

# Teaching Guide

## Living together across borders: Communicative care in transnational Salvadoran families

Lynnette Arnold

This teaching guide aims to support student engagement with this book and provide a structure for class discussions of the book as a whole or individual chapters. For each chapter, there is a list of key terms that are central to the argument of the chapter. Terms are listed in the order they are introduced in each chapter. The reflection questions help students connect the material in the book to their own lives and can be assigned as part of a reading response or homework assignment, journaling exercise, or partner/small-group discussion to launch class discussion of the chapter. The small-group discussion questions focus on key pieces of the author's argument in each chapter and are generally organized according to chapter sections. One way to use these questions is to divide students into the same number of groups as there are questions and have each group discuss one question before bringing their answers back to the large group. This sort of activity can help students to understand more clearly how the author builds the argument of each chapter. The large-group discussion questions capture the main argument of each chapter, and so may be helpful to discuss together after the small group questions have been discussed or may also be assigned for students to complete as part of a reading response.

NOTE: Many of the reflection questions ask students to think about their own families' experiences. Be sure that in answering these questions they are drawing on the broad understanding of kinship introduced in the book rather than relying on assumptions of nuclearity and blood relations (see Reflection Question 2 for the Introduction). Some students may wish to answer these questions by reflecting on experiences with their chosen family or a close group of friends or roommates.

## Prologue—Why I wrote this book

### For reflection

1. The author asks readers to think about the position from which they are encountering this book. What experiences and identities of yours do you think will inform how you read this book? How so?

### For large-group discussion

1. Why did the author write this book?
2. What does the author mean when she says that sharing her story might be read as an authorizing move? Do you read the prologue in this way?
3. The author writes that, regardless of her intentions, “this book will go on to do work in the world that I cannot fully control”. What does this mean?

## Introduction—Communication and Care-at-a-Distance

### Key terms

Convivencia

Multifunctionality

Scale

Neoliberalism

Care

Communicative care

Ethico-moral

### For reflection

1. The author cites recent anthropological work that denaturalizes biology as the basis for defining kinship. Who is in your family? In answering this question, think beyond blood relatedness to consider who you live with, who you feel close to, and who you rely on for support (as well as who relies on you).
2. Have you ever lived away from your family? If so, how did/do you communicate with them? What challenges did/do you face in living separately from your family?

### For large-group discussion

1. Why is communication a useful lens for understanding transnational family life?
2. What are the consequences of cross-border communication for transnational families?

### For small-group discussion

1. How has family separation “been a part of the United States since its founding”? Specifically, how is it part of the policies and practices that shape experiences of migration? (Section: *Navigating Family Separation through Communication*)
2. What are some of the factors that have historically and currently made migration a strategy for family care in El Salvador? (Section: *Migration and Family Care in Rural El Salvador*)
3. The author offers a gloss of care. Why does she do so and what gloss does she offer? (Section: *What is Care?*)
4. How does the author understand kinship? Why is it useful to think about kinship through the lens of care? (Section: *Care and Kinship across Borders*)
5. The author suggests that language facilitates, enacts, and signifies care. Define each of these three relationships in your own terms and give examples of each. (Section: *Communicative Care*)
6. How does this book contribute methodologically to the study of transnational family lives and to care practices? (Section: *Methods for Studying Cross-Border Communication*).

## Chapter 1—Making family care political: State-endorsed migration discourse in El Salvador

### Key terms

Migration discourse

Figures of personhood

Imaginaries

Transnational moral panics

### For reflection

1. What was something you learned that surprised you or that you found interesting about migration discourse in El Salvador?
2. What connections or contrasts do you see between Salvadoran migration discourse and migration discourse in other parts of the world?

### For large-group discussion

1. How does state-endorsed migration discourse in El Salvador make family care political?
2. The author writes that the figures of migrant personhood “function as an ideological companion to neoliberal projects of economic structural adjustment, advancing certain visions of migrant subjectivity that induce migrants, and non-migrants as well, to think and act in particular ways”. What does this mean? How exactly do these figures accomplish this? Explain using the examples of the *hermano lejano* and the selfish migrant.

### For small-group discussion

1. What is state-endorsed migration discourse? In El Salvador, who authors these discourses? Why is it important to study these discourses? (Section: *State-Endorsed Migration Discourse*)
2. What is the overarching contrast that is drawn between figures of migrant personhood in Salvadoran migration discourses? How is this contrast productive for the state? (Section: *Contrastive Migrant Personhood: Heroes or Dangerous Failures*)
3. What are some of the features associated with the figure of the hermano lejano? How does the newer figure of the embajador laboral build on these features? How do these characteristics harness family care to make individuals responsible for national well-being? (Section: *The Heroic Migrant as Economic Provider*)
4. How are figures of failed migrants tied to transnational moral panics? Explain using the figure of the criminalized deportee. What does this analysis reveal about the role of failed migrants in Salvadoran state imaginaries of migration? (Section: *Failed Migrants as Scapegoats in Transnational Moral Panics*)
5. How is the figure of the selfish migrant produced? What characterizes this figure? How does this depiction of the migrante desobligado impact transnational family care? (Section: *The Selfish Migrant: Family Disintegration as National Threat*)
6. How is the figure of the selfish migrant used to set up a particular explanation of the problems El Salvador faces? What does this reveal about how figures of migrant personhood function? (Sections: *The Selfish Migrant: Family Disintegration as National Threat AND Conclusion*).

