

REVIEW

***Of Love and Papers: How Immigration Policy Affects Romance and Family* by Laura E. Enriquez**

Oakland: University of California Press, 2020.

Cecil J. Worthen

Bakersfield College

cecil.worthen@bakersfieldcollege.edu

Of Love and Papers: How Immigration Policy Affects Romance details the effects of immigration policy on relationships for undocumented Latinx young adults. Ranging from dating to marriage and parenthood, Enriquez utilizes the detailed accounts of undocumented young adults, citizen parents, and recently documented young adults to investigate the *context of illegality*. Available on an open access basis through the University of California Press and their Luminos program, it offers a great opportunity for low-cost access for students in courses utilizing the text. The book follows the various stages of relationships, beginning with chapter 1, which delves into the theories that act as building blocks for the *context of illegality*. Chapter 2 focuses on the difficulties of choosing a partner for undocumented young adults, while chapter 3 details the varying nature of gender stereotypes and the effects of gender stereotypes on dating. Chapter 4 discusses how mixed-status couples navigate illegality, and chapter 5 takes us through the detailed accounts of couples pursuing legalization through marriage. Chapter 6 opens up about the struggles on parenthood and mixed immigration statuses, while chapter 7 explains the lasting and multigenerational mental tolls that undocumented status entails. Finally, chapter 8 discusses the status of immigration policy and how it will affect the futures of Latinx families. Each chapter describes a different relationship and its connection to the *context of illegality*, all being brought together at the culmination of the text.

Chapter 1 begins with the concept of multigenerational punishment, explaining that it is not only undocumented young adults who will be “punished” for their immigration status. It then lays out the main theory utilized for the study: *context of illegality*, which is “used to conceptualize the sociolegal context created by laws and policies that produce (il)legal statuses” (Enriquez 2020, 9). Other theories that help build into the concept of *context of illegality* include legal nonexistence (Coutin 2007), liminal legality (Menjivar 2006), and context of reception, which is shaped in part by segmented assimilation theory. The data included 286 in-depth interviews of 196 young adults in Southern California: 126 were initially undocumented, 31 had recently legalized their status, and 39 were romantic partners. Interviews took place between 2011-12 (first round) and 2014-15 (second round) and noted changes due to DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

Chapters 2 and 3 tell the stories of some participants and their experiences with choosing a partner, deciding to marry, and how gender stereotypes create a gendered illegality. Highlighting the benefit of in-depth interviews, the experiences of the interviewees shined. Within chapter 3, the true challenge of navigating gender stereotypes that are deeply engrained in the Latinx culture are discussed, with upward mobility seemingly coming easier for undocumented young adult women.

Chapter 4 details how mixed-status relationships (one undocumented partner and one citizen partner) can lead to difficult navigation of everyday life, with much stress placed on potential deportation and limited financial growth. Additionally, Enriquez engaged in discussions focusing on the stereotype of “marrying for papers” that can hinder mixed-status relationships from moving forward. Chapter 5 highlights marriage as a pathway for legalization yet emphasizes the arduous journey that families have depending on the undocumented partner’s entry into the United States.

Chapter 6 reviews the troublesome nature that interviewees endured due to undocumented status and how it often inhibits their ability to provide a stable childhood for their children. While chapter 6 homes in on the stress of parenthood, chapter 7 centers on lasting trauma that leads to citizen children navigating their lives in a similar manner to their undocumented parents. These two chapters bring to focus that the *context of illegality* doesn’t only affect the undocumented individuals but trickles down to the next generation and sometimes beyond.

Finally, chapter 8 discusses updates in immigration policy and the ways they have in some cases drastically changed the lives of some interviewees. With the introduction of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), the second wave of interviews highlighted the perceived benefit and the limited true benefit of DACA for undocumented young adults in Southern California. The text includes Appendices A and B, detailing the methods, positionality, and data that are the underbody of the study, while Enriquez also explained her story highlighting the connections between the study and her own life. Ending with this story completed the text and brought deeper understanding and educational benefit.

In terms of usage within education, I believe that this text would be easily tied into and utilized in a variety of cultural anthropology courses. With much more variety in upper-division courses, this text would find a place in courses such as urban anthropology, courses focusing on the Latinx community, or anthropology of love. The text bridges a gap in literature that gives the voice of the Latinx immigrant and particularly the undocumented community. As it discusses a topic that some students have lived or continue to experience, the text would be a strong optional reading for many cultural anthropology courses from introductory to graduate level courses.

Additionally, the text truly offers a benefit for anyone wanting to further their knowledge of the struggles of immigration, the Latinx community in Southern California, and the way in-depth interviews can lead to powerful interpretations of stigmatized topics.

As an ethnography, the text highlights for students how interviews can safely be carried out with interviewees in high-risk communities. The voice of the high-risk communities is vital to truly understanding topics such as illegality, yet their voices are often unheard or understudied. Students may identify with topics discussed within the text, leading to heightened interest in bringing forward the voice of the unheard. When the text ends, the Appendix brings together the importance of the text, but even more so highlights how students can develop meaningful research based off of their own life experiences.

To review, the text explains a detailed narrative pertaining to the undocumented Latinx community in Southern California, while also explaining their immigration status' effect on their relationships. The text can be utilized in a variety of anthropology courses, therefore allowing for various benefits for students and readers. Offering a great illustration of a topic that has lacked research, the text offers potential future research for students as well.

References

- Coutin, Susan Bibler. 2007. *Nations of Emigrants: Shifting Boundaries of Citizenship in El Salvador and the United States*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Enriquez, Laura E. 2020. *Of Love and Papers: How Immigration Policy Affects Romance and Family*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Menjívar, Cecilia. 2006. "Liminal Legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan Immigrants' Lives in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 111 (4): 999-1037.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/499509>.