizon JHSSR), particularly studies addressing language, culture, communication, migration, and social inclusion, where these contributed directly to the conceptual development of the study.

3.4 Exploratory Questionnaire Design

To complement the conceptual analysis, an exploratory questionnaire administered to 52 immigrants residing in Canada. The questionnaire was designed to obtain preliminary insights into participants' perceptions and lived experiences relating to communication, identity, settlement, and belonging within the Canadian multicultural context. Rather than serving as a statistically representative survey, the instrument was intended to generate exploratory evidence that would enrich the study's conceptual discussion.

The questionnaire comprised fifteen structured questions written in clear and accessible language to accommodate respondents from diverse linguistic, educational, and cultural backgrounds. Most questions were close-ended with selected multiple-response

options, enabling participants to respond easily while ensuring consistency in data collection.

The questionnaire explored seven broad thematic areas:

1. Demographic background and migration status;
2. Settlement experiences and duration of residence;
3. Identity and emotional attachment to the country of origin;
4. Communication, language use, and cultural adaptation;
5. Social integration and sense of belonging;
6. Workplace experiences, discrimination, and perceptions of safety; and
7. Future migration intentions and perspectives on permanent settlement.

The design of the questionnaire was informed by interdisciplinary scholarship on migration, intercultural communication, identity negotiation, social integration, belonging, and transnationalism. Particular attention was given to developing questions that reflected the study's central analytical themes while remaining sufficiently broad to capture diverse migrant experiences.

The questionnaire was distributed electronically using a convenience sampling approach, and responses were collected over a one-week period. Of the sixty questionnaires distributed, fifty-two complete responses were received and included in the analysis. The questionnaire findings do not seek to establish statistically generalizable conclusions; rather, they provide exploratory empirical insights that complement the theoretical framework and illustrate how communicative dimensions of belonging are experienced by migrants within contemporary Canadian society. These findings subsequently inform the development of the proposed Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework presented in this study.

3.5 Analytical Approach

The study adopts an interpretive thematic approach to analyse both the interdisciplinary literature and the exploratory questionnaire responses. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses or conducting statistical analyses, the study seeks to identify recurring patterns that explain how communication influences migrants' experiences of identity formation, social integration, and belonging within the Canadian multicultural context.

The analysis involved a systematic synthesis of the selected literature alongside the questionnaire findings obtained from 52 respondents. The literature provided

the theoretical foundation for understanding migration as a communicative and identity-based process, while the questionnaire responses offered exploratory insights into how these concepts are experienced in everyday life. Themes emerging from both sources were compared and integrated to identify areas of convergence and divergence.

Particular attention was given to issues relating to communication, identity negotiation, language adaptation, multicultural belonging, gendered experiences, and migrant voice. These interconnected themes informed both the interpretation of the questionnaire findings and the development of the proposed Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework.

Throughout the analysis, migrant experiences were understood as diverse and context-dependent rather than uniform or universally shared. Factors such as language, ethnicity, gender, migration pathway, and length of residence were recognised as influencing participants' perceptions of communication, identity, and belonging. Accordingly, the study adopts an interpretive perspective that emphasises complexity, contextual variation, and the dynamic nature of migrant experiences within multicultural societies.

3.6 Rationale for the Methodological Approach

The methodological approach adopted in this study is appropriate because migration, identity, and belonging are complex social phenomena that cannot be understood solely through demographic indicators or policy analyses. Migrants' experiences are shaped by communication, cultural negotiation, social interaction, and personal perceptions, all of which require an interpretive and interdisciplinary approach capable of capturing the complexities of lived experience.

While existing migration scholarship has made significant contributions to understanding migration patterns, integration, and multicultural policy, communication itself has often remained comparatively under-theorised as a central process through which migrants negotiate identity, recognition, and belonging (Couldry, 2010). This study tries to address that gap by positioning communication as the principal analytical lens through which migrant experiences are examined.

The integration of conceptual analysis with exploratory questionnaire findings enables the study to connect theoretical perspectives with participants' lived experiences. Although the questionnaire findings are exploratory rather than statistically generalisable, they provide valuable empirical support for the conceptual arguments developed throughout the paper. This integrated methodological approach ultimately underpins

the development of the proposed Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework, which represents the study’s principal theoretical contribution to contemporary migration and communication scholarship.

4. Findings & Discussion (Core Theoretical Contribution)

The findings presented in this section integrate insights from the exploratory questionnaire with the conceptual and interdisciplinary framework developed throughout this study. While the questionnaire was not intended to produce statistically generalizable results, it provides valuable evidence of how immigrants experience communication, identity formation, and belonging within the Canadian multicultural context. Fifty-two respondents representing Canadian citizens, permanent residents, work permit holders, and international students participated in the survey over a one-week period. This diversity of immigration status enabled the study to examine migration as a continuum rather than as a singular experience, recognizing that perceptions of belonging and identity evolve across different stages of settlement.