## Chapter 2—Transnational care in multigenerational households: Asymmetrical practices and moral meanings

### Key terms

Relational grammars

Asymmetrical reciprocity

Moral imaginaries

Gracious personhood

Communicative affordances

### For reflection

1. Think about a close relationship you have (with a family member, friend, or significant other, perhaps even a pet). What constitutes the relational grammar of this relationship? You may wish to consider terms of address, nicknames, inside jokes, and regular patterns of nonverbal communication.
2. The author is very visible in this chapter, as are her relationships with some of the participants, in particular the Mejía family. How does this feel to you? Why do you think the author decided to write about herself in this way?

### For large-group discussion

1. How does language matter for transnational family care? How is cross-border communication shaped by the ways that care in general is organized within these families?
2. How do the actual care practices of transnational families compare to the dominant discourses about transnational families discussed in Chapter 1?

### For small-group discussion

1. Why is it important to attend to relational grammars? What can they reveal about relationships? (Section: *Signifying and Enacting Relationships with Relational Grammars*)
2. What does the narrative of the Mejía family reveal about how care is organized in transnational families? Be sure to discuss the role of the multigenerational extended family, the global household and asymmetrical reciprocity. (Section: *Care in Multigenerational Households*)
3. What are moral imaginaries? Using examples from the Mejía family's narrative, describe how they are relevant for understanding transnational family care? How are these family imaginaries of kin care related to the state-endorsed imaginaries described in Chapter 1? (Section: *Envisioning Asymmetry and Reciprocity*)
4. What is gracious personhood? How does it shape the gendered and generational distribution of care in transnational families? How do differences between migrants and non-migrants matter for gracious personhood and what are the consequences for transnational family life? (Section: *Envisioning Asymmetry and Reciprocity*)
5. Why did these families rely on phone calls for transnational communication? Be sure to consider their communicative affordances and how these were mobilized in ways that were tied to asymmetrical reciprocity. (Section: *Communication Technologies and Affordances*)
6. How are phone calls connected to face-to-face conversations in both countries? What sorts of opportunities for social action does this provide to the members of transnational families? (Section: *Contesting Asymmetries through Interwoven Conversations*)

## Chapter 3—“Les mando saludos”: Sending greetings, envisioning family, and grappling with inequality

### Key terms

phatic communication  
genre  
greetings  
language socialization

### For reflection

1. How did you feel while reading the examples included in this chapter? Did any grab your in a particular way, and if so, why?
2. Think of a close friend or family member whom you regularly communicate with across distance using a chat app of some kind. Go back through your correspondence and identify one form of phatic communication that appears regularly. What do you think this phatic communication is doing in your long-distance relationship?

### For large-group discussion

1. The author suggests that the practice of mandar saludos should be understood as a genre. What makes up this genre, both in terms of specific linguistic forms as well as communicative functions?
2. What are the different consequences of mandar saludos in the lives of transnational families? How is this genre understood to facilitate and enact care? How do the greetings signify care through creating particular imaginaries of family life?

### For small-group discussion

1. Discuss the example of Olivia's saludo that opens the chapter. What does this example suggest about how such greetings participate in transnational care? How do they involve both material and emotional components? (Section: *Communicative Emissaries*)
2. If greetings are understood as a form of phatic communication, what relational work do greetings accomplish for transnational families (Sections: *How Greetings Matter and Sending Greetings in Latin America*).
3. The author argues that mandar saludos should be considered a genre of greetings despite not meeting all of the criteria for identifying greetings. Do you agree with this analysis? Why or why not? Use the example of David's saludo to ground your argument. (Section: *Mandar Saludos as a Genre of Communicative Care*)
4. What does the analysis of relational grammars (in this case reference terms) reveal about how saludos function in transnational families? Explain using the examples of the Mejía family greetings by David, Rosario, and Camila. (Section: *Envisioning Kin Care through Reference Patterns*)
5. How do children learn to mandar saludos? What does a language socialization approach reveal about how saludos participate in transnational family life both in the immediate moment and over the longer term? (Section: *Learning to Send Greetings and Family Futures*)
6. What are the differences and similarities between saludos sent by video and in phone calls? What does this comparison reveal about the genre? (Section: *Resignifying and Reproducing Care Asymmetries*)

## Chapter 4—Talking remittances: The conversational temporalities of intergenerational care

### Key terms

Conversational temporality

Adjacency pair

Complaint

Reported speech

Interdiscursivity

### For reflection

1. How does your family manage the distribution of resources? How are these resources offered or provided in routine ways? How do family members ask for additional resources they need?
2. Think about a time when you had to make a significant request of someone (or when someone made one of you), such as borrowing money or a vehicle, asking them to do a big favor, etc. How did you make the request? What kind of response did you receive? How did it feel in the moment and afterwards? What have the consequences of this interaction been for your relationship with this person?

