

Title:

A mixed-method analysis of remittance scripts among Bolivian immigrants in Spain

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Abstract

The use of mixed methods to deal with the complexity of remittance motivations is still infrequent. This paper uses statistical and qualitative data and provides evidence on the conceptual framework for understanding remittance behaviour proposed by the scholar Jørgen Carling. Carling's 'remittance scripts' understand remittances as multifaceted transactions and enrich the assessment of the relationship between remittances and development at origin. We use quantitative and qualitative data, both extracted from an ethnosurvey conducted in Spain, to shed light on the situation of transnational Bolivian immigrants after the economic crisis of 2008. We argue that the transactions are best represented by the necessity to provide for the recipients' basic needs.

Keywords: remittances, mixed-method analysis, scripts, transnationalism, development, Bolivian migrants, Spain

1. Introduction

The literature on the causes of remittances, particularly the economics-oriented, is abundant (see reviews in Rapoport and Docquier 2006; Hagen-Zanker and Siegel 2007; Carling 2008, 2014; Ruiz and Vargas-Silva 2009; Yang 2011; Brown and Jimenez-Soto 2015). A major strand of this literature considers motives for remitting from the economics-oriented perspective (closely, although not exclusively, associated with the discipline of economics). A further major strand is based on the ethnographic method, usually adopted by other social science scholars such as anthropologists, and (qualitative oriented) sociologists and geographers. Carling (2014) proposes combining both approaches in order to deal with the complexity of transactions and the variety of contexts (see also Cohen 2011; Brown et al. 2014). He does so by introducing the concept of ‘remittance scripts’, which resembles ‘remittance motives’ but goes further by emphasizing perceptions, encompassing not only material but also emotional relationships, and considering both senders and receivers. Scripts understand remittances to be multifaceted transactions, and go beyond the question as to why migrants remit in order to reflect the *nature* of the transaction (Carling 2014: 228).

This paper provides evidence on the conceptual framework for understanding remittance behaviour proposed by Carling (2014). We propose to assess the contribution of remittances to development by considering relatively unattended aspects. We focus on the motivations and meaning of remitting by Bolivian immigrants in Spain. Thus, we first analyse which factors are positively or negatively associated with remittance-sending. We then identify the most relevant scripts and explore the meaning migrants give to transferences of money to family members.

To do so, we draw on both statistical and qualitative data. Mixed-method designs are still uncommon when tackling the issue of remittances (see e.g. King, Castaldo and Vullnetari 2011; Carling, Bivand Erdal and Horst 2012). Two recent studies that use Carling’s (2014) concept of script are solely based on qualitative approaches and ethnographic research (Brown 2016; Ramsøy 2016). We adopt the ethnosurvey as the research strategy, as described in Massey (1987). This methodological instrument allows us to develop quantitative and qualitative procedures, simultaneously, and provides multifaceted and more robust information. Thus, we first use the quantitative data to assess the importance of variables referred to the transnational family (and control

variables) in the decision as to how much to remit by means of regression analysis. We then employ a further set of open-ended questions about the migration project and remittance transfers, also derived from the same source, to obtain qualitative information.

We focus on transnational Bolivian families in Spain in the aftermath of the economic crisis of 2008. In the last two decades, annual remittance flows to Bolivia (from around the globe) increased by about 16,000 per cent, one of the highest remittance growth rates in the world (Coon 2016).¹ Spain has been the second most important destination country for Bolivian emigrants in the 21st century (Hinojosa and De la Torre 2014). In spite of the importance of remittance flows sent from Spain to Bolivia (see also González et al. 2012), little attention has been paid to their motivations (Roig and Recaño 2012) and meanings. In an ethnographic study of female Bolivian domestic workers in the Basque Country (a Spanish region), Ramsøy (2016) builds on Carling's concept of script to show how care is transmitted transnationally throughout remittances.

Transnational ties are at the core of our explanation of remittance behaviour of Bolivian immigrants in Spain. That is, remittances contribute to the holding together of families who live apart but establish a sense of 'collective welfare and unity' (Brycesson and Vuorela 2002: 3). Nuclear families form a particularly widespread pattern among Bolivian households (Oyarce, Del Popolo and Martínez Pizarro 2009). As in other Andean countries such as Ecuador, Peru and Colombia, the action and the meaning of remitting by Bolivian emigrants are often motivated by the needs of transnational-family members, which may enhance the contribution of remittances to development at origin (Solé, Parella and Cavalcanti 2007; Rivas et al. 2008; Zapata 2009). This scenario would contrast with lessons drawn from migrants from some African countries, whose remittance behaviour may be dissociated from the recipients' needs, and involve the building of a social network, the maintenance of a social reputation or the avoidance of (moral) sanctions (e.g. Al-Ali, Black and Koser 2001; Azam and Gubert 2006; Carruet, Mastellaro and Mithbaokar 2015).

