

**Social Remittances:
A Conceptual Tool for
Understanding Migration and
Development**

Peggy Levitt

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In his article entitled, "Trans-national America," Randolph Bourne wrote,

"Along with dual citizenship we shall have to accept, I think, that free and mobile passage of the immigrant between America and his native land...To stigmatize the alien who works in America for a few years and returns to his own land...is to ignore the cosmopolitan significance of this migration. It is to ignore the fact that the returning immigrant is often a missionary to an inferior civilization...They return with an entirely new critical outlook, and a sense of the superiority of American organization to the primitive living around them. This continued passage to and fro has already raised the material standard of living in many regions of these backward countries... In the migratory Greek, therefore, we have not the parasitic alien, the doubtful American asset, but a symbol of that cosmopolitan interchange which is coming, in spite of all war and national exclusiveness." (1916, pp. 187)

Bourne published this piece in The Atlantic Monthly in 1916. But the issues he raises still concern us. We ask how the transnational ties sustained by contemporary migrants differ from those in the past. We debate whether these connections will persist beyond the second generation. We argue over whether "the continued passage to and fro" weakens or enhances American civil and political institutions. And we continue to debate migration's impact on sending-country life.

This last question is my primary focus in this paper. I will argue that to understand the relationship between migration and development more clearly, we need to take a closer look at what migrants send back to their countries-of-origin, the actual mechanisms of transmission, and the factors conditioning the impact of these transfers. These "social remittances" are distinct from other kinds of cultural diffusion. We need to understand how they are different and to analyze the significance of these migration-driven cultural transfers on development. How are the values and practices brought by immigrants transformed by their new lives? What gets transmitted home and by whom? What is the nature of the dissemination process?

Social remittances are the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from

receiving to sending-country communities. They are the under-studied, local-level counterpart of macro-level, global, cultural flows. They are the north-to-south equivalent of the social and cultural resources brought by immigrants which ease their transition from "immigrants" to "ethnics." The role that these resources play in promoting immigrant entrepreneurship, community and family formation, and political integration is widely acknowledged. What is less clear is how these ideas and practices are remolded by U.S. life and what their role is in creating and transforming transnational communities.

My principal concern in this paper is to define the concept of social remittances. By clarifying the term "social remittances," I want to call attention to these types of transfers, distinguish them from other cultural exchanges, and explore the determinants of their impact on transnational community life. I do not intend to make an argument about the role of social remittances in transnational community development. Instead, I want to offer illustrative examples of what is transmitted, how it is diffused, and the factors which condition its impact. Elsewhere, I argue extensively about the costs and benefits of social remittance flows (Levitt 1996a).

This paper is based on a study of a transnational community spanning Miraflores, a semi-urban village outside the city of Bani in the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica Plain, a poor, urban neighborhood in Boston. Almost 70 percent of the 445 households in Miraflores have relatives in the greater Boston Metropolitan area who began emigrating about 30 years ago (Levitt 1996a). The study examines the transnational religious, political, legal, and community organizational systems which link these two communities. It focuses on The Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD), one of the principal opposition political parties; the Catholic Church; The

Miraflores Development Committee, a community organization; and Dominican legal and judicial institutions.¹

THEORETICAL ROOTS

Neoclassical or Equilibrium Theorists viewed international migration as positive for both sending and receiving countries (Friedlander 1965; Griffin 1976; Hume 1973; Rose 1976). Migrants, they argued, supplement a scarce domestic labor force, earn good wages, and acquire human capital. They generate remittances and savings that ameliorate imbalances in the global distribution of resources and even out the international income distribution, thereby lessening inequality and promoting economic growth. Remittances also provide investment capital, support the balance of payments, and stimulate a demand for locally-produced goods and services. Exported labor acts as a safety valve for unemployment. Those migrants who return home allegedly do so with new skills, attitudes, and technology which stimulates sending-country economies (Kritz et al. 1981; Keely and Tran 1989).²

Historical-Structuralists are more pessimistic about the relationship between migration and development (Rhoades 1978; Weist 1979; Portes and Walton 1981; Portes and Borocz 1989; Sassen-Koob 1978). Since the most productive community members are often those who move, migration contributes to skilled labor shortages and depletes the human resources pool. Migrants acquire few new skills which are generally irrelevant in their home countries (Kearney 1986). Migration makes consumers out of producers as declines in agricultural production reduce food supplies and exports while heightening the demand for imports. Since immigrant workers earn low wages, they can barely meet their own subsistence needs, let alone send remittances. In cases where remittances do occur, they are said to be spent conspicuously on consumer goods or non-

mandatory food imports (Cornelius 1976).

To balance out the neoclassical focus on individuals with historical-structuralists' over-emphasis on macro-economic relations and structures, migration scholars focused on how social networks and households mediate between local and global processes (Pessar 1995). They found that over time, a dense web of social ties, permeated by reciprocal obligations for assistance, links migrants and non-migrants and stimulates a self-perpetuating process with an internal momentum of its own (Massey, Goldring, and Durand 1994). Massey (1990) referred to this as the "cumulative causation of migration." Reichert (1981) called it "the migrant syndrome" and Alarcon (1989) used the term "Northernization" to describe the process by which localities specialize in the production and reproduction of international migrants.

The sustained movement back and forth between communities-of-origin and destination, coupled with a recognition of the patterned way in which migration unfolds, prompted some scholars to speak of transnational communities (Duany 1994; Georges 1990; Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Gold 1996; Goldring 1992; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Guarnizo 1992; Guarnizo 1994; Massey et al. 1994; Reichert 1981; Smith 1995). The roots of these communities lie in the structural requirements of advanced capitalism (Portes and Borozc 1989). The core's need for labor and its penetration into peripheral markets gives rise to dense and extensive immigrant social networks spanning great distances. These ties make unique economic activities possible including long distance labor markets, collective savings strategies, informal credit associations, and transnational enterprises (Portes 1996). Though these transnational pursuits are initially economic, they gradually spread to political, cultural, and social activities and create transnational communities.

What is meant by the term, "transnational community" is not clear. Some researchers reject it outright saying it implies a boundedness or solidarity that simply does not exist. Others use the term to refer to all members of a particular country-of-origin regardless of their place of residence. I use the term with another, very specific idea in mind. The Miraflores-Jamaica Plain connection grows out of strong, widespread, interactive ties between two, fairly-discrete localities.³ All Mirafloreños belong to this transnational group, whether non-migrant or emigrant, because the impact of migration on village life is all-pervasive. Their self-consciousness as members of this group is demonstrated by their creation of the transnational Miraflores Development Committee. The social rules, patterns of behavior, and status hierarchies observed in each setting increasingly combine sending and receiving-country elements because of the constant circulation of goods, ideas, and people between the two sites.

