

## Expression of Emotions in The Norwegian-American Immigrant Letters, 1838-1848

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### **Abstract**

*Emotions are integral to human mobility. However, research on the expression of emotions in the letters of early immigrants is often neglected. This study on emotional expressions in early Norwegian-American immigrant letters, exchanged between 1838 and 1848, is a case in point. This article explores the dynamics in emotional expressions in the early letters of Norwegian-American immigrants. It shows how immigrants expressed their emotions in the letters addressed to their family members, neighbours and friends. This article also investigates the presence of emotional calls in the immigrant letters, which successfully pulled more people from Norway to America. Unlike many other early immigrant groups, Norwegian immigrants in America were satisfied with their migration experience and expressed more positive emotions in their home-going letters than negative ones. Considering the lack of research on the emotional aspects of migration, this paper recommends conducting more studies on this area.*

**Keywords:** *Emotions; Immigrant letters; Norwegian-American immigrants*

### **Introduction**

Ellev Bjørnsen, an early Norwegian-American immigrant, wrote a letter on 14 May 1848 to inform his sibling about the death of his brother (Ole Bjørnsen) who migrated to America and expected to read his letter to their mother living back in Norway:

You've probably had thousands of thoughts about us before you receive these lines. Yes, dear mother, Torgon and I are quite well. But then you'll ask how things are with Ole and to this, I must answer that I hope he, with the help of God, is in a far better state than we. For all humans, whether strong or weak, are but dust, and what can be of comfort for us on our often miserable wandering but the hope of an eternal and transfigured state after this life. Now, dear brother, you have probably already understood me: hundreds of times I've tried to take my pen and tell you this, but my feelings for our dear mother have each time kept my trembling hand from performing its duty. Oh! God of Heaven! Had I only not asked my brother to come to America! But the Lord is my witness that I meant well and it is my only comfort that no one could be more satisfied with America than he... Do not reproach me that I have not let you have this sad news before now. For, as I have written, it was for mother's sake that I was unable to do it. And please, dear brother, be careful when you tell our mother the contents of this letter. (Øverland, 2012: 94-5).

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Though it has been argued that there was a lack of emotional expression in the early letters (1838 to 1870) of Norwegian-American immigrants, like many other early Norwegian-American immigrants, Ellev expressed emotional attachment to his left-behind family in his letter to home. He shared his sorrowful feelings related to the death of his brother. He tried to console his sibling living in Norway, saying that his brother was satisfied with the migration. He did not forget to write to his sibling so that he could be careful when he would report the news to their mother, which represented the presence of transnational care in the letter. In the whole letter, he expressed sadness, gladness, hope, love, and care.

In the nineteenth century, Norwegian- American immigrants started writing letters to their curious families, friends, relatives, and neighbours back in Norway to inform about their condition in the 'new world'. Soon, these letters became the only reliable source for Norwegian aspirant emigrants to know about the opportunities in America and take a decision to emigrate (Zempel, 1991). Most of the early letters addressed to the immigrants' families were read by their neighbours, extended members of their family, and friends. To meet the wider circulation, some of them were published in newspapers (Øverland, 2012). Most of the earlier letter writers lacked experience in writing because they were originated from rural peasant families. However, their letters became important for maintaining communication and ties.

Transatlantic letters from Norwegian emigrants in America writing home have received substantial attention from social and migration historians. Noteworthy initiatives were taken to compile the letters. Noteworthy initiatives were taken to compile the letters with a view to better understanding motivations behind mass migration. Extensive studies have already been conducted on belongings using the Norwegian-American immigrants' letters (Mathiesen, 2015). Unfortunately, insufficient research has been done on the expression of emotions in their letters. In the introductory chapter of volume one (1838-1870) of *From America to Norway: Norwegian-American Immigrant Letters 1838-1914*, Orm Øverland reported a lack of emotion expression in the early letters. Therefore, the main aim of this paper is to examine Orm Øverland's assumption about the lack of expression of emotions in the letters written by Norwegian-American immigrants during the initial period of emigration (Øverland, 2012).

Nineteen letters written between 1838 and 1848 were selected for this study to understand the extent to which emotions were expressed in the letters written by Norwegian-American immigrants in this period. This would reflect the ways in which individual immigrants expressed emotions in the process of migration. Translations of letters were kept as original. In order to explore the expression of immigrant's emotions, the letters were read and re-read. Then, broader topics related to the expression of emotions emerged. Topics were identified and categorised manually.