Our findings suggest that Bolivian migrants' remittance behaviour, i.e. the amount of remittances sent, respond to transnational motivations—once variables reflecting further hypotheses are accounted for. As for the meaning transnational families give to the action of remitting, the results also show that the money transfers between migrants

¹ Remittances in 2017 represented US\$1.3 billion (World Bank 2018).

and family members left behind, particularly children, are best represented by the necessity to provide for the basic needs of the latter. ‘Allowance’ is the remittance script that best depicts the case under study, as well as its combination with two related scripts, ‘sacrifice’ and ‘compensation’.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In the first section, we refer to previous frameworks to study the causes of remittances and introduce Carling’s (2014) proposal. The second section discusses briefly the Bolivian migration context. The next two sections present the dataset and the methodology used and the results. The final section summarizes the conclusions.

2. Theoretical framework

Research based on explicit economic theory and econometric methodology, since pioneering studies such as Lucas and Stark (1985), generally considers whether remittances are driven by altruism, self-interest or some intermediate motivation. Migrants and (usually) their families establish, sometimes implicit, contractual agreements. These agreements may respond to a loan repayment, co-insurance purposes, and exchange for services provided. However, it is generally recognized that (overlapping) motives are difficult to separate, variables may be interpreted in different ways, and contexts matter.

On the other hand, research based on ethnographic methods, usually drawn on qualitative approaches, is less constrained and more context-based. However, it tends to lack a shared and specific theoretical framework (key exceptions are reviewed in Carling 2014). In fact, as argued by Carling (2014), remittances in ethnographic-oriented research have traditionally been a subsidiary topic, embedded in a more holistic consideration of migration and transnationalism. In order to incorporate the social and cultural dimensions, scholars have, for example, related remittances to theories of gift exchange and the concept of transnational family-based social capital and have also developed the term ‘social remittances’ (e.g. Cliggett 2005; Eckstein 2010; Levitt 2001).

Carling proposes combining the perspectives by means of an analytical tool that permits us to deal with the complexity of the transaction as a whole. Remittance scripts are defined as ‘a repertoire of generalized representations of remittance transactions that are recognized by a social group, but might not be explicitly expressed’ (Carling, 2014:

221). As transactions are multifaceted phenomena, not only material, but also emotional and relational aspects are considered. Thus, the notion of the script implies the interplay between money (the material aspect) and the symbol it conveys (the meaning). Both remittance senders' and receivers' roles are acknowledged.

The fact that remittance scripts are recognized by a social group makes them adaptable to specific contexts. Among the twelve remittance scripts proposed by Carling, we first chose 'allowance' as the key script as it best explains the transnational, often nuclear, family strategies among Bolivian immigrants in Spain. An allowance 'reflects the giver's responsibility to provide for the recipient, implies regularity, and typically suggests a bounded freedom for recipients to make spending decisions' (Carling, 2014: 237). Allowance remittances would often be intended to cover regular household expenses such as housing costs, food, health care, education and transport.

Given the complexity of remittance transactions, in the Bolivian case the allowance script is open to blending with related scripts such as 'sacrifice' and 'compensation'. An allowance may be considered as the product of 'sacrifice' in the sense of the endurance process migrants go through. The logic of sacrificial remittances suggests a strong link between the migration decision, remittances and the result of family well-being, and is tied to 'an ethos of selfless devotion to family, of placing the needs of others above one's own' (Carling 2014: 239). An allowance may also take the form of 'compensation', or payment, for services delivered by remittance recipients, such as the provision of care for migrants' children or elderly parents (Carling 2014: 232). The features of these two scripts are in line with a common type of transnational practices of Andean migrants—as has been put forward in the Introduction section.

3. Bolivian migration context

Modern Bolivian emigration up to the 1970s had Argentina as its main destination—followed by Chile and Brazil. Bolivian emigration grew from the 1980s onwards, and although emigration to (mainly) Argentina, continued, the flow partially changed its direction, principally, to the United States (e.g. Tapia 2014). Economic instability in Argentina and the adoption of increasingly restrictive immigration policies in the United States, made European countries such as Italy and, especially, Spain—a fast growing economy with favourable migration policy—major destinations for Bolivian emigrants,

including re-emigrants from Argentina (Tapia 2014). This pattern of, first, intraregional migration (often to nearby countries) and, then, (long-distance) migration to more developed countries in North America and later Europe has been common to many Latin American countries, including Andean countries such as Ecuador, Peru and Colombia (Durand and Massey 2010). The most salient feature of the Bolivian case is that the shift has taken place from a well-established southward centre, Argentina, rather than from poles of attraction in the United States, and Venezuela before the 1980s (Cerruti and Parrado 2015; Price 2016).