One way transnational communities are created and transformed is through social remittance flows. For a more complete appreciation of the relationship between migration and development, we need to understand how social remittances arise and are transmitted as well as to sort out how they differ from other types of cultural diffusion. We need to understand their significance for transnational community emergence and social as well as economic change.

SOCIAL REMITTANCES DEFINED

The idea of social remittances is not entirely new. My aim is to make explicit what prior studies infer, to draw lessons from related bodies of work, particularly institutional analysis, and to systematically define a useful analytical tool.

Social remittances are the ideas, practices, identities, and social capital that are transmitted through the migration circuit. Social remittances are carried by migrants and travelers or they are

exchanged by letter, video, or phone. They travel through well-marked pathways -- be they formal or informal organizational structures or during interpersonal exchanges between individuals.

Many of the changes that migration gives rise to do not result from social remittance flows. Other kinds of change catalysts are also at work. In some cases, the transformation of sending-country life is a social consequence of the economic fruits of migration. The monies villagers receive from their emigrant family members change social patterns. For example, both teachers and parents in Miraflores complained that young people did not take their studies as seriously as they used to.

"Many kids don't want to go to school or learn a trade because they've become accustomed to receiving money from their parents in Boston. They don't want to make a life for themselves here because they are waiting for their papers to go to the U.S. They don't have to plan for their future because they think their parents will always take care of them. So they drop out, sit around all day, get into trouble, and set a bad example for the younger ones." (Dolores, teacher, Miraflores)

Teenagers in Miraflores did not learn these attitudes from their friends and relatives in the U.S. But because their parents send them money each month, they do not have to go to school or learn a trade. They do not want to farm, though it is one of the few ways to make a living in Miraflores, because farming is no longer considered prestigious work. Since, as one young man commented, "you make so much more money by migrating than by working the land, who wants to work in the hot sun all day?" Young Mirafloreños do not see themselves making a future in Miraflores and often say, as the same young man did, "I'm waiting for my immigration papers instead." Changes prompted by remittances also differ from those resulting from new organizational demands generated by migration. A Dominican priest working regularly in a parish in New York during his vacations liked the fact that churchgoers feel such a strong affinity toward

their church. He is a social remittance carrier because, when he returned home once, he compiled a list of those living in his parish and used some of the community-building techniques he learned in the U.S. to stimulate a similar sense of membership.

But not all the new functions assumed by the Dominican church result from social remittance flows. In 1994, the U.S. Embassy began requiring that individuals submit baptismal and birth certificates in order to obtain a visa. The Archdiocese of Bani had to establish a separate office to cope with the numerous requests for papers it received. A black market for counterfeit documents developed. The creation of the new office and the regulations put in place to prevent fraud, however, were reactions to new demands that migration had placed on the organization. They did not result from social remittance flows.

FROM SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES TO SOCIAL REMITTANCES

How are the ideas and practices brought by immigrants transformed into social remittances? What determines what social and cultural elements from the U.S. are adopted? What factors influence the ways in which these combine with home-country ideas and practices?

Studies of evolutionary institutional change suggest useful approaches to these questions. Evolutionary change is change that is strongly shaped by the structure of already existing-institutional arrangements and rationalities which constrain and enable subsequent choices (Campbell 1995). Some researchers call these processes path-dependent -- events which arise through a branching process such that once a particular choice occurs, other routes are no longer possible (Scott 1995). Campbell (1995) describes a change mechanism involving interaction, interpretation, and bricolage whereby new and old institutional principles are combined to create solutions that differ from but resemble old ones. The concept of bricolage entails putting these

hybrid or grafted products towards new and different uses (Douglas 1986, Levi-Strauss 1962)

A similar process occurs in social remittance evolution. Immigrants interact to varying degrees with the host society. They make sense of their experiences using the interpretive frames they bring with them. Just as institutional actors' choices are curtailed and facilitated by the routines, ideas, and norms already in place, so the new behaviors and views that immigrants adopt are also a function of how things were done at home. The extent to which these frames are altered is a function of the intensity and location of their interaction with the receiving society (Portes and Zhou 1993). In some cases, new elements are grafted on to existing ones. In others, creolization occurs (Foner 1994), where social relations and cultural patterns are created by the intermingling of immigrant and receiving-country forms and are often used in ways that they were not originally intended.

How do immigrant actors select the new technical and symbolic elements they use to create social remittances? Those who interact more intensively with the host society are more likely to be exposed to new features, reflect upon their existing practices, and incorporate new items into their routines. Challenges to the existing routines of those who stay within the ethnic community are likely to be weaker and to be made up of fewer elements.

Mirafloreños exhibit a range of experiences along this heuristic continuum. I identify three ideal types in order to indicate broad patterns rather than to suggest that individuals fit precisely into these molds. At one end of the spectrum, there are the passive recipients, most often women⁴, who remain at home, shop and socialize with other Latinos, and interact only rarely with the Anglo community. These individuals do not seek new tools actively. They passively absorb new ideas and practices by observing the world around them, listening to the descriptions of

others, or watching that world on T.V.

Other Mirafloreños participate more fully in U.S. life. Their interactions at work, on public transportation, or with medical or educational professionals force them to shift their reference frames. They need to incorporate new skills to be able to get along. These instrumental adapters alter their routines, and add to them, for pragmatic reasons, so they can better meet the challenges and constraints of immigrant life.

Finally, there are those immigrants who are purposeful innovators. In contrast to passive recipients, they are sponges who aggressively search for, select, and absorb new things. In contrast to instrumental adapters, they are motivated by the need to cope and by a desire to get ahead. They creatively add and combine what they take in with existing elements, thereby expanding and extending their repertoire.

The level of contact between home and host-country organizations also conditions social remittance impact at the organizational level. Transnational organizations formed by chapters of sending-country entities involve less contact with receiving-country ideas and practices than those that combine sending and receiving-country groups. Only a few members of the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) in Boston, for example, had any experience with the Republican or Democratic Parties. The new ideas and practices that party members adopted grew out of their observations of U.S. politics, not from their direct participation in U.S. political groups. And because the transnational religious system combines U.S. and Dominican Catholic-church components, the remittances which evolve reflect a greater synthesis of U.S. and Dominican practice.

