

Pathways of Desire: The Sexual Migration of Mexican Gay Men, by Héctor Carrillo, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2017, 369 pp., \$105 (cloth), ISBN:

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Migration is an ever-present topic of debate in the cultural and socio-political landscapes of Trump administration, with the border between Mexico and the United States (US) holding a central place in the unfolding politics and contestations over the meanings of freedom, identity, citizenship, race and nationhood. Héctor Carrillo's *Pathways of Desire: The Sexual Migration of Mexican Gay Men* is a welcome engagement with how sexuality informs the motivational structures that prompt gay and bisexual men to migrate from Mexico to the US; their efforts to create new lives, relations and identities for themselves; and ultimately their creation of new maps of meaning and new practices in the US as well as at home. The title of the volume specifies the subjects of Carrillo's study while aptly pointing to a plurality of journeys that connect different places of departure with multiple points of arrival and to the many individual, cultural and structural forces that co-determine such trajectories.

In recent years, "sexual migration" has been used to describe movements that are at least in part motivated by the sexuality of those on the move, whether the movements are within or across national borders, involve multiple or unidirectional border crossings, circular or serial transnational trajectories, or temporary or permanent relocations. *Pathways of Desire* originates from the empirical data of large ethnographic study conducted in San Diego, California, between 2003 and 2005. The structure of the book reflects one of Carrillo's main arguments, namely that the study of migration necessitates a more sustained analytical engagement with the pre-migration lives of migrants. Thus, after a first chapter dedicated to a theoretical overview of the sexual migration literature, chapters 2 through 5 turn to sexual migrants' narratives, delving into

the socio-economic details of migrants' lives in their home cities, towns, suburbs or villages in Mexico. The migrants describe their awareness of and involvement with local same-sex practices, as well as their familiarity with global or foreign sexual vocabularies. Finally, they recount their everyday negotiations over the meanings of family, community and gender identity. Relying on the same diversity of voices that informs the first part of the book, chapters 6 through 10 examine narratives of arrival in San Diego, ambivalent feelings of belonging in the new context and experiences of inclusion and exclusion from the praxis of sexual citizenship of gay San Diego. These exist alongside the intricacies of Carrillo's participants' sexual attractions and romantic lives as they get reshaped at the confluence of unanticipated cultural patterns of same-sex desire, racial dynamics, social-class positionalities and other institutional forces that hinder or facilitate incorporation.

The theoretical work of *Pathways of Desire* is grounded firmly in Carrillo's rich empirical data, which he features by providing detailed interview excerpts and including biographical arcs that follow particular people's experiences of migration and sexuality across chapters. By reading with and against the grain of 265 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 150 self-identified gay and bisexual Mexican immigrants, the author interrogates and repositions established concepts and central analytical frameworks of migration, sexuality and globalisation studies: the concept of sexual freedom, the directionality of global vocabularies and the agency/subjectivity nexus.

"Sexual freedom" is invoked by many of Carrillo's participants as the main reason for seeking relocation to the US. By simultaneously interrogating critical concepts from sexual globalisation studies (e.g., the North-South directionality of sexual globalisation) and queer postcolonial critique (e.g., sexuality as instrument of colonial power), Carrillo exposes the

unquestioned links between the concept of “sexual freedom” and US hegemony and the subsequent representation of Mexico’s sexual cultures as “backward” and static in relation to the idealised progressive character of US gay freedom (p. 28). Carrillo poses “uncomfortable questions” to his participants about lifestyles, family disharmony, occupational de-skilling, sexual desires, existing transnational family networks, and relationships to well-developed manifestations of gay life in Mexican home places (p. 97-98). The “constellations of factors” that ensue from the examination of their answers show that the Mexican gay and bisexual men’s movement across borders is determined not only by imaginaries of sexual freedom rooted in discourses of US gender and sexuality exceptionalism, but by cultural as well as structural factors which are entangled with the broader dynamics of the region’s political economy of migration.

The notion of “sexual passion” is employed by the Mexican gay and bisexual men interviewed for this book to describe moments of spontaneous, deep intimacy as well as carefully orchestrated gestures that lead to feelings of connection which differentiate between the sexual registers of Mexican/Latino and white American men. Carrillo’s exploration of the entanglements of sexual passion with shifting racial and socio-economic hierarchies within and across national and geopolitical configurations makes the book highly relevant to the relatively new interdisciplinary field of affect studies. By looking through the lens of the erotic to the possibility of enacting connection, equality and reciprocity among individuals across cultural, racial, socio-economic and citizenship statuses (p. 254), Carrillo invites important questions that trespass the boundaries of social constructionism. He offers invaluable glimpses into how race operates viscerally, how it drives certain modes of intimacy and creates attractions, relationships, pleasures, and vulnerabilities to illness. In addition, Carrillo shows how specific constellations of

emotion which are subsumed under the notion of sexual passion produce gay immigrant men as creative agents who alter current global gay cultures by introducing forms of intimate interaction and critiques of the individualist ethos (p. 264-265).

In documenting how transnational gay and bisexual men from Mexico make sense of the difficulties they encounter in attempting to partake of the much-desired American “sexual freedom,” Carrillo’s careful intersectional analysis unveils intricate interactions between cultural notions of collective responsibility and structural vectors of race, social class, gender and sexual orientation which shape his participants’ understandings of their bodies, their senses of self and identity, and the characteristics of their sexual encounters, which take place on terrains shaped by power disparities (p. 271-272). But he also highlights the challenges that such contexts of erotic interaction, along with HIV-prevention efforts (p. 271) (which are still rooted in relations of domination and subordination), pose to maintaining their sexual health and well-being.

Carrillo’s focus on sexuality addresses conceptual and methodological gaps within the field of migration studies, a field where critical explorations of how gender and sexuality regimes structure migrants’ lives remain marginal. His discerning explorations of the sexuality-informed motivations, trajectories and incorporation of migrants enhance the understanding of the diversity both within Mexican immigrant populations and among gay and bisexual Mexican men’s experiences of crossing borders and negotiating incorporation in the global gay cultures of the US. *Pathways of Desire*’s relevance thus reaches well beyond the scope of migration studies and into the realms of human geography, sociology and gender and sexuality studies.

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