The article is divided into four sections: the next section presents a brief review of the migration of Norwegians to America. After that, the theoretical issues related to the expression of emotions in immigrants' letters will be presented, which is followed by a brief discussion on methodology. Then, the analysis and discussion are carried out. The article ends with a concluding remark.



## A brief review of Norwegian migration to America

Norwegian migration to America started in 1825 (Zempel, 1991: ix). Most of the earlier migrants were religious dissidents and migrated to America because of religious and political freedom (Gjerde, 1995: 86). Between 1825 and 1836, Norwegian migration levels to America fluctuated, but after that, it became more constant/regular (Zempel, 1991: ix). According to Østrem, the Norwegian-American migration really started in the years of 1836 and 1837 – some later than the pioneers from 1825 (Østrem, 2014: 9). During the initial phase (1825–1866) of emigration, most of the migrants migrated with family (Zempel, 1991: ix). By the end of the 1860s, more than seventy-seven thousand Norwegians had settled in the United States, mainly in the rural settlements of Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota, though their concentration was also noticed in the cities of New York, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Seattle (Zempel, 1991: ix). These earlier immigrants successfully established a Norwegian-American immigrant community in the new land and attracted their country people to join them. Between the mid-1860s and mid-1920s, over 770,000 Norwegian people migrated to the new land (Lovoll, 1999: 8). During this mass migration period, young, single men and women also participated in the migration process. Most of the Norwegian immigrants were peasants who originated from rural areas. As most of them were dissatisfied with their livelihoods and economic conditions, the access to free land ownership in the ‘new world’ was very appealing to them. But, not all of the newly established Norwegian migrants were engaged in farming, with some becoming businessmen, gold miners, professionals, and politicians. It is reported that of those who emigrated from Norway to America after the 1880s, a quarter of them returned to Norway (Semmingsen, 1978: 120). After the 1920s the flow of mass migration decreased (Zempel, 1991: ix). America was an unvisited place for most Norwegians in the 19th century (Zempel, 1991: ix). They became familiarised with America through the letters exchanged by the early immigrants. Historians agreed that these letters were the most reliable source of information about land and others in the ‘new world’ and helped Norwegians to decide to emigrate.

### Expression of emotions in migrant’s letters: Theoretical issues

Emotions are an important part of the everyday life of migrants. Migrants’ emotions are often defined as their interactions and memories with human and ‘non-human phenomena’ back home and in the destination country (Svašek, 2010: 686). Emotions are socially constructed. They are shaped by, and they also shape the events, memories, and environments (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015). However, sufficient studies have not been conducted on the emotional aspects of migrants (Mai & King, 2009; Ryan, 2008). Existing research shows a few causes of why the emotions of migrants have remained under-researched (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015: 73). First, migration research has been dominated by economic and political aspects and hence the emotional issues of migrants have been overlooked. Second, there is a lack of mutual knowledge sharing between migration studies and emotion studies. Third, researchers have regarded emotions as private matters of migrants and refrained from reporting those (Mai & King, 2009: 297). Last but not least, the issue of emotions has been traditionally neglected in the major disciplines, for example, geography, demography, and sociology from where migration studies have emerged. Recently, nevertheless, it is observed that emotions have become a center-piece in migration studies. Different migration studies journals, for example, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Emotion, Space and Society*, *Journal of Intercultural Studies* and

*Mobilities* have published special issues on the interplay between migration and emotions (Walsh, 2012). Leading researchers have taken initiative to publish books and articles concerning emotional experiences of different migrant groups (Borges et al., 2021; Zotova, 2018; Zulueta, 2016). Scholars also call for an ‘emotional turn’ in migration studies (Mai & King, 2009: 296). It is assumed that more and more research has been conducted on women’s migration and emotional labour, which motivates researchers to include the discussion on emotions.

Two main approaches to migration studies have been used to explain the emotions of migrants: integration and transnationalism. The main assumption of the integration approach to the emotions of migrants is that emotions, as a form of identity and belonging, to the home community will be diminished and shifted to the host-community. However, this ‘over-simplified binary’ belief has largely failed to examine the complexity of emotions related to the process of migrants’ integration (Bocagni & Baldassar, 2015: 76). In contrast, transnationalism acknowledges ‘the co-existence of different, even conflicting emotional orientations as part and parcel of migrants’ emotional experience’ (Bocagni & Baldassar, 2015: 76). Due to the nature of Norwegian-American immigration, transnationalism approach will be used in this research. This research believes that the exchange of letters is an indicator of transnational care, emotional attachment, and belongings.