The discussion that follows moves beyond a descriptive presentation of survey responses. Instead, it interprets the findings through the broader perspectives of migration studies, communication theory, cultural studies, and diaspora scholarship. The analysis demonstrates that migrants’ experiences cannot be understood solely through legal status, employment, or duration of residence. Rather, communication emerges as the central process through which migrants negotiate identity, establish social relationships, experience recognition or exclusion, and gradually cultivate a sense of belonging within Canadian society. The six thematic dimensions discussed below collectively contribute to the Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework proposed in this study.

4.1 Communication as the Foundation of Settlement

Migration is frequently examined through economic, demographic, or policy-oriented perspectives; however, the findings of the present study indicate that communication constitutes one of the earliest and most influential dimensions of the settlement process. Beyond facilitating everyday interactions, communication enables immigrants to navigate unfamiliar institutional systems, establish interpersonal relationships, access employment opportunities, and participate meaningfully within the social fabric of the host society. Consequently, communication should not be understood merely as the

exchange of information but as a social process through which migrants negotiate identity, recognition, and belonging.

The exploratory questionnaire findings strongly support this proposition. An overwhelming majority of respondents (94.2%) reported that they were able to communicate effectively in English after settling in Canada, while a further 5.8% indicated moderate communicative ability. These findings suggest that linguistic competence is generally not perceived as a significant barrier among the respondents. Nevertheless, language proficiency alone does not guarantee successful settlement. Several respondents acknowledged that adapting to Canadian communicative norms, workplace expectations, interpersonal interactions, and culturally embedded patterns of expression required continuous learning and adjustment. Settlement therefore extends beyond acquiring linguistic skills; it involves developing communicative competence within the broader social and cultural environment.

Communication also emerged as a critical mechanism through which respondents established trust, expanded social networks, and accessed community support. Many participants indicated that interactions with neighbours, colleagues, educational institutions, community organizations, and multicultural associations contributed significantly to their sense of inclusion. These communicative encounters often reduced uncertainty associated with migration while simultaneously

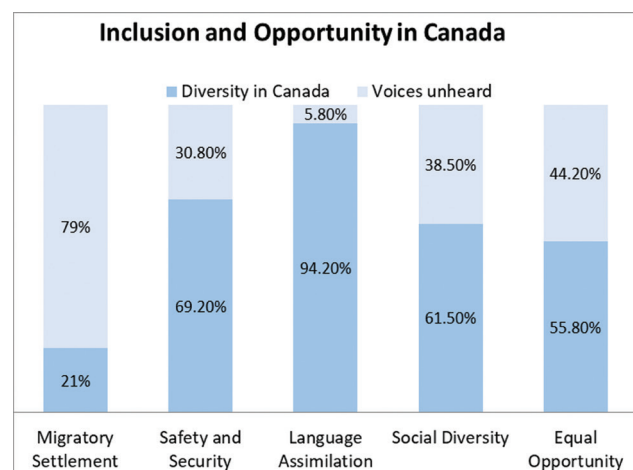


Figure 1. Summary of Exploratory Questionnaire Findings on Communication, Settlement, and Belonging among Immigrants in Canada

Note. The figure summarizes responses from 52 participants comprising Canadian citizens, permanent residents, work permit holders, and international students. Percentages represent descriptive findings from the exploratory questionnaire administered by the authors in 2026. The survey was designed to explore participants’ experiences of communication, identity, and belonging within the Canadian multicultural context.

strengthening confidence in navigating Canadian society. Collectively, these findings suggest that communication facilitates access to social networks, information, and opportunities that support migrants' long-term integration and sense of belonging within the host society (Couldry, 2010; Georgiou, 2006).

At the same time, the findings reveal that communication is not always accompanied by social recognition. Although respondents generally reported confidence in using English, a notable proportion continued to experience moments of exclusion, cultural misunderstanding, or unequal treatment in professional and social settings. These experiences suggest that communicative ability and social acceptance are related but distinct dimensions of settlement. Speaking the dominant language does not necessarily eliminate implicit bias, stereotyping, or barriers to full participation within the host society. This distinction reinforces the argument advanced throughout this article that belonging is negotiated through ongoing processes of recognition rather than through communication alone.

These findings resonate with Hall's (1990) understanding of identity as a process of continual becoming rather than a fixed state and support Couldry's (2010) argument that voice acquires significance only when it is acknowledged within wider social structures. Communication therefore operates as more than an individual skill; it represents the principal mechanism through which migrants construct identities, establish relationships, negotiate cultural differences, and gradually cultivate a sense of belonging. The findings presented here provide the first empirical foundation for the Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework proposed later in this study, illustrating that communication is not simply the starting point of settlement but the thread that connects migration, identity formation, and social participation throughout the migrant journey.

4.2 Identity Negotiation: Between Continuity and Transformation

Migration is not merely a geographical movement from one nation to another; it is also a continuous process of identity reconstruction. The findings of the present study suggest that identity is neither abandoned upon migration nor preserved in an unchanged form. Rather, migrants continuously negotiate between the cultural values, traditions, languages, and memories of their countries of origin and the expectations, practices, and social norms of the host society. Identity therefore emerges as a dynamic process of adaptation, negotiation, and continuity rather than a fixed or singular construct.