Bolivian migration to Spain constituted one of the latest waves of Latin American immigration to a destination country in Europe before the 2008 economic slump (Sanz-Gimeno and Sánchez-Domínguez 2009; Hierro 2015). The number of Bolivians increased from 8,422 in 2001 to 240,912 in 2008 (España. Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2018). The economic crisis, which has complicated family reunification, and new visa requirements for Bolivians (1 April 2007) have markedly reduced the number of new arrivals and fostered return migration. The number of Bolivian immigrants in Spain in 2017 was 168,801. During the crisis, Bolivians in Spain have faced an acutely vulnerable economic situation, one of whose facets has been the rise of legal irregularity (Bastia 2011; Tapias and Escandell 2011; Parella 2015).

4. Data and methodology

We use the Return and Circular Migration Ethnosurvey, which results from a Spanish Government-funded project on mobility patterns of Bolivian immigrants after the severe economic crisis of 2008. This comprehensive instrument is comprised of 101 closed and open-ended questions, conducted simultaneously, several of which refer to remittance behaviour. We draw on quantitative data extracted from the answers to closed questions to estimate regression models on the transnational-family determinants of sending remittances. From the same source, we used the answers to open-ended questions to obtain qualitative data about the migration project and the meaning attributed to remittance transfers.

The questionnaire was administered to 400 current Bolivian residents of Spain aged 18 and over, regardless of their legal status, between the months of September 2011 and June 2012. Half of the respondents were drawn from the capital city of Madrid, and

the other half from the city of Barcelona and the adjacent municipality of L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, the three largest Bolivian immigration-receiving Spanish municipalities (Hinojosa 2009). Questionnaires were conducted in person, mostly to individuals visiting Consulates. Some key characteristics of Bolivian immigrants in 2011-2012 based on our dataset are similar to those based on the National Immigrant Survey of 2007, at the height of Bolivian immigration.²

Our dataset reports a high percentage of individuals that have completed their tertiary education, 30.6 per cent. This figure, however, is similar to those reported by Bolivian household surveys (2005-2011), especially for urban inhabitants (Bolivia. Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2012: 152). Despite this, Bolivian immigrants in Spain are predominantly concentrated in low-skilled occupations (see also Bradatan and Kolloja 2015). Although our survey does not permit us to estimate a highly accurate distribution of individuals across occupations, particularly for females, the data show that women are mostly engaged in domestic service and (to a lesser extent) the hospitality industry, and 32 per cent of men are engaged in the construction industry.

The analysis proceeds in two parts. First, in regression models, we combine variables that reflect transnationalism with key variables that control for hypotheses related to socio-economic conditions and assimilation in the country of destination and ties to the country of origin, as well as further control variables. Quantitative findings on the relative importance of transnational variables are then used as a starting point from which to delve deeper into the respondents' motivations for remitting; in the second, qualitative part of the analysis we do so by means of a set of open-ended questions, provided by the same dataset, and Carling's concept of 'script'.

Respondents were asked for the amount of remittances sent, which acts as the dependent variable in the regression analysis. The choice of model to explain remittance behaviour depends on the assumptions made regarding non-remitters. Tobit, Heckit and, more recently, Double-Hurdle models are usually used (e.g. Bettin, Lucchetti and Zazzaro 2012; Brown and Jimenez-Soto 2015). We considered the three options and performed a series of estimations.³ We report the Tobit specification, which presented the best results

² The comparison is not reported, but available from the authors upon request.

³ In the Heckit model, we tried several identification exclusions (variables that significantly affect the probability of remitting, but *not* the amount sent), such as the answer to the question of migration alone/accompanied. But results were not always satisfactory. On problems related to the Heckit

in terms of the significance of variables. As a cross-section dataset, our source does not permit us to directly account for self-selection of migrants and further unobservable characteristics of households that may affect the propensity to remit (e.g. Brown and Jimenez-Soto 2015).

As a *sending-side* methodological instrument, available (and quantifiable) explanatory variables predominantly refer to the migrants' characteristics and their situation in the country of destination, rather than to potential recipients and their areas of origin (Brown et al. 2014). Table 1 describes the dependent variable, control variables and transnational family explanatory variables. Two cases were excluded because information regarding some of the relevant items was incomplete. Correlations between variables, effects of unreported variables mentioned below, as well as regressions and marginal effects noted but not reported are available from the authors upon request.

[Insert Table 1 around here]

The first set of control variables concern demographic and ethnic attributes. The expected signs of sex and (self-defined) ethnicity variables are not clear a priori. Age, as a proxy for experience in labour markets, is expected to increase the propensity to remit.

The second set of control variables was selected to reflect socio-economic conditions and assimilation in the country of destination. The expected effect of educational attainment is unclear.⁴ In terms of altruism, income is expected to increase remittances.⁵ Being employed may also be associated with a greater propensity to remit (e.g. Bouoiyour and Miftah 2015). However, there is some evidence that being unemployed has a positive impact on remittances if they are the response to income risks in the host country (e.g. Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo 2006). We are able to distinguish between two unemployed statuses: those who receive some kind of benefits and those who do not. The expected effect of having the citizenship or quasi-citizenship to stay in

identification procedure, see for example Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo (2006), Aísa, Andaluz and Larramona (2011), Busetta, Cetorelli and Stranges (2016).