Several patterns of social remittance evolution result. In some cases, immigrants abandon

elements of the social and cultural tools they arrive with. They are irrelevant in the U.S. or structural and social constraints mitigate against their use. For instance, Doña Gabriela reported that she stopped holding popular, folk-based ceremonies in her home (Hora Santas) because they were just too complicated to organize in the U.S. Since fellow villagers have less free time, live farther away from one another, and are reluctant to go out in the cold, she could never be sure that enough people would attend. She decided, instead, to have a mass said in honor of her deceased mother at her local parish.

Beliefs also weaken, behaviors become unfamiliar, and social capital is depleted if not regularly used. Patrones (benefactors), for example, lose their hold over their "clients" if they do not bestow favors upon them regularly. Individuals involved in relations of reciprocal obligation may not see each other as often in the U.S. as they do at home. The patrón has more limited access to goods he can distribute so his capacity to make claims weakens.

Certain aspects of the social and cultural resources immigrants bring are unchanged by life in the U.S. This second pattern occurs most often among the passive recipient group. Because their interaction with the host society is more limited, many of their norms and practices go unchallenged. They carry on as they did before emigrating because the lives they lead are quite similar to those they led at home.

A third pattern occurs when immigrants add new items to their cultural repertoire without altering existing elements. They expand the range of practices they engage in without modifying their old habits or ideas. This occurs most frequently among instrumental adjusters. One example of this is the new skills Mirafloreña women acquire at work. Since most emigrant Mirafloreñas did not work outside of their homes before they came to the U.S., they learn a whole

new set of skills in the process of job seeking alone.

"When I got here, my sister tried to get me a job but there was no work at the company she was working for. I had to go down and speak to the supervisors at the places people told me about. I wasn't used to talking to people I didn't know. I had to use the telephone. In Miraflores, they had just gotten a phone at Carmen's house (her mother-in-law next door) and I wasn't used to talking to people that way. I had to find my way downtown on the subway. And I had hardly ever been to Santo Domingo by myself."
(Teresa, 38, emigrant Mirafloreña, Boston)

Teresa incorporates this new expertise into the repertoire of skills she uses everyday. She has acquired new capabilities that do not call into question her old ones. Her collection of skills, attitudes, and routines is added to but not transformed.

In a fourth scenario, which occurs most frequently among purposeful innovators, immigrants' ideas and practices combine with host-country norms. In these instances, cross-pollination occurs producing hybrid social forms. Dress is a good example of this, though its impact is most apparent in Miraflores, where these styles have been remitted back.

Mirafloreñas in the Dominican Republic normally wear tight-fitting, brightly-colored clothing. They continue to dress this way in Boston with some slight modifications, exchanging shorts for pants and sleeveless blouses for long-sleeved shirts. They start wearing boots in the cold weather. One sees some anomalies. Some men continue to go without socks though they wear heavy coats. Others heat their houses at 85 to 90 degrees and continue to wear light clothing throughout the winter.

Non-migrants see these styles when emigrants visit. They also receive clothing as gifts. Because young women, in particular, want to emulate these patterns, they combine elements of their own wardrobes with items from the U.S. and a new, hybrid style emerges. Women wear

boots with shorts. They wear long-sleeved clothing in 80 degree weather. They dye their hair bright shades of blond, though their natural color is dark brown. Patterns of dress no longer reflect the climate. Rather, current fashion combines U.S. and Dominican elements.

Whether expanded upon or hybridized, these social and cultural resources become the substance of social remittance flows. The following section describes the actual content of these transfers and differentiates them from other cultural flows.

WHAT IS EXCHANGED?

There are at least four types of social remittances -- normative structures, identities, systems of practice, and social capital.

Normative Structures

Normative structures are ideas, values, and beliefs. They include norms for interpersonal behavior, notions of intra-family responsibility, standards for age and gender-appropriate behavior, accepted principles of neighborliness and community participation, and aspirations for social mobility. Normative structures also include expectations about organizational performance. For example, ideas about how the church and state should function are transmitted. Norms concerning the role of clergy and politicians are also exchanged.

Several prior studies document the influence of normative structure-type social remittances without defining them as such. The changing values and social ties that Polish immigrants wrote about to their non-migrant family members allegedly fostered greater individuality at home (Thomas and Znackieki 1929). The cassettes that immigrants from Haiti and St. Vincent sent home introduced the latest music and fashion to even the most remote rural areas (Richman 1987). Return emigrants to the West Indies repatriated change-inducing

ideologies they learned from the Black Power movement in the U.S. (Patterson 1988). In some settings, migration furnished a channel through which a bi-directional flow of ideas traveled, allowing political events at home to influence migrant communities abroad while migrant experiences were relayed in the opposite direction (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow 1987).

Mirafloreños also communicate the values and norms they observe to those at home.

"When I go home, or speak to my family on the phone, I tell them everything about my life in the U.S. What the rules and law are like. What is prohibited here. I personally would like people in the Dominican Republic to behave the way people behave here. The first time I went back to the Dominican Republic after nine years away, I arrived at the airport. I saw the floor was filthy and that the smokers threw their cigarette butts everywhere. And I said wait a minute. I even said it to the police who were there. How can this be, the gateway to our country is the airport. It should be clean and neat and people should be polite. When people put out their cigarettes they should use an ashtray. Tourists will get a bad impression when they see this mess. So when I smoked, I used an ashtray. It's not just saying things but doing them to provide a good example. When I'm in Miraflores, when I see people throwing garbage on the ground, I don't go and pick it up because that would be too much, but I get up and throw my own garbage away and everyone sees me do it. And those that have a little consciousness, without me saying anything, the next time they have to throw something out, they'll probably remember that they saw this, and its the right thing to do, and they'll do it. These things and many more, the good habits I've acquired here, I want to show people at home." (Pepe, Dominican immigrant, Boston)

Both positive and negative role models are introduced. Most emigrant Mirafloreños work hard in Boston. After years of saving, some people eventually return home, build a house, and settle into work or retirement. But there are also those who make quick, easy money by cheating the welfare system or filing disability insurance claims for accidents feigned at work. They model an alternative route to social mobility, all the more tempting because they leave with so little, return with so much, and so few of them seem to get caught.

"Before, for example, if a father knew that his son was involved in some sort of illegal activity, he punished him. Now, it is the other way around. A lot of those

who migrate make money fast. People know they are doing something illegal but the parents make excuses for this. The kid becomes, in the context of the family and the community, not someone looked down on but a sort of hero. They go, they succeed, and it doesn't really matter how." (Folklorist, Bani)

Identity

Notions about gender, class, and racial identity are also socially remitted. The social position that individuals occupy determines their access to different ideas and resources and colors their perceptions of what is possible and what is proper (Sewell 1992). Migrants' social positions are altered by their journeys. The concepts of self they carry with them are challenged and reshaped by the host country context and then sent back home. These revised concepts expose non-migrants to a more ample range of possible identities from which to choose. In fact, the migration experience increasingly involves managing these fluid statuses which often conflict with one another (Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994; Goldring 1996; Smith 1995).