A growing number of interdisciplinary studies on the links between emotions and movements have been identified. Most of the studies have been conducted in the context of destination country perspective, though a wide range of issues has already been addressed: emotional interaction between immigrants and locals; emotional distress and depression of immigrants; dimensions of emotions in transnational families; ambiguous emotional experiences; the management of migrants’ emotions; how emotions are shaped by the policies of the host country (Borges, 2021; Hall 2010; Hladnik 2021; Kokanovic & Bozic-Vrbancicbm 2015; Ryan, 2008; Skrbiš, 2008). However, insufficient attention has been paid to understanding how migrants express emotions in their own letters. In migration studies, the letters of migrants have received considerable attention. Though most of the studies concentrate on the letters of immigrants in North America, diverse types of issues have been studied using the letters of immigrants, for instance, the impact of modernisation on traditional societies, causes and consequences of mass migration, experiences of migration and adaptation, and livelihoods (Borges & Cancian, 2016). Over time, migration scholars have started to look at the expression of emotions in the letters of migrants (Romero-Trillo & Avila-Ledesma, 2016). It is also getting acknowledged that letters not only exchange information and experiences but also provide a ‘physical space’ where migrants can express the emotions (Romero-Trillo & Avila-Ledesma, 2016: 394). More emphasis has to be given on how the early immigrants express their emotions in their home-going letters, and how they express sadness and happiness in their letters. It is often argued that the early letters were public texts. Public letters were seen as impersonal and less-emotional regardless to whom they were addressed (Øverland 2012: 31). It is reported that early immigrants’ letters were considered as a tool that encouraged further migration. Before the invention of modern communication technology, early migrants used to write letters to cope with unfamiliar situations in the host country.



## Findings

### *Expression of emotions in family letters and non-family letters*

This research included letters written by Norwegian-American immigrants between 1838 and 1848. Orm Øverland wrote in the introductory chapter of volume one (1838-1870) of *From America to Norway: Norwegian-American Immigrant Letters 1838-1914* that all letters were written before 1870 ‘were not private letter but public texts’ (Øverland, 2012: 31). He argued that these letters were ‘read aloud, sent around to other farms, and copied so that others could read them’ (Øverland, 2012: 31). According to him, some of these letters were published in newspapers. For the purpose of this research, these ‘public texts’ under this study were divided into two types: family letters and non-family letters. Family letters (number<sup>3</sup>- 1:1, 1:2, 1:6, 1:7, 1:9, 1:11, 1: 12, 1:14, 1:15, 1:17, 1:18, and 1:19) refers to the letters written by immigrants to their family. These family letters could be read by their extended family members and neighbours. This type of letter might be written collectively by multiple writers. Family letters were not published in newspapers. In contrast, non-family letters (number- 1:3, 1:4, 1:5, 1:8, 1:10, 1:13, and 1:16) were written to friends or general audience to inform the migration situation. Some of the non-family letters were published in newspapers.

This research found that emotions were expressed in both types of letters. But, more emotional expressions were found in family letters than in non-family letters. Immigrants in their family letters to their parents, siblings, and relatives, expressed more emotions. One explanation of the relative absence of emotional expression in non-family letters can be that in these cases writers were concerned about their publication and hence refrained from expressing personal emotions. Another explanation can be that ‘private matters could be omitted’ when these non-family letters were copied and passed to the newspapers or for publication (Øverland, 2012: 32). It is well-known that most of the early Norwegian-American immigrants reported the death news of their family members after migrating to America in their home-going letters. The following extracts from two different letters- one family letter to an immigrant’s family and another non-family letter to immigrant’s friend, illustrates the difference of death-related emotional expression. On 2 September 1845, Ole Herbrandsen Osland, in his letter to a friend, wrote about the death of his two children:

...I must also tell you that my eldest daughter Anne has died. This was a great loss for me and her mother. She died 30 October 1844, after a very short illness. I assume you’ve heard that my son Halsten died in Rochester 3 January 1839. (Øverland, 2012: 66-7).