⁴ More educated migrants may be more likely to remit, as the level of education is usually correlated with a better current or expected position in the labour market. Remittances may be also used to repay earlier migrant education costs—although Carling (2008) warns of interpreting the effect of *current* education levels. However, more educated migrants may be better assimilated and more willing to stay permanently and so they may lose ties to their home country and their incentives to remit be reduced.

⁵ The Hausman exogeneity test fails to reject the null hypothesis that income is exogenous.

Spain (including permanent Spanish residency permit, Spanish citizenship and long-term European residency permit) is not clear a priori.⁶

Finally, duration of stay in Spain may have a negative relationship with the amount of remittances sent, if attachment to the home country weakness over time. However, the evidence for the ‘remittance decay hypothesis’ is mixed (see Busetta, Cetorelli and Stranges 2016). In the regression models presented, duration of stay was only included in linear terms; in further regressions we added the variable in squared terms, but the two estimated coefficients were not significant. We estimated the regressions with (models 2 and 4) and without (models 1 and 3) duration of stay to account for potential overlaps with other variables (Carling and Hoelscher 2013).

Two variables incorporate ties to the country of origin. First, an available measure of household wealth in the country of origin is based on a factor analysis that contains data on assets (e.g. Bohra-Mishra 2011).⁷ We use the first component, which explains 53 per cent of the variance. With regard to this issue there are two possible options, either, migrants may remit more to deprived households or to the contrary, migrants may remit more to wealthier households due to exchange and self-interest motives such as the maintenance of assets, investment plans, aspiration to inherit, etc. Second, in terms of self-interest motives, but also in relation to attachment to the country of origin, intention to return to Bolivia, a variable based on a question about plans in the near future, may be positively related to the amount of remittances sent. A final control-variable considers whether further potential remitters, residing in Spain or other countries, may reduce the respondent’s responsibility for remitting.

The importance of transnational-family characteristics is captured by a final set of variables. A range of interpretations derived from the altruistic, semi-altruistic and self-interest frameworks have been used in the literature to explain the effect of family size, composition, and location. In applied terms, household size and the presence of the spouse and children in the host (origin) country may be expected to be negatively (positively) associated with the propensity to remit. For Spain, alternatively, we included household size (models 1 and 2) and the number of children (models 3 and 4)—the correlation being

⁶ Stability derived from having the citizenship or quasi-citizenship may be expected to increase the propensity to remit if these statuses helps to improve migrant’s performance in the labour market. But if having these statuses is associated with a better assimilation in the host country, and a weaker attachment to the home country, the effect on the propensity to remit may be negative.

⁷ Household income cannot be estimated.

0.55. Accordingly, for Bolivia, we included either three available dichotomous variables as proxies for household size (models 1 and 2) or the number of children (models 3 and 4).

Once the contribution of transnational family ties to remit was estimated from quantitative data, we moved on to the qualitative part of the analysis. We used a set of suitable open-ended questions and complete enough answers to delve into the expectations and meanings given to remittance behaviour by migrants who belong to transnational families. Our analytic strategy included a process of coding qualitative data, based on the analytical abstraction of the remittance script. We proposed allowance as the main remittance script among transnational Bolivian families. However, as remittance transactions, in practice, often combine several ideal-type scripts, we also provided evidence for the combined scripts of sacrifice and compensation.

5. Results

5.1. Quantitative findings

The main results of the Tobit regression model are shown in Table 2. With regard to control variables, each year of age, as a proxy for experience in the labour market, and income increase the propensity to remit (the negative signs of the squared variables reflect decreasing returns). Being unemployed reduces the propensity to remit, as the number of further potential senders also tends to do. The most educated, those having citizenship or quasi-citizenship, and those staying longer in Spain tend to be less willing to remit. Intention to return may increase the propensity to remit, while wealthier households receive more remittances.

[Insert Table 2 around here]

The results derived from age, income and employment variables indicate altruistic behaviour and that a certain level of economic integration is necessary in order to remit; the latter being related to the fact that Bolivians have been a migrant-group hit particularly hard by the economic crisis in Spain. The range of migrants' motivations to remit increases with the positive impact of our index of household wealth in Bolivia and

intention to return, although the latter variable is not significant.⁸ The migrant may be contributing to improving a house they own or that they expect to inherit or sell, regardless of their intention to return in the near future. The mixed nature of remittance behaviour among Bolivians would be confirmed with the results derived from higher education, citizenship statuses, receiving unemployment benefits (compared to not receiving benefits at all) and duration of stay. These are indicators of better assimilation or attachment to the host country. Among all the control variables, only citizenship statuses becomes non-significant when duration of stay is included.

