

# Love or Anarchy?

## Links between Emotional Bonds and Well-Being for Migrant Men

Antti Kivijärvi & Kai Mathias  
The Finnish Youth Research Network

If we speak of well-being [...] I have my duties which satisfy me. I have a family that supports me. I have good friends with whom I can share something, discuss things and whom I can trust. And I have a religion, I have a purpose in life and I know for what I am working for.  
[Germany, age 24]

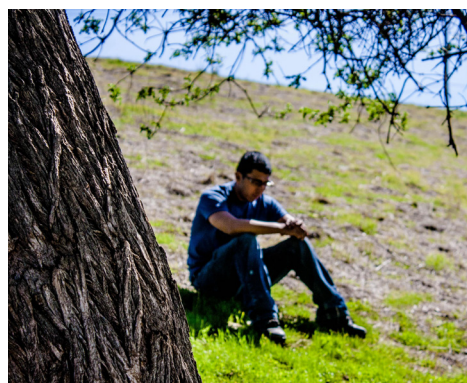
It is difficult when you are alone in Finland. There is nobody who tells you what to do, what is good, what is bad. And now, my family is not able to help me. I moved here to live alone.  
[Finland, age 22]

### Motivation

Warm and supportive attachments are strongly emphasised in the literature on well-being. Relatedness is a basic human need and a resilience factor across the lifespan. Strong attachments are essential in promoting subjective well-being and feelings of loneliness have the opposite effects. However, the well-being of migrant men have rarely been scrutinised from the perspective of private life.

### Research Questions

What kind of connections there are between emotional bonds of young migrant men and their well-being? Moreover, in the framework of transnational analysis, we ponder whether there are any group-based differences in emotional bonding of our informants.



### Key Concepts

By emotional bonds we refer to relations which provide

- 1) feeling of belongingness and continuity
- 2) material support and advices.

By (eudaimonic) well-being we refer to the feeling of continuous growth across the life-span and ability to realise one's potentials.

Peoples' ideas about their desirable direction of growth is strongly determined in relation to significant others. Moreover, this growth is fostered by support and advices received through one's bonds.

### Results

The emotional bonds of the informants are transnational and manifold consisting mostly of nuclear and extended family members. However, for many informants, partners, friends, children, ethnic and religious communities and foster and voluntary parents are can be defined as emotional bonds as well.

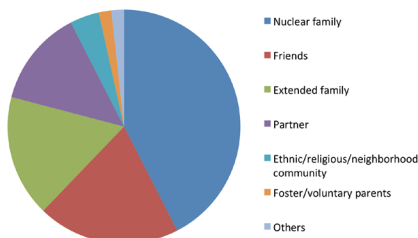


Figure 1: Emotional bonds in the interview data

Almost all of the interviewees receive emotional support and almost three quarters more concrete support in the form of material benefits and advices.

Table 1: Receiving emotional support

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	104	96,3
No	4	3,7

Table 2: Receiving material support and/or advices

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	77	72,0
No	30	28,0
Missing	1	

Many of the informants position themselves in 'generational continuums'. They talk about their parents/relatives who have sacrificed a lot by either migrating themselves or sending children to study/work in the wealthy West. As young men the informants' role is to take advantage of the situation by ensuring even better living-conditions for their offspring and partners. Thus, emotional bonds in the form of generational continuums provide a life-course perspective for many young migrant males – an idea about one's roots and a vision of the future paths.

The data showed that a particular group of young men have relatively few bonds providing material benefits and advices; those with no family in the host country, recent arrivals and those who came as asylum seeker.

Men lacking emotional attachments were few in numbers but seemed to be in a vulnerable position. As opposite to the men who saw themselves as a part in a generational continuum, these men were socially disintegrated. They suffered from mental problems, homelessness, and lack of trust toward other people, had a fragile identity and expected little from the future. In other words, they lived in 'anarchic' conditions with weak links to the surrounding social world. Most of the men lacking emotional bonds had migrated in their countries of residence to become part of new family settings including e.g. father or uncle with their partners

and children. Afterwards a conflict emerged and as a result they decided to leave themselves or were abandoned.

### Policy Implications

Private issues are not easily converted into public policy recommendations. However, few issues seem important.

1. Migrant men should be recognised as caring actors in private spheres
  - The intertwining of private and public issues should be recognised (the ability to fulfil the masculine roles in generational chains)
2. The transnational nature of the attachments of migrant men should be recognised in national policies
  - The motivations behind men's decisions are often related to their transnational ties
3. Recognition and targeting support for young people who have migrated to become part of new family settings is important
  - Allocating public support to foster/voluntary family arrangements
4. Supporting the cohesion of migrant/ethnic groups and communities alongside promoting cultural and social integration in the mainstream society
  - Attachments to minority communities do not prevent societal integration



### References

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