In Miraflores, notions of gender identity, in particular, are changing. Due to their more active participation in public life in the U.S., women modify their notions of what is right and appropriate, and they transmit these back to Miraflores. Non-migrant women use these social remittances to construct new versions of womanhood. While their ideas are somewhat romanticized, they still represent a significant shift in thinking about what it means to be a woman.

"I don't say that I won't get married to someone from here because he doesn't have a gold necklace.⁵ I want to marry someone from there because they have another mentality. They have changed the way they think. When they live there, they see that there isn't machismo. In the U.S. machismo doesn't exist." (Luisa, 28, non-migrant, Miraflores)

Non-migrants also have images of how emigre men and women share household chores. They hear that many men clean, cook, and shop in the U.S. These notions challenge their

understandings of the meaning of marriage and motherhood and about what men and women's roles and responsibilities should be,

"If I work and he works, then we both will have to maintain the house, because I will have the same rights as he does. Work is what changes things because if a woman does not depend on a man, since she works, if she sees something that she likes in the store, and she has just gotten paid, she can buy it. She doesn't have to ask for his permission." (Maria, 22, Non-migrant Miraflores)

This is not to say that all women are in a position to act upon these new self-concepts. Many of those who achieved some measure of financial independence in the U.S. become dependent upon their husbands when they return because there are so few jobs in Miraflores. Other return emigres, though, preserve some measure of autonomy. They start small businesses in their homes, organize raffles⁶, wrest control of the family budget, or tell their emigrant children to send economic remittances directly to them rather than their husbands. By renegotiating these arrangements, and by talking about and modeling these types of behaviors, emigrant women introduce new gender identities to non-migrant women as well.

Systems of Practice

Systems of practice are the actions shaped by normative structures. For individuals, these include the tasks one performs in the households, religious practices, and patterns of civil and political participation. Within organizations, they include modes of member recruitment and socialization, strategies, leadership styles, and patterns of intra-organizational contact.

In Miraflores, these types of social remittances have far-reaching effects that range from changing living conditions to altering patterns of political participation. For instance, because of the heat in Miraflores, people spend long hours out of doors. They conduct much of their private lives within public view. Their houses are built with many windows so that women can easily

converse with those working nearby. Most houses also have front galerías (porches) where Mirafloreños typically spend long afternoons, watching the street life as they tomar fresco (literally, take in the coolness) from their rocking chairs.

"In small communities like Miraflores, people always stop to say hello. It is very uncommon for someone just to pass by. You have to stop, greet, embrace, ask how did you sleep? How are the children? There is a minimal level of privacy; sometimes privacy hardly exists. Your neighbor knows your debts, who lent you money, where you are at any particular time. The solidarity is immense."

(Journalist, Bani)

When Mirafloreños move to Boston they are isolated from their neighbors. Several respondents said that they lived in the same building for several years but they never met the people living across the hall. While some felt this contributed to their loneliness, others became accustomed to living more independently, without "everyone knowing my affairs." When they returned to Miraflores, their desire to protect their privacy was one factor motivating the types of houses they chose to build.⁷ Some eliminated the front galería and oriented their homes toward a more private patio in the back. Others built homes surrounded by high walls. As more and more people imitate these behaviors, a less communal lifestyle, that is closer to patterns in the U.S., will probably emerge.

Patterns of organizational behavior are also socially remitted. Dominican priests and seminary students who serve in the U.S. are also social remittance carriers.⁸ One priest liked the "organized sociability" at the parish he visited in the U.S. so he instituted an after-mass coffee hour in the Dominican Republic and began personally greeting parishioners outside the church at

the end of each service. After observing lay ministers give communion, a second priest organized a training school where Dominican parishioners are learning to perform these rituals. He also wants to introduce the "personalized" collection envelopes he noted in the U.S. as a way to teach his parishioners a stronger sense of financial responsibility to the church.

Social Capital⁹

Both the values and norms on which social capital is based, and social capital itself, are socially remitted. Basch (1987), for example, found that the prestige and position that Vincentian and Grenadian leaders and activists acquired could be transferred back and forth between the home and host society. This also occurs in Miraflores. For example, when the non-migrant sister of the current Miraflores Development Committee (MDC) president in Boston became ill, her family went to the health clinic and asked the doctors to make a home-visit, which they refused to do. Her relatives became angry and told the physicians she was related to the president of the MDC, which had recently paid for extensive clinic renovations. When the doctors heard this, they suddenly became available. The president's family in Miraflores harnessed the social capital he accrued in Boston to help a family member at home.

Access to social capital can also decline. If an emigrant Mirafloreño does not contribute to the community, but is thought to be in a position to do so, his family in Miraflores may suffer the consequences. After Manuel was promoted to supervisor in Boston, he began charging fellow community members to get them jobs. When word of this got back to Miraflores, committee members openly criticized his behavior. They did not solicit his family's help with the baseball stadium construction project, relegating them to a more marginalized position in the community.

MECHANISMS OF TRANSMISSION

Social remittance exchanges occur between individuals, within social networks, and within transnational organizational systems. Exchanges between individuals occur when emigrants return to live in or visit their communities-of-origin; during the less frequent visits of non-migrants to their emigrant family members; or through interchanges of letters, videos, cassettes, and telephone calls. They spread through the transnational social networks spanning sending and receiving-country sites. Social remittances are also transmitted through the transnational organizational systems which migration gives rise to. Here again, the remittances themselves are communicated interpersonally or by letter, fax, or phone. They occur within an organizational context between individuals enacting their organizational roles. Social remittances also flow through the looser, informally-organized groups that are connected to these formal organizations. For instance, temporary political working groups organized by Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) members or informal groups formed to organize popular religious ceremonies are also forums for social remittance transmission.

The Miraflores-Jamaica Plain relations described here are only one part of a multi-level web of interactions among countries. Social remittances are transmitted along with, but are distinct from, several other types of global transfers. Contrasting these with social remittances helps clarify further what social remittances are.