The exploratory questionnaire demonstrates that respondents generally regarded Canada as a welcoming and culturally diverse society. Nevertheless, many participants acknowledged that adjusting to everyday social interactions, workplace cultures, educational environments, and community expectations required ongoing personal transformation. These adjustments were not interpreted as a rejection of their original identities but as a gradual expansion of self-understanding. Many respondents continued to celebrate their cultural traditions, maintain family connections with their countries of origin, and participate in ethnic communities while simultaneously embracing aspects of Canadian civic life. Such experiences illustrate that migration often produces multiple and overlapping identities rather than replacing one identity with another.

These findings reinforce the notion that identity is continually shaped through communication and social interaction. Everyday conversations with colleagues, neighbours, educators, and community members become important sites where migrants negotiate acceptance, recognition, and cultural understanding. Communication therefore serves not only as a practical tool for integration but also as the medium through which identities are affirmed, challenged, and reconstructed. Hall (1990) argues that cultural identity should be understood as a process of "becoming" rather than simply "being," a perspective that resonates strongly with the experiences reported by participants in this study. Similarly, Bhabha (1994) suggests that migrants frequently occupy spaces where cultural meanings are negotiated rather than fixed, allowing new forms of identity to emerge through intercultural encounters.

The Canadian multicultural context further illustrates this process of negotiation. Although multiculturalism officially recognizes cultural diversity, migrants continue to navigate subtle expectations regarding language use, professional behaviour, social etiquette, and cultural participation. Respondents generally expressed appreciation for Canada's commitment to diversity while also acknowledging occasional experiences of stereotyping, cultural misunderstanding, or the need to demonstrate their competence more visibly than native-born Canadians. These findings indicate that identity negotiation is influenced not only by migrants' own choices but also by the extent to which receiving societies recognize and validate cultural difference.

An important finding emerging from the questionnaire is that emotional attachment to one's homeland remains remarkably resilient even after successful settlement. Many respondents described maintaining close relationships with family members

abroad, celebrating traditional festivals, preparing familiar cuisines, and participating in transnational cultural or religious communities. Rather than hindering integration, these practices frequently provided emotional stability and strengthened migrants' confidence in engaging with Canadian society. Identity should therefore be understood as transnational rather than territorially confined, allowing migrants to sustain meaningful connections across multiple cultural spaces simultaneously (Vertovec, 2009).

The findings also reveal that identity negotiation is experienced differently across categories of migrants. International students often viewed identity formation as exploratory and transitional, whereas permanent residents and citizens more frequently described identity as cumulative, integrating elements from both their countries of origin and Canadian society. Work permit holders frequently expressed aspirations for greater permanence, suggesting that legal status itself may influence perceptions of belonging and self-identification. These differences reinforce the understanding that identity evolves alongside migrants' settlement trajectories and is shaped by both institutional circumstances and personal experiences.

Collectively, these findings suggest that identity negotiation represents a continuous dialogue between continuity and transformation. Migrants neither relinquish their past nor fully assimilate into entirely new identities. Instead, they construct flexible and multilayered identities through ongoing communication, cultural participation, and social recognition. This process forms the second pillar of the proposed Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework, demonstrating that identity functions as the critical bridge between communicative interaction and the development of an enduring sense of belonging within multicultural societies.

4.3 Language and Social Integration

Language occupies a central position within migration experiences because it mediates communication, facilitates access to institutions, and enables participation in the social life of the host society. Nevertheless, the findings of the present study suggest that language proficiency should not be viewed as the sole determinant of successful integration. Rather, language functions as an entry point into broader processes of social interaction, cultural adaptation, and identity negotiation. The ability to communicate effectively may facilitate access to opportunities, but meaningful social integration ultimately depends upon recognition, participation, and reciprocal acceptance within the receiving society.

The exploratory questionnaire demonstrates that respondents generally possessed a high level of confidence in their English-language communication. The findings reflect Canada's multilingual and multicultural environment, where linguistic competence often constitutes an essential prerequisite for employment, education, and civic participation. However, respondents also emphasized that effective communication extended beyond grammatical proficiency or vocabulary. Successful integration required understanding cultural nuances, workplace etiquette, interpersonal expectations, humour, non-verbal communication, and the implicit social norms that shape everyday interactions.

The questionnaire findings indicate that language functions as more than a means of communication; it also serves as a medium through which migrants establish relationships, negotiate cultural expectations, and develop a sense of belonging within Canadian society. Participants' responses suggest that successful integration depends not only on linguistic proficiency but also on confidence in navigating everyday communicative situations across culturally diverse social and institutional settings. These observations reinforce the importance of viewing language as a social practice that facilitates inclusion, participation, and identity formation within multicultural communities (Piller, 2017).