In contrast, Ellev and Ole Bjørnsen wrote (in 1846) the following letter to console their mother on their sister’s death:

Time is uncertain; this is an old and experienced truth. Who could have known that my good and loving sister Anlaug would end her earthly life so soon? You may already have seen this in halvord Akerhaugen’s letter. I know this causes grief, dear mother, but you must not forget how natural a road this is for us all... She was a model for us...she was always in good health after she came to America...was never homesick. (Øverland, 2012: 76).

<sup>3</sup> Denotes the number of the letter in the volume

Ole Herbrandsen Osland expressed the death news of his two children within four sentences, while Ellev and Ole Bjørnsen wrote a two-page letter full of emotions. This shows the difference in the presence of emotional expressions in family and non-family letters. That does not mean that there was an absence of emotional expression in non-family letters. Expressing emotions in letters was a part of the early Norwegian-American immigrants' coping strategy in the new environment. During illness, depression, and fear of voyage, the immigrants wrote emotional words to their families and friends.

Both in family and non-family letters, immigrants expressed their love and respect to both their fatherland and the new destination. Most of the letters expressed their transnational belongings, though immigrants rarely expressed any intentions to return to Norway. Their letter writings and expression of emotions showed that their belongingness to homeland had not diminished (Bocagni & Baldassar, 2015). On 3 November 1846, Gjermund Gjermundsen Barboe in the letter to a friend expressed love for his fatherland and America:

...I love both America and Norway in different ways. If I could live with as good prospects as here, then I would choose my fatherland, which I will always remember with love and respect as the years of my childhood and youth were spent there so that I often turn in my thoughts to where I know my fatherland lies. And I am no stranger to the hope that I will once again be able to see my fatherland, but time will show whether this will ever happen (Øverland, 2012: 73).

Apart from to whom- family or non-family- those letters were addressed, the presence of emotional expression in the early letters of Norwegian-American immigrants also depended on the educational attainment and economic class of the letter writers. Orm Øverland argued that most of the early letters were written by the peasant class. Therefore, those letters were impersonal, according to him. He also argued that a few letter writers were originated from higher social class who successfully 'gave expression to personal emotions' (Øverland, 2012: 32). As an example, he indicated the letters of Elise Tvede Wærenskjold. One of Elise's letters (number 1:16) was exchanged during the period under this study. It was included in this analysis. However, it was found that Elise's letter was more impersonal than any other early letters; instead of writing Elise's own feelings and belongings, he described how other people were doing in the new land. In some cases, Øverland later acknowledged that there was an expression of emotions in the Norwegian-American immigrants' letters but their presence was occasional /'situational' (Mathiesen, 2015: 19-20). He argued that 'it is wrong to read expressions of nostalgia in immigrant letters as indications of a general longing' (Mathiesen, 2015: 19-20).

To sum up, emotional expressions were more or less noticed in all the 'public texts'; whether the letters were addressed to family or non-family. It seems that their emotions related to migration, adjustment, death, belonging, transnational care, and homesickness were more public rather than individual matters. As Svašek and Skrbiš argued, emotions were expressed in the 'public texts' because emotions were more social and public/environmental construction than 'an interior processes' limited within individuals only (Svašek & Skrbiš, 2007: 368). Moreover, emotional expressions were found in the early letters regardless of the writers' educational attainment and economic class.



### ***Expression of emotions in pro-immigration letters and anti-emigration pamphlets***

As information about the ‘new world’ was scarce until the first half of the nineteenth century, immigrants’ letters were viewed as a reliable source of information. Their letters worked as the ‘catalyst of mass migration’ from Norway to America (Gerber, 2006: 41) This research found that immigrants expressed emotions, obviously along with rational advice, in their letters to attract their left-behind families, friends, relatives and neighbours. For example, Gullik and Ole Gulliksen Dorsett in their letter to family wrote: ‘As we are satisfied here we will advice you, parents and siblings, to come. We are convinced you won’t regret it....’ (Øverland, 2012: 85).

Also, Svein Knudsen Lothe on 10 July 1838 wrote the following lines in the letter to encourage his brother to move to America:

I have a great desire to visit you but even greater desire to see you here in my home in Chicago. I hope to see you and your wife and children here...Come to me my brother! Your children will thank you for it. (Øverland, 2012: 47).

Apart from sharing information about the opportunities in the ‘new world’, Norwegian-American immigrants expressed emotional calls in their home-going letters so that their country people could join with them. In their letters, they expressed their satisfaction with the migration so that their family members living in Norway could take a decision to migrate to America. The findings acknowledge that emotional calls from immigrants pulled more members of their families from Norway (Zempel, 1991).