First, social remittance transfers take place within the context of the world society. World-level institutions or complexes of normative frameworks, regimes, discourses, issue-networks, structures that are rationalized by professions, nation-states, and the mass media provide stability and meaning to social behavior (Meyer 1994; Scott 1995; Krasner 1983; Sikkink

1986). Since organizations are deeply embedded in these institutional contexts (Meyer and Rowan 1983), they are the product of increasing sophistication and the heightened rationalization of cultural rules. For example, Soysal (1994) showed how global principles of national sovereignty and universal human rights combined with national-level incorporation regimes to condition levels of non-citizen political participation.

The global diffusion of ideas and culture also accompany social remittance transfers. Technology, capital, media, styles, and ideas flow ubiquitously across national boundaries (Appadurai 1990; Featherstone 1991; Robertson 1992). That the overwhelmingly popular television program, *Dallas*, reached millions means that villagers in the remotest parts of Asia and Latin America share some sort of global frame-of-reference (Liebes and Katz 1990). The numerous styles of music, food, and dress that result are the tangible cultural products of these contacts.

These two types of transfers differ from social remittances in several important ways. First, the paths through which world-level institutions and global cultural diffusion occur are not always clear. It is sometimes difficult to sort out how these global institutions emerge and are disseminated. In contrast, social remittances normally travel through well-marked channels. It is possible to trace their source and destination. Migrants and non-migrants can specify how they learned of a particular idea or practice. In some cases, global transfers heighten social remittance impact. Non-migrants, for example, may begin demanding better social programs, both because they hear about the kinds of services their relatives receive in the U.S. and because of the stories they see on the Cable News Network (CNN). The Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) adopted a rhetoric of greater participation because return emigrants pressured the party to do so

and because an international pool of ideas, which supported the utility of markets and democracy, was in vogue (Dominguez 1996).

A second feature that distinguishes social remittances from these other types of transfers is that the latter are often unsystematic and not entirely intentional. Non-migrants may also begin to hold their politicians more accountable when they happen to hear on the radio that the President of the United States is being investigated for his involvement in questionable real estate dealings. But these messages are not aimed at specific individuals. Many Mirafloreños are not listening. Others hear about it by accident. A comparable transfer of information that is a social remittance occurs when emigrants speak directly to their family members about a different kind of politics and encourage them to pursue change. In this case, ideas are communicated intentionally and to a specific recipient or group of recipients. Villagers can specify when and why they changed their mind about something or began to act in a different way.

This is not to say that social remittances cannot be an en-masse dissemination of ideas, but that to be characterized as such, idea transmission must be organized and purposefully- focused. Mirafloreños may rethink their religious practices when they happen to watch a tele-evangelist but this could not be considered the result of social remittance transfers. However, those who adopt new behaviors because they join a religious movement group at an emigrant friend's prompting are responding to social remittance flows.

A third distinguishing aspect of social remittances is their carriers. Elite migrants also transport ideas (Hall 1989). They introduce technical expertise and skills. They often belong to influential social networks which allow them to act upon their ideas or to encourage others to do so. In Latin America, for example, techno-pols introduced and applied an international pool of

ideas they learned while studying abroad, to fashion market-oriented economic policies and consolidate democracy (Dominguez 1996). Some argue that the influx of European intellectual refugees during the 1930's prompted a "sea change" in American thought (Hughes 1975). In each of these examples, it is highly-educated cosmopolites speaking to an influential audience who introduce and promote these intellectual trends.

In general, social remittances are the provincial cousins of these elite transfers. They are transmitted by "common folk" who have little contact with the upper echelons of power. Even many return migrants remain "locals" despite their cosmopolitan experience (Hannerz 1990). Instead, social remittance carriers tend to participate in the village, municipal, or provincial levels of civil and political life. If they have connections at all, it is to local and regional elites. The ideas and practices they introduce are the community-level, change-from-below counterpart of elite idea carriers' influence on high politics.

One exception to this is social remittance transfers within organizational contexts. In a small number of cases, high-level political party or church "elites," who have lived or traveled often to the U.S. are also social remittance transmitters. Return emigrants or frequent travelers may also achieve high-level organizational roles, thereby enhancing their ability to communicate social remittances. An excellent example of this is the newly-elected President of the Dominican Republic, Lic. Leonel Fernandez, who spent most of his childhood in New York City. In television campaign ads shown on the island, Fernandez appeared shooting basketball to highlight his international experience. According to his campaign manager in New York, "He's going to turn this country into a little New York, but with the decency of Dominicans." (Boston Globe, July 2, 1996). One of the ways he is likely to do this is by introducing social remittances.

A fourth characteristic differentiating social remittances from other cultural flows is the timing with which they are communicated relative to other types of transfers. In many cases, a staged process occurs whereby global flows precede and ease the way for social remittance transmission. Since many non-migrants want to emulate the consumption patterns they see in the U.S. media, they are often more receptive to the new political and religious styles that their emigrant family members later introduce. Calls for greater political and economic participation by women are greeted more receptively because they come on the heels of a widely-accepted discourse about the importance of equality for women. Social remittance flows do not arise out-of-the-blue. They are part-and-parcel of the already on-going process of cultural diffusion. Gradual transmission sets the stage for future remittance transfers which then seem to make more sense.

DETERMINANTS OF IMPACT

Social remittances are separable from their effect -- normative structures, identities, social capital, and systems of practice may be transmitted but produce little change. A variety of factors, which I outline below, determine the nature and magnitude of social remittance impact. Again, I turn to institutional analysis for insights into the factors which enable and constrain these diffusion processes.

The Nature of the Remittance Itself - Remittance impact partially depends on how easy a particular remittance is to transmit. Some remittances are difficult to package. They are slippery and unstable, and therefore unwieldy to send. They may be so complex that it is difficult to "theorize" or communicate them (Strang and Meyer 1994). Or, to be transmittable, they may have to be broken down into component parts, thereby heightening the potential for

misinformation and confusion. In contrast, other types of remittances are fairly straightforward. They travel cleanly through transmission channels after which they are either adopted or ignored.

For example, member recruitment or vote winning strategies are clear. They are either appropriated as is, modified and adopted, or disregarded. In contrast, values and norms fluctuate more easily. Immigrants constantly redefine and re-negotiate them. Their fluid nature makes them more difficult to simplify and express, therefore diminishing their force.

One return emigrant alluded to these differences when he described how he manages professional and personal relationships since he returned home. He has little difficulty applying the norms for impersonal, job-related relations he assimilated in the U.S. to his workplace in Miraflores. He is the boss, the rules are straightforward, and many workers perceive them as an improvement over standard practice.