The questionnaire responses further indicate that language proficiency alone does not eliminate experiences of exclusion or unequal treatment. Several respondents acknowledged that despite communicating fluently in English, they occasionally encountered assumptions regarding their competence, accents, cultural backgrounds, or professional capabilities. Such experiences suggest that communication is interpreted through broader social perceptions, where visible ethnicity, cultural identity, and migration status may continue to influence interpersonal interactions. Consequently, linguistic competence should be regarded as necessary but insufficient for achieving full social integration.

An equally significant finding concerns the preservation of heritage languages. Many respondents reported actively maintaining communication in their native languages within family settings, religious institutions, and ethnic community organizations. Rather than hindering integration, bilingualism or multilingualism frequently strengthened cultural continuity, reinforced intergenerational relationships, and provided emotional support throughout the settlement process. These observations support contemporary perspectives on transnationalism, which recognize migrants as individuals capable of sustaining meaningful linguistic and cultural

connections across national borders while simultaneously participating in the civic life of the receiving society (Vertovec, 2009).

The Canadian model of multiculturalism provides an important context for understanding these experiences. Unlike assimilationist approaches that implicitly encourage linguistic and cultural conformity, Canada's multicultural framework formally recognizes cultural diversity while promoting one of the country's official languages as the principal medium of public participation. Respondents generally appreciated this balance, describing Canada as a society in which cultural identities could be maintained alongside broader civic integration. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that genuine inclusion depends not only on migrants' willingness to communicate but also on the willingness of institutions and communities to recognize linguistic diversity as an asset rather than as a marker of difference.

Taken together, these findings suggest that language should be understood as a bridge rather than a destination. It enables communication, facilitates identity negotiation, and opens pathways toward participation; however, it does not automatically produce belonging. Social integration emerges when communicative competence is accompanied by mutual recognition, cultural respect, and opportunities for meaningful engagement within the host society. This insight strengthens the proposed Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework by demonstrating that language functions as the principal vehicle through which communication is enacted, yet its transformative potential depends upon reciprocal processes of inclusion and recognition.

4.4 Multiculturalism and Belonging

Belonging represents one of the most complex and deeply personal dimensions of migration. While settlement may be measured through employment, education, legal status, or length of residence, belonging reflects the extent to which migrants perceive themselves as accepted, recognized, and valued within the social fabric of the host society. The findings of the present study indicate that belonging is not an automatic outcome of migration nor an inevitable consequence of successful settlement. Rather, it emerges gradually through continuous interaction between migrants and the communities in which they live, work, and participate.

The exploratory questionnaire demonstrates that respondents generally viewed Canada as a safe, diverse, and welcoming country that offers substantial opportunities for personal and professional development. Many participants expressed appreciation for Canada's

multicultural environment, inclusive educational institutions, respect for cultural diversity, and relatively high quality of life. These positive perceptions reinforce Canada's international reputation as a multicultural society that actively encourages immigration while recognizing cultural pluralism as an important national value (Kymlicka, 2010).

At the same time, the findings reveal that multiculturalism should not be equated automatically with belonging. Although respondents valued Canada's multicultural policies, several participants described subtle experiences of exclusion, cultural stereotyping, social isolation, or uncertainty regarding full acceptance within the broader society. Such experiences suggest that formal multicultural policies alone cannot guarantee genuine inclusion. Belonging depends equally upon everyday interactions, interpersonal recognition, and the willingness of receiving communities to embrace cultural diversity beyond institutional rhetoric. As Bannerji (2000) argues, multiculturalism may celebrate diversity at the policy level while structural inequalities and unequal power relations continue to shape the lived experiences of racialized communities.

The questionnaire findings further demonstrate that migrants frequently maintain emotional, cultural, and familial connections with their countries of origin while simultaneously developing attachments to Canada. Rather than representing divided loyalties, these transnational relationships illustrate the increasingly fluid nature of contemporary belonging. Respondents described celebrating traditional festivals, maintaining regular communication with relatives abroad, participating in religious and cultural organizations, and preserving heritage languages alongside active participation in Canadian civic life. Such experiences support contemporary understandings of transnationalism, which view belonging as extending across multiple social, cultural, and geographical spaces rather than being confined to a single nation-state (Vertovec, 2009).

An equally important observation emerging from the study is that belonging develops through recognition. Many respondents indicated that seemingly ordinary experiences—being welcomed by neighbours, feeling respected in the workplace, participating in local community activities, or experiencing cultural acceptance within educational institutions—significantly strengthened their attachment to Canadian society. Conversely, experiences of discrimination, implicit bias, or cultural misunderstanding weakened feelings of inclusion regardless of respondents' legal status or linguistic competence. These findings reinforce Yuval-Davis's (2011)

argument that belonging is simultaneously emotional, social, and political, involving both personal identification and recognition by others.