On the other hand, anti-emigration preachers expressed emotions in their pamphlets to warn Norwegian emigrants. Bishop Newmsnn was one of the prominent preachers of anti-emigration pamphlets. He also used emotional sentences in his pamphlets so that Norwegians did not migrate to the Americas. Here is an illustration from Neumann’s anti-emigration pamphlets: ‘...when you are far away from all that has been dear to you, who shall close your eyes in the last hour of life? A stranger hand! And who shall weep at your grave? Perhaps- no one’ (Øverland, 2012: 49).

### ***Expression of positive and negative emotions***

It was found that the nature of migration and thereafter adjustment of Norwegian-American immigrants affected the expression of positive and negative emotions in their letters. In line with Romero-Trillo and Avila-Ledesma (2016), this research defines the expression of happiness and gladness as positive emotions on one hand, and on the other hand the expression of sadness and unhappiness as negative emotions. Most of the time, the early Norwegian-American immigrants were happy with the migration and expressed happiness in their letters. As Jakob Abrahamsen and others in their letters on 27 August 1848 wrote:

...I realise I will never regret my emigration. We are all glad to be here. There is no lack of food, and there are good wages for both men and women...Food is cheaper than in Norway...My wife Dro Gjermundsdatter is well and is glad she is here. Should my brothers come here they would live much better than you do in Norway...I see that no one praised America too highly because things are even better than the best rumors in Norway (Øverland, 2012: 96).

Like Jakob Abrahamsen and others, most of the immigrants expressed satisfaction and happiness in their letters for different reasons. First, they were not happy with the life-standard and wage level in Norway. They were dissatisfied with the domination of Norwegian state church, while in America they were happy with political freedom and individual liberty. Lack of availability of land in America than in Norway was another reason for their happiness. Second, most of the immigrants got the chance to take their family with them that helped them not to become homesick. Moreover, having established a Norwegian-American society, they did not experience difficulties in adjustment to the destination society. This point is illustrated in the following quote by Brynjulv Lekve who notes: ‘The main inconvenience for the immigrant is ignorance of the language and of customs and manners, but such stumbling blocks are fewer now that Norwegians have settled almost everywhere in this state and can give advice to their countrymen’ (Øverland, 2012: 51).

Immigrant letter writers were happy in the new land and expressed less guilty-feeling in their letters. They expressed less sadness and negative feelings in their letters because they knew that their migration would lead them to be successful. Unlike the Irish immigrants in America, Norwegians were not engaged in lower status employment in industries; rather they involved in agricultural activities in the land-abundant rural areas. It was found in the research that Irish immigrants expressed worries in their letters because they were not happy with their jobs in the urban industries (Romero-Trillo & Avila-Ledesma, 2016: 393). Furthermore, they did not experience any discrimination and isolation in the new land that could trigger their negative emotions (Svašek, 2010). Elise Tvede in his letter (5 January 1848) to his friend shared about non-discrimination at workplace in America:

... I’ve seen that the class differences we have in Norway don’t exist here: the hired hand eats at the same table and of the same food as the master of the house, and is treated with the same politeness as any other person. (Øverland, 2012: 92).

Svein Knudsen Lothe wrote how he was loved by his employer in the letter to his mother on 10 July 1838: ‘I worked for a pastor whose name was Uchalemo and he worked just as hard as I did. I know him and he knows me; he loves me and I love him, and that is our duty’ (Øverland, 2012: 48). Immigrants were also happy with their family members. In their letters, they expressed how they were being loved by their new husbands and wives. Ellev Bjørnsen wrote the following lines to his mother on 17 January 1846: ‘Since you don’t know my dear wife, I’ll permit myself to note that she’s a very nice and pleasant person; her loving, friendly and good-natured company makes my life sweeter than I’m capable of describing...’ (Øverland, 2012: 69).