### For large-group discussion

1. The author states that interactional and interdiscursive timescales are crucial forms of conversational temporality. What are these two timescales and how are they related to one another in remittance communication? Referring to concrete examples here may be helpful. (BONUS: Can you see these two timescales at work in any of the other language practices that this book discusses?)
2. How are the interactional and interdiscursive timescales of conversation relevant for how transnational families maintain care across generations and the individual life course?

### For small-group discussion

1. What are the specific forms of communicative labor that make remittances possible? Why are conversations about remittances between migrants and non-migrants so charged? (Section: *Communicative Labor in Remittance Conversations*)
2. Using the example of the Mejía family planning for David's birthday, explain how remittance communications navigate different temporalities. How are these conversations impacted by gendered and generational hierarchies and asymmetries between migrants and non-migrants? (Section: *A Birthday to Remember*)
3. What does an interactional analysis of requests reveal about their temporality? Why does this matter for transnational families? (Section: *The Interactive Temporality of Requests*)

4. How did non-migrant relatives articulate their requests for money? What were the consequences of this communicative practice for the transnational family? (Section: *Making Requests through Complaints*)
5. How does the Mejía family use reported speech in their remittance communication? What were the consequences of this practice for their family? (Section: *Intensifying Complaints with Reported Speech*)
6. Drawing on the example of David and Beto’s conversation with its communicative breach and complex aftermath, what can we learn about how communicative norms are produced and changed? (Section: *Creating and Breaking Communicative Norms*)

## Chapter 5—Communicative memory: Defying institutional forgetting through remembering as care

### Key terms

Communicative memory practices

Memoria histórica

Joint remembering

Stance and alignment

### For reflection

1. Think of a story your family often tells about the past, whether distant or more recent. When is this story told and what prompts its telling? Who recounts this story and who listens? Is the story ever co-narrated or debated? Why do you think this story is important to your family?

### For large-group discussion

1. What is the role of communicative memory practices in El Salvador? How do the communicative practices of memoria histórica and the traditions of Día de los Difuntos help us to better understand the importance of remembering in transnational family conversations?
2. What are the consequences of joint remembering for how transnational families live together across borders? Be sure to consider here how the past is mobilized in the present to shape future possibilities.

### For small-group discussion

1. Why is remembering and forgetting so charged for Salvadoran transnational families? Consider both Salvadoran history in general and experiences of migration and family more specifically. (Sections: *¿Se Acuerda Cuándo? (Do you Remember When?)* AND *Institutional Forgetting and the Struggle for Memory*).



2. What do the practices of naming the dead and the ritual of los presentes reveal about the role of communication in memory? (Section: *Naming the Dead to Preserve Memoria Historica*).
3. What do Salvadoran traditions for Día de los Difuntos reveal about the role of communication in memory, especially for care in transnational families? (Section: *Making Meaning in Día de los Difuntos Rituals*).
4. Why is it important to attend to the linguistic details of joint remembering? Use the example of stance alignment in Adán and David’s conversation and discuss what this reveals about the importance of cross-border remembering. (Sections: *Remembering Together across Borders AND Connecting Past and Present through Stance Alignment*)
5. According to the author, why are recent migrants the most likely to initiate joint remembering? Do you agree with this analysis? Are there other factors that might be shaping this pattern? (Section: *Motivations for Remembering*)
6. What is dialogic convivencia? Use the diagraphs from Serena’s conversations with both her sister Perla and her mother Olivia to demonstrate how dialogism matters for cross-border care. (Sections: *Dialogic Convivencia and Imagined Togetherness AND The Future of the Past*)

## Conclusion—Social change through communicative care

### Key terms

Accompaniment

Accomplice

Mutual aid

### For reflection

1. The author suggests that communication is relevant to care beyond transnational families. What is one aspect of your own life in which communication participates in care?
2. How did you feel as you were reading the call to action at the end of the book? Why do you think you had this sort of response?

### For large-group discussion

1. How does communicative care enact transformative work, according to the author? Be sure to discuss issues of scale in your response.
2. The author calls for her readers to become accomplices who accompany transnational families in their struggles for justice. What are the potential outcomes of this approach? What are the challenges of this model?
3. What is one action you can commit to taking to support migrant communities? Be as specific as possible and make a detailed plan for how you will take this action.

For small-group discussion

1. Describe the potential implications of this book for each of the following areas of scholarship: migration studies, care studies, kinship studies, and linguistic anthropology. Be sure to consider the insights related to materiality, multifunctionality, and temporality that the author outlines. (Section: *Thinking Communication and Care Together*)
2. What does it mean to accompany as an accomplice? What are some examples of this work that the author gives? (Section: *A Call to Accompany as Accomplices*)