The Canadian experience therefore illustrates both the strengths and the continuing challenges of multiculturalism. While multicultural policies create important institutional foundations for diversity, the lived experiences of migrants demonstrate that belonging is ultimately negotiated through everyday communication, mutual respect, and reciprocal recognition. The respondents' experiences suggest that successful integration cannot be measured solely through economic participation or legal citizenship but must also consider whether migrants perceive themselves as valued members of their communities. In this respect, belonging becomes less a destination than an evolving social relationship continuously shaped through interaction and participation.

The findings presented in this study therefore support the argument that multiculturalism provides the structural framework within which belonging may develop, but communication remains the mechanism through which belonging is ultimately realized. When migrants are afforded opportunities not only to participate but also to be heard, recognized, and respected, multiculturalism moves beyond policy to become an everyday lived experience. This relationship forms the fourth pillar of the proposed Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework and demonstrates that belonging is neither bestowed by legislation nor achieved solely through adaptation. Rather, it is co-constructed through sustained communication, reciprocal recognition, and meaningful participation within multicultural society.

4.5 Gendered Experiences: Intersectionality, Communication, and Belonging

Although migration involves shared processes of adaptation, settlement, and identity negotiation, these experiences are not uniform across all migrants. Gender constitutes an important dimension through which migration is experienced, influencing access to opportunities, patterns of communication, social participation, and perceptions of belonging. The findings of the present study suggest that while many challenges associated with migration are common to all respondents, gender may shape the ways in which migrants negotiate cultural expectations, social relationships, and community participation within the host society.

The exploratory questionnaire was not designed to compare male and female respondents statistically; therefore, the discussion presented here should be

interpreted within a broader conceptual framework informed by existing scholarship. Nevertheless, several respondents referred to experiences that reflected differing social responsibilities, family expectations, workplace interactions, and community engagement.

Women's migration experiences frequently extend beyond geographical relocation to include the negotiation of multiple and overlapping social expectations. Women often balance professional responsibilities alongside caregiving roles, family obligations, and cultural traditions that may differ significantly between their countries of origin and the host society. Such negotiations frequently require continuous adaptation while maintaining family cohesion and cultural continuity. Consequently, communication assumes particular significance as women navigate educational institutions, workplaces, healthcare systems, schools, community organizations, and transnational family networks. These communicative spaces become important sites where identity, belonging, and social participation are continually negotiated (Mohanty, 2003).

The Canadian multicultural context offers important opportunities for gender equality, educational advancement, and labour force participation. Bannerji (2000) argues that multiculturalism, while promoting cultural diversity, does not necessarily eliminate unequal social relations embedded within institutional and societal structures. Consequently, women may experience multiple forms of marginalization that are not fully captured through analyses focusing exclusively on migration or gender in isolation.

The findings of the present study further suggest that communication plays a particularly significant role in supporting women's settlement experiences. Access to community organizations, educational programmes, healthcare services, cultural associations, and informal social networks frequently contributes to greater confidence, social participation, and emotional well-being. Communication therefore functions not merely as the exchange of information but as a means of developing trust, accessing support, and strengthening resilience throughout the migration journey. These observations reinforce broader understandings of communication as a social resource that facilitates both integration and empowerment.

The discussion also highlights the importance of adopting an intersectional perspective when examining migrant experiences. Rather than viewing gender as an isolated category, the findings support approaches that recognize the interconnected influence of gender, ethnicity, migration status, language, religion, and socioeconomic position in shaping migrants' opportunities

and challenges (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Such perspectives provide a more comprehensive understanding of why experiences of belonging differ even among migrants living within the same multicultural society.

Taken together, these findings suggest that gender should be understood as an important mediating factor within the broader Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework proposed in this study. Communication enables participation, identity negotiation supports adaptation, and belonging develops through recognition; however, each of these processes is influenced by the intersecting realities of gender and other social identities. Recognizing these complexities contributes to a more inclusive understanding of migration and underscores the need for communication-centred settlement policies and community initiatives that acknowledge the diversity of migrants' lived experiences.

4.6 The Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework: An Integrative Conceptual Model

The preceding discussions collectively demonstrate that migration cannot be adequately understood through demographic statistics, immigration policies, or economic participation alone. While these dimensions remain important, the findings of the present study suggest that migration is fundamentally a communicative and relational process through which individuals continuously negotiate identity, establish social relationships, and seek recognition within unfamiliar social environments. Communication, identity, and belonging should therefore not be viewed as separate constructs but as mutually reinforcing processes that collectively shape migrants' lived experiences.

Drawing upon these theoretical and empirical insights, this study proposes the **Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework** as an integrative conceptual model for understanding contemporary migration experiences (see Figure 2). The framework positions communication as the principal enabling mechanism through which migrants interact with institutions, communities, workplaces, and interpersonal networks. These communicative interactions influence the continual negotiation of identity, allowing migrants to reconcile cultural heritage with new social realities while constructing multiple and evolving identities. Identity negotiation, in turn, shapes migrants' perceptions of belonging, influencing whether individuals experience social recognition, acceptance, participation, and emotional attachment within the host society.