The variables of greatest interest are those reflecting the transnational family. It is confirmed that the effects of household size (models 1 and 2) and the number of children in Spain (models 3 and 4) on the amount of remittances sent are highly significant and negative, whereas the effect of the number of children in Bolivia (models 3 and 4) is also significant but positive. Among marital status variables, the effect of having the spouse in Bolivia is positive and significant in model 1. However, this variable becomes non-significant when duration of stay (models 2 and 4) and the number of children (models 3 and 4) are included, a result that would confirm both that the effect of staying abroad longer may weaken links to the country of origin and the crucial role played by the presence of children in explaining remittance behaviour. The lack of significance of the three proxy variables for household size in Bolivia would suggest that there is no privileged receiver of remittances. Table 2 reports marginal effects on the expected value of the latent variable (Cameron and Trivedi 2010: 539-44). Unreported marginal effects on the probability of remitting, and the expected amount remitted if remitting provides smaller but still considerable values for significant variables.

5.2. Qualitative findings

Results from regressions have shown that although remittance behaviour among Bolivians is shaped by the extent of socio-economic assimilation in Spain, it also depends on attachment and commitments in their country of origin. Remittances may thus be seen as an *investment* in transnational relationships (Carling and Hoelscher 2013). The

⁸ We may not discard household assets being potentially endogenous to remittance behaviour, at least in part (e.g. Osili 2007; Carling 2008). In supplementary regressions, as an alternative to the wealth index variable, we used a three-category home ownership in Bolivia variable that mitigates the problem and confirms the sign and significance of the impact using our preferred variable.

following cases extracted from our ethnosurvey illustrate the meaning Bolivian migrants give to these money transfers, and the position of senders and recipients in relation to each other. The common nexus of representations of remittance transactions that emerge from migrants' answers is the allowance script. Children's basic consumption needs are a prevalent motivation for remittances. These include food, education fees, transport and healthcare. Migrants also refer to investment plans in Bolivia, usually small businesses.

A first, revealing, case is Alfonso, married father of 7 in his 50s.⁹ He arrived in Spain in 2006, thanks to his two brothers' invitation letter. His wife and five of his children remain in Bolivia. He worked as a teacher in Bolivia and decided to emigrate to assure sufficient income for his family and to cover the tuition fees of his children at private school and university: 'I wanted to work outside Bolivia in order to improve my family's well-being'. Since arriving in Spain, he has been working in the construction sector, always in the informal economy and without labour stability. 'I do a little bit of everything', he asserts. He has noticed the economic crisis, and at the moment he can only send 75 Euros per month. Although his children are grown-up, he plans to support them economically until they finish their studies. He is also aspiring to save in order to start a business in Bolivia.

The logic of remitting money in this case resembles the male breadwinner model of household organization described by Carling (2014: 237). The feminization of Bolivian emigration to Spain, however, has transformed gender relations and many women residing and working abroad have taken on the role of primary earners and remittance senders for their families (Parella 2012). The following two cases illustrate this.

Soledad is a married mother of two. The family decided she had to migrate to Spain, after a failed migration project in Argentina. The main reason, as she states, is 'because it was not possible to get a job there'. She and her husband had run a jewellery shop, but they had to close the business. She arrived in Spain alone in 2005, to work in domestic service, as a live-in maid. At the time the fieldwork was conducted, her job remained the same. After obtaining a permanent Spanish residence permit in 2010, she brought over her oldest child, Antonio, in 2011. She is sending 250 Euros per month to her husband, which as she says: 'are used to pay food, books, transportation, education, and health expenditure'. She gives a positive assessment of her migration, believing that

⁹ All names are pseudonyms.

in the future their children can build a better life with their families. She is also planning to invest money in a business in Bolivia.

Felisa is a single mother in her late 30s. Her two daughters, of school-going age, live in Bolivia. She left her mother in charge of the children. She arrived in Spain in 2005 and since then has been employed as a live-in housemaid, without a contract. She had never worked in Bolivia. She plans to return to Bolivia in the medium term. She sends 300 Euros per month which is managed by her mother. Remittances are designated for food, school, transportation expenses and health assistance. She also wants to save some money in order to set up a small local food shop in her hometown. She is happy about her decision to migrate, although she bemoans all she has lost: ‘Yes [I am happy], because I have raised by myself my two daughters; but, no [I am not happy], since I’ve lost my family’.

The complexity of remittance transactions implies that they can be represented by more than one script. We first considered the combination of allowance with ‘sacrifice’ for the sake of families, as evinced by the next case.