"Many people don't want to teach anyone their job because they are afraid someone will take work away from them. I want everyone to learn. Here in the factory, there are always two men who know how to work the same machine so if one gets sick, I can count on the other. Also, before I was a worker, now I'm a boss. In the U.S., I worked with good people, they taught me and treated me like a human being. They didn't treat me like an underling, and I try to act the same way toward my workers here. I don't have an office, I'm out there all the time with the workers. I move with them. The other Dominican bosses I know are different. They sit in their offices and their workers have to ask for permission to speak with them. Their bosses make them wait." (Jorge, return emigrant, Miraflores)

But he finds it more difficult to put his new values concerning family into practice.

"Everyone has to work in the U.S. You can't support your brother for a year. Here it is different. If my brother is not working and he can't find work I have to support him. This is my family. In the U.S. there is always work if you want work. One's responsibility changes because since there are jobs, you don't feel like you have to support someone just because they don't feel like working. In Santo

Domingo, there are fewer jobs. If my brother shows up at my house at lunch time, what can I do? I have to give him food and if he needs a place to sleep, I have to give him a roof. But I also feel he needs to take some responsibility for himself." (Jorge, return emigrant, Miraflores)

Jorge's dilemma with respect to his family stems from his inability to reconcile the differences between the values he acquired in the U.S. and the structural constraints to their realization in the Dominican Republic. He wavers, caught by his own relativism. The remittances he communicates to others are less coherent and therefore less likely to have an impact.

The Nature of the Transnational System - The features of transnational organizational systems and social networks also influence remittance effect. Remittances flow more efficiently through tightly-connected, dense systems because they tend to consist of similar parts and to use similar transmission technologies. Transfers within more open, informal systems are sloppier, less efficient, and more prone to interference by other cultural exchanges. They can resemble the child's game of "telephone" in that each time a message is communicated, it becomes increasingly distorted in the translation.

The Boston-Dominican transnational church system, for instance, is formed by interpersonal connections between priests, parishioners, and seminarians. Few formal organizational structures connect the two churches. Because these transnational ties are based on interpersonal relationships, communication tends to be more circuitous, unsystematic, and leaky. In more structured settings, or in cases of tightly-woven social networks, the most effective transmission channel is clear. The connections between organizational units or network members are closer and more well-established, such as in social networks involving women. Each of these factors heightens remittance impact.

The open nature of the religious system also means that these types of social remittances

are more vulnerable to interference by other global flows. For example, Catholic religious messages must compete with those from Evangelical churches which flow outside its purview. In contrast, the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) established a branch of the party organization in the U.S. that mirrors its Dominican structure. Political social remittances travel directly, and with some degree of protection, through its organized, secure channels. Since the technology used to transfer remittances and the organizational units between which they flow are similar, remittances wield a greater effect.

Finally, remittance impact also changes at different stages of organizational development. New organizations or organizations in flux tend to be more malleable or amenable to change. The PRD's 1986 electoral defeat left it in disarray. Bitter internal disputes discredited the party in the eyes of the Dominican public. To restore unity, and to regain and extend its base of support, the PRD underwent a major structural overhaul. Party leaders also instituted some of these changes in recognition of the emigrant community's increasing influence over party life. When return emigrant members suggested new strategies for membership recruitment, they felt that party leaders were more receptive to their ideas because so many routines were open to discussion during this organizational "window of opportunity."

The Target Audience - Remittance impact is also a function of relative levels of status and power between senders and receivers. In some cases, remittance adoption may be higher because senders and receivers occupy similar class and cultural positions. In other cases, receivers are responsive because they have a perception of themselves as being similar to the social remittance transmitters. There are also cases in which recipients adopt remittances because they want to preserve their parallel footing or to "keep up with the Jones" (Strang and Meyer 1994).

Status and power differences can enhance openness to remittances as well (Westney 1987). Community members who are older, male, monied, or recognized leaders heighten remittance acceptance because they set standards others want to emulate, they redefine what is appropriate and valued, or they pressure others into greater responsiveness.¹⁰

In some cases, when receptivity is motivated by a desire to be like someone else, social remittances are purposefully sought after. For example, young siblings were eager to emulate behaviors introduced by their older emigrant brothers and sisters. A frequent complaint in my conversations with young Mirafloreños was that the young women were becoming too self-sufficient and "loose" because they "want to be like those in Boston."

In other cases, Mirafloreños were responsive to remittances because individuals who are legitimate standard bearers in the community introduced them. One explanation for why young Mirafloreños get caught up in illegal money-earning schemes is that the emigres modeling these behaviors have improved their social standing. The money they earn, and the mystique that surrounds emigre life, transform them in the eyes of fellow villagers from pobre infeliczes (poor, unhappy lost souls) to citizens of the world. Though they are criticized for breaking the law, they are also respected for getting away with it. Young Mirafloreños pay attention to these behaviors because they are introduced by "nouveau-influential" community members who are redefining what is "right" and "appropriate."

Senders sometimes pressure individuals into accepting particular ideas and practices. In some cases, individuals have to assimilate social remittances because they depend financially on the transmitter. Receptivity increases because remittances are delivered with a golden glove. When political candidates campaign in Boston they attempt to capitalize on these relationships.

They know that, in many households, emigres can tell their non-migrant family members how to vote.

"In addition to their economic clout, emigrants also influence social and political decisions. It doesn't matter if it's the father, mother, brother or sister who emigrates. Those here become dependent upon them because they need the money that is sent. When their emigrant relatives tell them how to vote, they listen. We went to Boston to talk to the people there, so that when they write home to their relatives, they would tell them to support the Partido de la Liberacion Dominicana." (PLD Leader, Bani)

Gender and generational hierarchies within households also enable some family members to pressure others.

Pressure to accept remittances also occurs within organizational settings. Boston members of the Miraflores Development Committee (MDC) now dominate the committee's activities because they raise most of the funds. Though there is some pretense of shared decision-making, Boston members largely determine what and how projects will be done. In fact, Boston members withheld funds two times during the course of this study because they were not satisfied with project management in Miraflores. They pressured their counterparts into accepting social remittances by withdrawing their financial support.

Finally, individuals at particular stages of their lives are better able to assimilate remittances than others. Younger, unmarried women are more flexible about their future lifestyle than women who are already married with children. They have more "degrees of freedom" with which to respond to remittances.