Unlike linear models of immigrant adaptation that imply a gradual movement toward complete assimilation, the proposed framework conceptualizes migration as a

dynamic and iterative process. Communication influences identity, identity reshapes communication, and both continuously interact with experiences of belonging. Belonging itself is similarly dynamic, fluctuating across different social contexts, institutional encounters, family relationships, and transnational connections. Migrants therefore do not simply progress from outsider to insider status; rather, they continually negotiate multiple forms of belonging throughout different stages of settlement and across diverse social spaces. This perspective resonates with Hall's (1990) understanding of identity as an ongoing process of becoming, Bhabha's (1994) emphasis on negotiated cultural spaces, and Yuval-Davis's (2011) conception of belonging as both personal and political.

An equally significant contribution of the Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework lies in its interdisciplinary orientation. Existing migration scholarship has frequently examined communication, identity, multiculturalism, gender, settlement, and transnationalism as distinct fields of inquiry. The present framework brings these perspectives together within a single conceptual structure, demonstrating that meaningful settlement cannot be understood without recognising the reciprocal relationships among communicative practices, identity formation, and social recognition. By integrating insights from migration studies, communication studies, sociology, cultural studies, and gender studies, the framework offers a holistic lens through which migrants' lived experiences may be interpreted.

The framework also accommodates the diversity of contemporary migration pathways. The questionnaire findings illustrate that Canadian citizens, permanent residents, work permit holders, and international students each negotiate communication, identity, and belonging in distinct yet interconnected ways. Legal status, duration of residence, cultural background, gender, language, and professional aspirations influence these experiences without fundamentally altering the underlying communicative processes identified in this study. Consequently, the Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework possesses analytical flexibility that extends beyond the Canadian context and may be applied comparatively across multicultural societies characterised by increasing mobility, transnationalism, and cultural diversity.

From a practical perspective, the framework carries important implications for migration policy, settlement services, educational institutions, workplaces, and community organisations. Programmes designed to support immigrants should extend beyond language acquisition and employment assistance to include

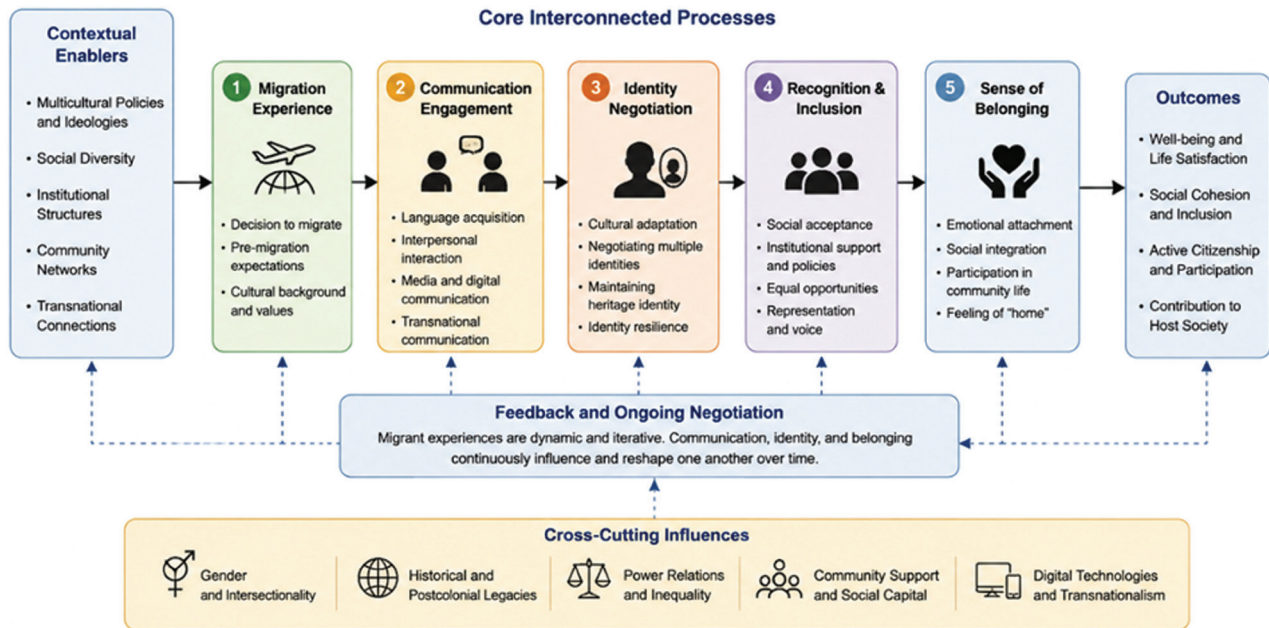


Figure 2. Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework for Understanding Migrant Experiences in Multicultural Societies

Note. The Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework is proposed by the authors as an integrative conceptual synthesis developed from interdisciplinary scholarship and the exploratory questionnaire findings. Communication functions as the enabling process through which migrants negotiate identity, establish social relationships, and cultivate belonging. The process is dynamic, reciprocal, and continuously shaped by institutional contexts, cultural diversity, social participation, intersectionality, and transnational connections.

opportunities for intercultural dialogue, community engagement, mentorship, social participation, and institutional recognition. Policies that promote communicative inclusion are more likely to strengthen migrants' long-term sense of belonging than those focusing exclusively on economic integration. The findings therefore suggest that communication should be recognised not merely as an instrument of settlement but as a foundational element of social inclusion and democratic participation (Couldry, 2010).