Paloma left Bolivia in 2006. She is a married woman in her 50s, with five grown-up children. One of her sons lives in Argentina now. Paloma and her husband Joaquín jointly decided that she had to move to Spain. As he was unemployed in Bolivia, they were no longer able to meet the family needs. She recognizes: ‘Thus, I was forced to come’. Today, she and her husband are able to send their children to private school and university. Her remittances, an amount of not less than 350 Euros per month, are essential in affording these expenses. Although she is satisfied with her migration project, she refers to sacrificial remittances when she says: ‘Leaving my country meant leaving my children behind. It has been a very hard decision’. She cannot return yet. She has never been in a position to visit Bolivia and her family. Her jobs as a live-in domestic worker have not provided her the opportunity to change her legal status as yet.

The second proposed combined script is ‘compensation’ for services rendered by remittance recipients during the migration process. Transactional family arrangements in cases of this sort may go beyond the nuclear family and require extended kin networks, in which relatives assume the role of informal or formal caregivers. In Bolivia, grandmothers, aunts and even foster carers have become typical recipient actors when the mother or both parents have emigrated, and children have been left behind (Parella 2012).

In the regression analysis, our three-category variable may not have adequately captured this phenomenon. Its lack of significance—although the sign of having the mother of the remittances' sender in Bolivia is positive—points to the presence of different care-givers. However the quantitative information provided by our source did not allow us to properly reflect the role played by further family members and non-family actors in the regression. The next case refers to the parents of one of the two remitters so extending the definition of care-giver.

Carlos is a man in his 30s, who lived in Bolivia with his wife, Dulia, and two children. Their economic situation was very poor. Even though he was employed, he did not earn enough to satisfy their basic needs. The migration project in this case involved the two members of the couple. She came to L'Hospitalet de Llobregat (Barcelona) first, in 2005, and shortly afterwards, in 2006, Carlos arrived. The children are in the care of his parents in law. Once in Spain, they had their third child. They are thinking about regrouping the family in the future. Dulia works in domestic service and Carlos is an employee operating in the wholesale of fashion handbags, with a permanent contract. They send 300 Euros per month, Dulia's parents use this money to support themselves and to provide non-durable consumer products and private education for the children. Carlos and Dulia are also saving some money to buy land, build a house and perhaps start a micro-business in Bolivia. Carlos is proud of what he has achieved thanks to migration. As he explains: 'Yes, the economic status and all what I wanted, I got it. I was saving money and building a house in Bolivia; although it had taken longer than I thought'.

Beyond reported plans for business investment, the main use of Bolivian migrants' remittances is for household expenditures such as food, transport and healthcare, which clearly improves people's living standards, and therefore, their capabilities. The also common use of remittances for paying for the next generation's education may be considered a long-term investment (Mendola 2012: 109). Our findings are in line with previous studies on the contribution of remittances in Bolivia to reducing poverty and child labour, increasing household wealth, and fostering economic diversification (Acosta, Fajnzylber and Lopez 2007; Jones 2014; Lazarte et al. 2014; López-Videla and Machuca 2014; Coon 2016).

In his review of migration and development, De Haas (2010; 2012) in fact shows that when research focuses on micro-level indicators of this sort, it usually leads to

positive implications of the effect of remittances on development; while the evidence is mixed when the focus is on macro-level impacts. It has then been proposed to disentangle different effects of remittances along the multiple dimensions of development, including physical and socio-psychological effects (De Haas 2010: 15; see also Sørensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen 2002; Mendola 2012). We have shown that migrants seem to play a role in their communities' development, even though it may come with a human cost (see also Basa, Harcourt and Zarro 2011).

6. Conclusion

Two main approaches can be identified in the abundant research on the causes of remittances: the economics-oriented (but not circumscribed to the discipline of economics), and the ethnographic method usually adopted in several social science disciplines. Both perspectives have their strengths and weaknesses. In this paper, we follow Carling's (2014) proposal to combine approaches and address the complexity underlying migrants' transferences of money. Specifically, we adapt his conceptual framework based on the concept of 'script'. We concentrate on remittance behaviour among transnational Bolivian families in Spain, a little-known but major migrant group just before the economic downturn of 2008.

We aim to engage with the consideration, and policy debate, of remittances as one possible (but not unquestionable) nexus between migration and development. Remittances may be a fundamental resource for many households, but their precise contribution to development in countries of origin needs to account for different dimensions such as motivations and meaning and consider that remitting is embedded in socially constructed norms. A major methodological contribution of this paper is our use of both quantitative and qualitative information, a still uncommon practice in remittance studies.

In the first part of the analysis, we extracted quantitative data from our ethnosurvey and estimated regression models. We found that migrants' propensity to remit did not seem to respond to only one motive—as usually shown in remittance studies of this sort. Migrants displayed altruistic behaviour—as illustrated by the effect of economic indicators such as age (as a proxy for experience in the labour market), income and unemployment. But they also seemed to be driven by further motivations such as

their own assimilation process in the host country—as reflected in a series of indicators: higher education, citizenship statuses, receiving unemployment benefits and duration of stay, above all for an immigrant group which has been particularly affected by the deep economic crisis.