Differences Between Sending and Receiving Countries - The impact of social remittances also depends, in part, on relative differences between sending and receiving-countries. If the value structures and cognitive models emigrants send home are similar to prevailing norms and do not

challenge entrenched interests, then social remittances tend to be assimilated more quickly. If the new patterns of social relations approximate those already in place, then social remittances are also more likely to be adopted (DiMaggio 1988, Westney 1987). If what is remitted represents a completely new idea or behavior, then it will face greater barriers to acceptance. In this sense, remittance adoption, as well as evolution, is also path-dependent, in that existing normative, cognitive, and structural constraints condition future patterns.

Mirafloreños, for instance, found it easier to adopt new religious practices from the U.S. than political ones. This was because religious remittances were frequently stylistic variations of the Catholic practices that Dominican and Boston parishioners already share. In contrast, political remittances advocating more egalitarian leadership styles went against the grain of "business as usual" and contradicted vested interests. They represented a sharper departure from long-standing political ideas and behaviors.

In contrast, most Mirafloreños vote for the candidate they think will improve their economic standing not for whom they think will do the best job.

"Everyone in politics in the Dominican Republic is looking for something. It is not like the U.S. Everyone works, they support a particular party, but on the day of the election, they work, they vote, and they go home. Here, no one works on the day of the election but they are interested in who wins. 'Oh, we are going to win City Hall, and I will get a job for 1,000 pesos a month.' That is what they are looking for." (Jose, return migrant, Miraflores)

Social remittance transfers encouraging a more substantive approach to politics face major obstacles because they require a significant ideological shift. They also face structural barriers to acceptance because Mirafloreños are likely to continue to view politics as a social mobility strategy until there are other viable means to get ahead.

Finally, remittance impact is also a function of size and power differences between

sending and receiving countries. Remittance transfers from large, powerful countries to smaller, weaker ones will have a greater impact than those between more equal states. Brazilian immigrants in Boston also transmit social remittances to their sending-country city, Gov. Valadares (Martes 1996). I would expect these remittances to have a more diffuse, diluted effect.¹¹ Brazil and the U.S. are more alike with respect to size and socioeconomic development. They are farther apart geographically and culturally. Because of the Dominican Republic's small size and the long history of U.S. involvement in its political and economic affairs, remittance introduction is like throwing large stones into a small, nearby pool. The waves that result are large and frequent. Remittance transmission from the U.S. to Brazil is like throwing stones into a larger, distant body of water. The subsequent ripples are smaller, less intense, and dissipate more quickly.

Features of the Transmission Process - Some remittances have a stronger effect because they travel with other remittances. When one remittance is accepted, it heightens receptivity to the other. For example, most Mirafloreños think of themselves as white. Since Miraflores was settled by Canary Islanders and little intermarriage with neighboring black communities was allowed, many residents are, in fact, lighter-skinned than most other Dominicans. This is a socially-valued quality -- one frequently hears references to "good skin" and "good hair" which are phenotypically white features.

When Mirafloreños arrive in the U.S., however, most U.S. residents see them as people of color. This experience forces some individuals to rethink who they are and how they respond to those around them,

"On our passports, we have the categories white, indio claro (light-skinned Indian), indio negro (dark-skinned Indian), and black. No one ever chooses black, no matter how dark their skin is. When I went to the U.S. I thought of myself as white. Pretty soon I realized that for the Americans, I was just another black person -- someone to fear and stay away from. It made me think about how we treat Haitians here. They live and work near us but it's as if they are invisible. They pass through Miraflores and we don't look at them. I started telling my family that I knew what that felt like and that it had to change." (Juan, 40 year old return emigrant)

In this instance, reports about experiences with discrimination, reflections on racial identity, and ideas about race relations, are remitted together. When non-migrants hear that their family members are victims of racism, some become more responsive to subsequent appeals for greater tolerance.

Remittances traveling through multiple pathways also wield a more significant effect. For example, community funds are now managed with greater care because of joint demands from the Miraflores Development Committee (MDC) in Boston and from community members in general. MDC members pressured for more systematic financial management systems because they wanted to be sure that the money they raised was properly used. Their demands coincided with those of several other emigres who reported on the benefits of tighter administrative controls they had witnessed in the U.S.

Finally, the force of the transmission affects impact. If many remittances are emitted in a sustained manner during a short period, their impact tends to be greater than transfers that emerge more sporadically. If there are many, simultaneous calls for men to share the housework, and numerous examples of this, non-migrants are more likely to follow suit than if they are exposed to only infrequent, isolated examples of these behaviors.

CONCLUSION

Much current research on migration highlights the transnational ties sustained by sending and receiving-country communities and the continuous flow of people, money, goods, and information that are exchanged between them. Studies of the relationship between migration and development often emphasize development's economic dimensions. Not enough attention has been paid to the social remittances that are transmitted between countries-of-origin and destination, to the actual transfer process, or to the factors which condition their role in creating and transforming transnational communities.

In this paper, I propose a conceptual tool for analyzing these dynamics. Immigrants do not absorb all aspects of their new lives unselectively and communicate these intact to those at home, who accept them as is. Instead, there is a screening process at work. Senders adopt certain new ideas and practices while filtering out others and receivers adopt certain elements and turn a blind eye to others as well. Furthermore, the nature of the social remittance itself, the way in which it is transmitted, the characteristics of transnational organizational systems and networks, and differences between individual and nation-state senders and receivers also influence social remittance impact. These factors ultimately shape who receives what kinds of remittances, how likely they are to adopt them, and how they change the transnational community which evolves.

I want to emphasize several determinants of social remittance impact. First, the nature of the transnational systems described here, and the social remittances that flow through them, are strongly influenced by the Dominican Republic's close proximity to the U.S. and the long history of U.S. dominance in Dominican economic and political affairs. These social remittance exchanges take place within the distinctly regional context of what Patterson (1988) calls the

West Atlantic System. Migration flows involving greater geographic and cultural distances, more "low-impact" immigrants (Patterson 1988), or sending and receiving countries that differ less with respect to size and power would produce different types of remittance transfers.

Second, the social remittance transfers I described occur within a historical context that is supportive of sustained transnational relations. Ease of travel and enhanced technology and communication encourage U.S.-bound migrants to preserve their connections to the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America. High barriers to immigrant political and economic integration and sending-country policies which purposefully block assimilation or encourage dual-affiliations also reinforce these connections. Distinct patterns of social remittances would result in contexts that are less conducive to transnational tie maintenance.

Third, both remittance formulation and remittance impact appear to be path-dependent. What immigrants bring with them influences what new elements they incorporate to create social remittances. Similarly, social remittance recipients are more responsive to those remittances that fit better with their prevailing cognitive and normative schemes. Those remittances that are somewhat familiar are more likely to have an effect than those that are totally new.