Most of the immigrants indicated their unwillingness to return to Norway. For example, Gulbrand Engebetsen Thulien wrote to his family: ‘I am happy here and not a single day have I wished I were back in Norway’ (Øverland, 2012: 79). Very few of them wrote letters to express regret for their long-time separation. For example, Ellev Bjørnsen shared:

From my heart I wish these lines will find you in as happy and healthy a situation as I’m in myself. My only regret is that you, my loving mother, so often have fond thoughts of seeing and hearing how your children are doing in so distant a land. Yes mother, we would indeed have been happy to see you, and how happy wouldn’t you have been to see us again! But as we don’t wish to live in Norway, this would be too great a sacrifice; nature has set up too wide a separation between us. We’ll therefore





have to content ourselves with occasional reports from each other...Be happy in knowing that you've done your duty as a mother. Yes, we thank you from our hearts for having so lovingly taught us the way of virtue, that both I and my sister faithfully promise to follow, something that will ever bind us to you who so carefully planted virtue in us from our childhood... (Øverland, 2012: 68).

As the existing research shows, a mixture of both positive and negative emotions is expressed by immigrants. It seems that the ambivalence in their expression of emotions largely depends on their nature of migration. In the case of Norwegians' migration to America, most of the immigrants were happy and started feeling 'at home' because of the availability of land, higher wage level, absence of discrimination, better life standard and establishment of Norwegian society in the destination area (Mathiesen, 2015: 16). Probably for these reasons less nostalgia, disaffection and guilt- feeling were expressed in their letters. Unlike many other immigrants, the co-existence of conflicting emotions was noticed among the letter writers in a very rare case.

### **Discussions and conclusion**

This research has attempted to study an under-researched topic: the expression of emotions in the letters of Norwegian-American immigrants exchanged between the years of 1838 and 1848. The main aim was to explore how the early Norwegian-American immigrants expressed their emotions in their letters and acknowledge that migration is an 'emotional journey' (Ryan, 2008: 299). It posits that migration is not exclusively motivated by economic and political factors, but also by emotional ones (Mai & King, 2009). In line with Boccagni and Baldassar (2015), this research supports that migrants migrate, send remittances, pay a home visit, and provide transnational care because they have an emotional attachment to their family back home.

This article finds a considerable presence of emotional expressions in the letters of earlier Norwegian-American immigrants and disagrees with the assumption of Øverland (2012: 32) that 'there is as little there about the emotions as about the beauty of a landscape' in the early letters. Based on the findings, this research paper challenges Øverland's (2012) views on the lack of emotional expression in the earlier letters. Øverland (2012) also argued earlier Norwegian-American immigrants were not taught how to express themselves in writing and there was a lack of written language for emotional expressions in traditional Norwegian society (Øverland (2012: 31). By contrast, this research claims that their 'emotional culture' was reshaped after migration to the new environment.

This research suggests the social construction of emotions and shows how the traditional 'feeling rules' and 'display rules' of emotion embedded in the Norwegian culture changed when Norwegians migrated (Boccagni & Baldassar 2015: 75). Migration to an unfamiliar place arose emotions in them, reshaped their emotional culture, and taught them how they could express emotions in written format. This research finds that the presence of emotional expression in the letters also depends on their target audience. More emotional expressions were found in the letters written to the family members of the immigrants, though the immigrants expressed emotions in their letters to their friends. The expression of emotions in the letters proved that the immigrants wanted to maintain their emotional attachment with their families and friends back home. While most of the letter writers were unwilling to return

to Norway, they expressed emotions to satisfy their family members and maintained their transitional relations.

This research also finds that Norwegian-American immigrants expressed emotions in their letters so that their left-behind family members, neighbours, and friends could feel encouraged to migrate to America. These findings of this research support Zempel (1991), who believes that the emotional calls of the immigrants successfully pulled more country people to migrate and caused mass migration. Findings suggest that in anti-emigration pamphlets, preachers also used emotional sentences to convince aspirant migrants so that they remained refraining from emigration. Although a mixed form of positive and negative emotions is generally expressed by immigrants in their letters, in the case of Norwegian-American immigrants an overwhelming positive expression of emotions was noticed (Boccagni & Baldassar 2015). Having a better living standard and income source, they were glad about their migration and that was what expressed in their letters. Very few of them expressed sadness or regret their move away from their fatherland. In fact, most of the first generation of Norwegian-American immigrants were successful in adjusting to their new environment. Even though they suffered from homesickness and loneliness, they ‘suppressed’ their negative emotional expressions in the letters ‘to justify’ their emigration decision (Lovoll 1999: 69).

To conclude, expressions of emotions are an integral part of every migration journey. Emotions are no longer irrational and irrelevant in the process of migration. Therefore, this paper recommends studying more on the emotional aspects of migration in order to better understand the diversities in experiences of migrants and their families.

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