Ties to the origin country also mattered. First, as suggested by the positive effect of indicators of household wealth and intention to return on the amount of remittances sent. Second, as shown by the effect of size and composition of households in Bolivia and Spain. It is clear that motivations related to the exchange of care provided for family members, particularly children, left behind help to explain the propensity to remit.

Indeed, the importance of transnational family ties revealed in the quantitative analysis led us to explore the meaning migrants give for their money transfers. Thus, in the second part of the analysis, we looked at a series of open-ended questions derived from the same ethnosurvey. The case for compatible paradigms to the altruism to self-interest continuum emerges when we use the proposed concept of script.

Three main conclusions can be drawn from this approach. First, ‘allowance’ is the remittance script that best represents the case of Bolivian transnational families in Spain. Respondents refer to the migration project as necessary to finance basic household expenses such as food, education, healthcare and transport. These allowance remittances are regular, rather than a contingent flow, and are often designated to recipients’ specific needs.

Second, allowance remittances are associated with a strong sense of commitment and responsibility towards family members left behind, particularly children. Concern about family welfare seems to motivate migration and remittance-sending, rather than a social obligation that may not necessarily be related to the remitter’s own family. Remittance transactions tend to respond to the logic of nuclear family structures. However, transnational ties may also be based on extended families. ‘Compensation’ remittances for the provision of care for children are a common example when (usually) the mother or both parents have emigrated. In this regard, the feminization of Bolivian emigration to Spain complements the traditional male breadwinner model of family organization. The case of Bolivian migration to Spain provides evidence of how women have acquired the role of primary earners through emigration. In any case, the migration project appears to be based on family, rather than individual, decisions.

Finally, aimed at obtaining family welfare, remittances may also be conceived as ‘sacrifice’ when they are the result of suffering caused by distance and the loss of family proximity. Moreover, the recent economic crisis in Spain has drastically reduced job opportunities and worsened working conditions in sectors which migrants had traditionally flooded into. The possibilities to earn money have been reduced as a result. So too has the option of returning home, even though Bolivian migrants in Spain refer to short-term migration and investment plans in Bolivia among their aspirations.

Future mixed-method studies on remittance-sending may consider some of the limitations that have marked our analysis. First, the availability of longitudinal data could increase the accuracy of the quantitative approach. It would permit the researcher to account for changes in motivations over time and therefore achieve a more dynamic treatment of the phenomenon. The second consideration concerns the use of a sequential, rather than a simultaneous design. As an example, preliminary interviews would have helped to improve the identification of indicators used to describe scripts and meanings (Carling 2014; see also Brown et al. 2014). Finally, beyond the sender and recipient, further agents involved in the remittance process may be included in the analysis, which would better clarify scripts proposed or permit new ones to emerge (Carling 2014: 252). This extension of research would shed more light on one aspect of studies like ours, the role played by some family (and non-family) members, if further, more in-depth data were available.

This paper points to the importance of combining research strategies when analysing the nuances of remittances, and the role they played in development strategies. The range of results found suggests that the use of a solely quantitative analysis would not have allowed us to bring to light the meanings transnational families give to the action of remitting. Whereas the exclusive use of qualitative analysis would be insufficient to confirm the contribution of transnational factors to remittance behaviour when other influences are taken into account. In terms of policy concerns, future research might consider expanding the focus to other migrant groups—or Bolivians in other primary countries of destination, for the sake of comparison, and adapt the script frame to new contexts.

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Tables

Table 1. Description and summary statistics of variables

Variable	Description	Percentage	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<i>Dependent Variable</i>						
Remittances	Annual amount (€)		1782.16	2434.87	0	14400
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Sex	Reference male		0.38	0.49	0	1
Age			36.98	10.22	18	81
White (Reference)	(Self-defined ethnicity) <i>Blanca</i>	12.81	0.13	0.33	0	1
Mixed	<i>Chola and Mestiza</i>	48.74	0.49	0.50	0	1
Native	<i>Indígena/Originaria</i>	5.78	0.06	0.23	0	1
Others		32.66	0.33	0.47	0	1
		(Total= 100)				
Primary school (Reference)	Up to primary school	12.56	0.13	0.33	0	1
Secondary school	Completed	56.78	0.57	0.50	0	1
University or above		30.65	0.31	0.46	0	1
		(Total= 100)				
Income	Monthly gross (€)		905.34	572.58	0	3500
Employed (Reference)		67.34	0.67	0.47	0	1
Unemployed with some benefit	Unemployment insurance, family support (420€), others	8.04	0.08	0.27	0	1
Unemployed, no benefits		24.62	0.25	0.43	0	1
		(Total= 100)				
Citizenship or quasi-citizenship	Including Spanish residence permit, Spanish citizenship and European Union permit		0.30	0.46	0	1
Duration of stay in Spain	Years		7.80	2.85	1	32
Standardized index of household amenities in Bolivia	Factor analysis using data on running water, fridge, ceramic or parquet floor, internet, phone and cable tv		0.00	1.00	-2.01	1.13
Intention to return to Bolivia	At the time of the interview		0.36	0.48	0	1
No. of further potential senders	Parents/siblings living abroad		0.85	0.97	0	5
<i>Transnational Variables</i>						
Single (Reference)		24.12	0.24	0.43	0	1
Spouse in Spain	Include cohabitation	51.26	0.51	0.50	0	1
Spouse in Bolivia	Include cohabitation	8.04	0.08	0.27	0	1
Other marital status		16.58	0.17	0.37	0	1
		(Total= 100)				
Household size in Spain	No. of household members		2.95	1.80	1	10