Ultimately, the Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework constitutes the principal theoretical contribution of this study. It provides a coherent conceptual model that explains how migrants negotiate voice, identity, and recognition throughout the settlement process while offering researchers an interdisciplinary framework for future investigation. By positioning communication at the centre of migration experiences, the framework shifts scholarly attention from migration as physical mobility to migration as an ongoing social, cultural, and communicative process. In doing so, it contributes to contemporary debates concerning multiculturalism, citizenship, identity, and the politics of belonging within increasingly interconnected societies.

Integrative Theoretical Synthesis

The six thematic discussions presented above collectively demonstrate that migration is best understood not as a linear process of settlement but as a

dynamic and iterative process of communication, identity negotiation, social integration, and belonging. The exploratory questionnaire findings, interpreted alongside the interdisciplinary literature, consistently reveal that migrants negotiate multiple and evolving identities while interacting with institutional structures, community networks, workplaces, educational settings, and broader cultural expectations within Canadian society.

Taken together, the findings indicate that communication functions as the foundational mechanism through which migrants negotiate identity and cultivate belonging. Identity is continually reconstructed through everyday interactions, while belonging emerges gradually through recognition, participation, and sustained engagement rather than through legal status or physical relocation alone. Building upon this theoretical synthesis, the present study proposes the **Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework for Migrant Voice** (Figure 2) as an integrative conceptual model illustrating the interconnected processes through which migrants communicate, negotiate identity, experience recognition, and ultimately develop a sense of belonging within multicultural societies.

5. Conclusion and Future Directions

5.1 Conclusion

Migration has traditionally been examined through demographic trends, labour mobility, immigration policy, and economic integration. While these perspectives

remain indispensable, they do not fully capture the lived realities of migrants negotiating new social, cultural, and communicative environments. This study has argued that migration should also be understood as a continuous process of communication, identity negotiation, and belonging, in which migrants actively construct, reconstruct, and negotiate their place within multicultural societies. Rather than viewing settlement as the final stage of migration, the study demonstrates that belonging remains an evolving process shaped through everyday interactions, cultural participation, institutional recognition, and social acceptance.

Adopting a conceptual and interdisciplinary approach, this study synthesized scholarship from migration studies, communication studies, cultural theory, sociology, and gender studies to develop a broader understanding of migrant voice as a dynamic and contested phenomenon. Particular attention was devoted to the Canadian experience because of Canada's long-standing commitment to multiculturalism and its continuing reliance on immigration as a defining feature of national development. The exploratory questionnaire administered among immigrants residing in Canada further complemented the conceptual discussions by providing insights into how migrants perceive communication, identity, and belonging throughout different stages of settlement.

The findings demonstrate that communication extends beyond language proficiency to encompass participation in workplaces, educational institutions, neighbourhoods, community organisations, and wider social networks. Effective communication facilitates access to opportunities and resources; however, it does not automatically produce belonging. Rather, migrants continually negotiate their identities while balancing cultural continuity with adaptation to new social environments. The study further illustrates those multicultural policies, although essential for promoting diversity and inclusion, cannot by themselves guarantee meaningful belonging. Genuine belonging develops when migrants experience recognition, respect, participation, and opportunities to contribute actively to the communities in which they live.

An important contribution of this study lies in highlighting the continuing disparity that may exist between those who are long established within Canadian society and newcomers who continue to negotiate their place within it. Despite Canada's international reputation as one of the world's leading multicultural nations, migrants may continue to experience subtle forms of exclusion, cultural stereotyping and varying degrees of emotional attachment to both their homeland and their adopted country. These experiences reinforce the

understanding that belonging emerges through reciprocal communication and social recognition that validate migrants as valued members of society.

The study also demonstrates that migration experiences are neither homogeneous nor static. Gender, migration status, cultural background, language, ethnicity, and transnational ties intersect to shape how migrants communicate, negotiate identity, and experience belonging. Women, in particular, may encounter multiple and overlapping forms of negotiation. Recognising these intersecting dimensions contributes to a more inclusive understanding of migration and highlights the importance of communication-centred approaches that acknowledge the diversity of migrants' lived experiences.

The principal contribution of this study is the development of the Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework for Migrant Voice, an integrative conceptual model that explains how communicative practices shape identity negotiation, social recognition, and the construction of belonging within multicultural societies. By synthesising interdisciplinary scholarship with exploratory empirical insights, the framework offers a holistic perspective that extends beyond traditional migration models centred primarily on economic adaptation or policy outcomes. It provides researchers with a conceptual lens through which migration may be understood as an ongoing communicative and relational process rather than merely a physical movement across national borders.