Fourth, social remittance impact appears to be staged or sequential. That is, previous flows heighten the effect of those that follow them. Sometimes, these earlier flows are global transfers that set the stage for remittances that come after. In other cases, particular remittances pave the way for others. Similarly, remittances may, at first, affect only return emigrants or non-migrants with emigrant family members. But as the migration circuit matures, the magnitude and volume of social remittance transfers increases such that even non-migrants without relatives abroad are also influenced.

Fifth, social remittances wield a stronger effect when they are communicated by influential community members. Transmitters who enjoy social or economic clout can encourage or pressure others to be more responsive. Still, recipients cannot respond to social remittances with complete liberty, even if they want to. They are constrained by the social and economic structures that shape their lives. They are also constrained by their previous choices.

Sixth, social remittances are both positive and negative. There is nothing to guarantee that what is learned in the host society is constructive or that it will have a positive effect on communities-of-origin. In Miraflores, for example, social remittances have broadened the base of community-participation, enhanced organizational effectiveness, and increased accountability among political and civic groups. At the same time, law-breaking and "law-bending" increased as more and more of these behaviors were imported and modeled as viable social mobility schemes.¹ Factors increasing social remittance impact are ethics-blind. They cannot filter out those remittances involving social costs from those that accrue social benefits.

There may be ways, however, in which policy makers and planners can harness social remittances more proactively. Because social remittances emanate from clear sources and travel through identifiable pathways to clear destinations, it may be possible to stimulate purposefully certain kinds of remittance flows. Deliberate exchanges of particular kinds of information or behaviors, such as health practices or business skills, could positively contribute to development outcomes. The intentional transmission of more accurate information about working conditions and economic prospects in the U.S. might also stem the tide of future migration flows.

¹. Elsewhere, I discuss in detail the impact of social remittances on Mirafloreño political, religious, legal, and community organizational life (Levitt 1996a, Levitt 1996b).

Finally, once remittance flows are initiated, the pathways through which they flow, the organizations and individuals that receive them, and the migration circuit within which they are exchanged change constantly. One could imagine other types of transfers that might result. For instance, social remittances transformed by the sending-country context are sent to the receiving country once again.

One case of these "re-remittances" might be the small businesses that women open in Miraflores. Both non-migrant and return emigre women are becoming entrepreneurs in response to the new ideas about gender roles taking hold in Miraflores. Emigre women also want to preserve some measure of the financial independence they achieved in the U.S. The kinds of businesses women are establishing, however, are more typical of those in the Dominican Republic. They include making and selling food or clothing, organizing raffles, setting up a small store at home, or establishing itinerant manicure or haircutting businesses. What we may begin to see is the replication of these informal strategies in Boston. Social remittances, adopted and transformed in Miraflores, are being sent back to Boston where they are then put to use. Hosting weekend domino games in one's apartment, for which admission is charged and beer is sold, is one example of the strategies that are emerging.

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Abstract

Many studies of migration and development focus on migration's economic impacts rather than its social and political consequences. This paper proposes a conceptual tool, social remittances, for understanding the relationship between migration and development more clearly. Social remittances are the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending-country communities. They are the north-to-south equivalent of the social and cultural resources brought by immigrants which ease their transition from "immigrants" to "ethnics." They are an under-studied, local-level counterpoint to global cultural flows. Using the case of migration from the Dominican Republic to Boston, this paper examines how these migration-driven cultural exchanges develop, are transmitted, the determinants of their impact, and how they differ from other kinds of cultural diffusion.

**SOCIAL REMITTANCES: A CONCEPTUAL TOOL
FOR UNDERSTANDING MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Peggy Levitt*
Assistant Professor
Harvard University
William James Hall 636
617-496-6501
Levitt@wjh.harvard.edu

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* Peggy Levitt is an Assistant Professor in the Sociology Department at Harvard University and a member of the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies.

NOTES

conducted field work in Boston and the Dominican Republic using five research strategies including: (1) 115 interviews with institutional leaders, members, and users at the local, municipal, and national levels, (2) observations of meetings, masses, rallies, social events, (3) two sets of in-depth interviews with 20 immigrant families in Boston and 20 return emigrant families in Miraflores, (4) a document review, and (5) a 190-household survey in Miraflores to assess socioeconomic characteristics and migration trends.

More recent versions of this approach, termed the "new economics" of migration, offer a more nuanced view. From this perspective, migration is seen as a strategy allowing households, rather than individuals, to diversify their labor portfolios, maximize income, and minimize risks (Stark and Levhari 1982). While in many cases, migration does make return and productive investments possible, it can also stimulate the need for continued stints of migration as households become increasingly dependent on income earned abroad to circumvent local capital and investment constraints (Stark and Taylor 1989, Massey et al. 1993)

Small numbers of Mirafloresinos also live in Santo Domingo and New York but the strongest connection by far is between Boston and Miraflores

This is not to say that women always change less or that they respond more passively to the migration experience. In fact, several examples later in the paper illustrate the strong influence social remittances exert on Mirafloresina women. In general, social remittances act differently by gender. Social remittances seem to have a more variable impact on women than they do on men.

This refers to emigres' propensity to wear gold chains. While some Mirafloresinos also want this kind of jewelry, others see it as a ostentatious display by the nouveau riche.

Some women bring items back with them from the U.S. or buy things in Santo Domingo that they can raffle off. This is an income generating strategy for them in that the money that they raise, beyond the cost of the item, is their profit.

Social remittances are not the only factor motivating these choices. The desire to display enhanced status or to be able to use technologies such as air conditioning are at play as well.

Dominican priests often serve in northeastern parishes while the regular priest is on vacation. Also, during the 1980's, there was a range program which sent Dominican seminarians to work in U.S. parishes each summer.

Portes and Sensenbrenner define social capital as "those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goal-seeking behavior of its members, even if these expectations are not oriented toward the economic sphere" (1993:132). The introjection, reciprocity transactions, bounded solidarity, and enforceable trust are four sources of social capital through which individual maximizing behavior is constrained" in a fairly predictable way so that these expectations can be utilized as a resource (Portes and Landolt 1996). Coleman (1988), Putnam (1993), and Bourdieu et al. (1991), among others, all offer their own slightly different version of the concept. What is important here, as Portes and Landolt (1996) correctly point out, is that social capital can be used with positive and negative consequences.

I am influenced in my thinking about this by DiMaggio and Powell (1991) who outlined three mechanisms through which institutional isomorphism occurs: coercive, mimetic, and normative.

A comparative study, which examines social remittance flows historically and cross-regionally is currently underway.