No. of children in Spain	< 18 at home		0.60	0.91	0	4
Mother in Bolivia		61.06	0.61	0.49	0	1
Father in Bolivia		57.04	0.57	0.50	0	1
Siblings in Bolivia	Any brother or sister	84.42	0.84	0.36	0	1
No. of children in Bolivia	< 18 at home		0.59	0.98	0	6
No. of obs. = 398						

Table 2. Tobit models of the determinants of the amount of remittances

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Marginal	Stand.	Marginal	Stand.	Marginal	Stand.	Marginal	Stand.
	Effect	Error	Effect	Error	Effect	Error	Effect	Error
<i>Control Variables</i>								
Sex	-292.86	347.01	-200.45	349.67	-319.20	312.32	-246.88	313.31
Age	197.74 [†]	103.79	244.10*	104.11	192.42*	97.35	228.72*	98.69
Age square	-2.49*	1.20	-2.92*	1.21	-2.50*	1.10	-2.85*	1.12
White (Reference)								
Mixed	1.41	513.92	-18.11	517.07	262.35	488.98	230.67	491.36
Native	-782.98	899.02	-864.35	933.74	-334.67	848.45	-432.67	879.94
Others	-300.21	540.35	-254.30	543.31	89.42	526.48	104.28	523.98
Primary school (Reference)								
Secondary school	169.81	448.33	165.95	446.44	176.05	432.48	164.98	426.68
University or above	-1191.67*	506.52	-1226.10*	503.86	-828.65 [†]	477.59	-871.20 [†]	472.64
Income	2.17**	0.81	2.14**	0.81	2.47**	0.81	2.43**	0.81
Income square	-0.0005 [†]	0.00	-0.0005 [†]	0.00	-0.0006 [†]	0.00	-0.0006 [†]	0.00
Employed (Reference)								
Unemployed with some benefit	-1235.81 [†]	658.59	-1294.87*	639.93	-1242.21 [†]	636.78	-1294.70*	622.35
Unemployed, no benefits	-955.46*	376.63	-904.43*	378.03	-898.14*	363.99	-854.97*	365.49
Citizenship or quasi-citizenship	-951.99**	359.57	-499.91	409.07	-676.16 [†]	372.78	-304.42	413.32
Duration of stay in Spain			-176.58*	78.95			-145.56 [†]	74.33
Standardized index of household amenities in Bolivia	552.26**	164.06	542.41**	161.29	634.31***	160.98	624.65***	158.57
Intention to return to Bolivia	168.36	337.68	133.64	336.75	82.79	326.33	56.23	327.03
No. of further potential senders	-196.74	198.47	-149.31	195.94	-438.43**	163.22	-397.24**	158.86
<i>Transnational Variables</i>								
Single (Reference)								
Spouse in Spain	-3.71	458.02	-90.49	450.62	30.46	399.05	-21.27	393.28
Spouse in Bolivia	1293.36 [†]	722.04	1073.27	711.85	860.39	650.29	695.98	643.05
Other marital status	544.14	533.67	450.80	534.53	382.74	511.37	307.78	510.56
Household size in Spain	-389.80***	103.38	-351.48**	104.48				
No. of children in Spain					-814.49***	194.87	-758.86***	191.06
Mother in Bolivia	449.44	368.01	476.57	363.51				
Father in Bolivia	-343.56	340.09	-264.33	334.69				
Siblings in Bolivia	841.89	560.49	781.44	559.38				
No. of children in Bolivia					789.68***	173.36	770.23***	170.63
Log pseudolikelihood	-2622.00		-2618.89		-2607.02		-2604.58	
	F(23,375) = 4.63		F(24, 374) = 4.47		F(21,377) = 5.99		F(22,376) = 5.68	
Prob > F	0.0000		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000	

*** Statistical significance at the 0.001 level.

** Statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

* Statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

† Statistical significance at the 0.1 level.

Notes: No. of observations = 398. The regressions are estimated using heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors and include an intercept term.