Ultimately, the study argues that the politics of belonging begins with the politics of voice. Migration is not solely about crossing geographical borders but about navigating the symbolic, cultural, and social boundaries that shape recognition and inclusion. The question is therefore not simply whether migrants have opportunities to communicate, but whether their voices are genuinely heard, acknowledged, and incorporated into the collective narratives of the societies they now call home. It is through this continuing dialogue between communication, identity, and recognition that belonging is ultimately negotiated and sustained.

5.2 Scope and Limitations

The present study adopts a conceptual and exploratory orientation, examining migration through the interconnected lenses of communication, identity, and belonging while integrating insights from migration studies, communication studies, sociology, cultural studies, and gender studies. Although grounded primarily in interdisciplinary scholarship, the article is complemented by an exploratory questionnaire administered among immigrants residing in Canada. The questionnaire findings enrich the conceptual discussion

by providing contextual illustrations of migrants' lived experiences; however, they are not intended to establish statistically representative conclusions.

Several limitations should therefore be acknowledged. First, the questionnaire involved a relatively modest sample of respondents and should be interpreted as exploratory rather than generalisable to Canada's highly diverse immigrant population. Second, the study focuses primarily on communicative, cultural, and identity-related dimensions of migration and deliberately does not undertake extensive analyses of legal, geopolitical, economic, or immigration policy frameworks. Third, participants represented diverse cultural, linguistic, and migratory backgrounds, limiting comparisons across specific ethnic, national, or linguistic communities.

Furthermore, the questionnaire instrument was designed as an exploratory research tool rather than as a standardised psychometric scale. While it successfully captured broad perceptions regarding communication, identity, and belonging, future studies may strengthen empirical reliability through validated instruments, larger sample sizes, and more extensive comparative analyses.

Despite these limitations, the study makes an important contribution by foregrounding communication as a central analytical category within migration scholarship. By integrating interdisciplinary theory with exploratory migrant experiences, the article advances a conceptual understanding of how communication, identity, and belonging interact to shape migrants' settlement experiences within multicultural societies. The proposed Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework provides a foundation for future empirical investigation and theoretical refinement across different migration contexts.

5.3 Future Research Directions

This study adopts a conceptual study supported by exploratory questionnaire data proposed in this study opens several promising avenues for future research. First, the Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework should be empirically validated through larger quantitative studies involving more diverse immigrant populations across Canada. Comparative investigations involving permanent residents, citizens, temporary foreign workers, refugees, international students, and second-generation immigrants would enable researchers to examine how communication, identity negotiation, and belonging evolve across different migration trajectories.

Second, future scholarship would benefit from comparative international studies examining whether the proposed framework is equally applicable within other multicultural societies such as Australia, New Zealand, the

United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States. Such cross-national comparisons would contribute to a broader understanding of how different immigration policies, multicultural models, and social institutions shape migrants' communicative experiences and perceptions of belonging.

Third, greater attention should be devoted to the rapidly expanding role of digital communication technologies in shaping migrant identities. Social media platforms, online communities, and transnational digital networks increasingly mediate relationships between migrants, their countries of origin, and their host societies, thereby transforming traditional understandings of identity, community, and belonging.

Fourth, future research should continue to examine the intersectional dimensions of migration, particularly the experiences of women and other historically underrepresented groups. Greater emphasis on gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, and socioeconomic status would provide a more nuanced understanding of how different forms of identity intersect to shape communication practices, settlement experiences, and opportunities for social inclusion. Mixed-methods approaches combining surveys, interviews, ethnographic observation, and longitudinal research would be particularly valuable in capturing these complex lived experiences.

Finally, the concept of migrant voice deserves recognition as an independent field of scholarly inquiry. While migration scholarship has extensively explored integration, adaptation, multiculturalism, and citizenship, comparatively less attention has been devoted to understanding whether migrants feel genuinely heard, represented, and recognised within the institutions and communities that shape their everyday lives. Future investigations focusing on communicative participation, institutional recognition, and democratic inclusion may significantly enrich contemporary debates concerning migration, multiculturalism, citizenship, and the politics of belonging.

Taken together, these research directions demonstrate that migration should increasingly be studied not solely as a process of movement or settlement but as a continuing dialogue between communication, identity, and recognition. The Communication–Identity–Belonging (CIB) Framework proposed in this study provides an interdisciplinary foundation upon which future empirical and theoretical scholarship may continue to build.

In an increasingly interconnected world, the future of migration scholarship lies not only in understanding how people move across borders, but also in understanding how their voices move across societies.

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During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies solely for editorial purposes, including language refinement, grammar correction, stylistic improvement, and the enhancement of clarity and coherence. These tools were not used to generate the research ideas, theoretical framework, analysis, interpretation, arguments, or conclusions presented in the manuscript. All intellectual content, conceptual development, methodological decisions, and scholarly interpretations remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

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