"Sadness is a Great Pain for the Body": The Emotional Trauma and Embodied Impacts of Migration from Mexico to Tucson, Arizona

Author
Crocker, Rebecca

Issue Date
2016

Keywords
Embodiment
Emotions
Health
Immigration
Mexican Immigrants
Anthropology
Arizona

Advisor
Sheridan, Thomas E.

Committee Chair
Sheridan, Thomas E.

Publisher
The University of Arizona.

Rights
Copyright © is held by the author. Digital access to this material is made possible by the University Libraries, University of Arizona. Further transmission, reproduction or presentation (such as public display or performance) of protected items is prohibited except with permission of the author.

Embargo
Release after 08-Aug-2018

Abstract
A considerable body of evidence links social and economic inequities to poor health. One of the means through which these inequities are translated to the body is via negative emotions, which carry known psychological and physiological responses. This thesis is a historically contextualized study of how migration from Mexico to southern Arizona is experienced at the site of the body. In this dissertation, I outline the ethno-historical background of traditional medicinal usage and concepts of health and healing in northern Mexico, the primary sending region to southern Arizona. This historical grounding enables a richer exploration of how Mexicans understand migration to affect their physical and mental health. I then examine migration-related psychosocial stressors impacting first-generation Mexican immigrants in southern Arizona, and report on the primary emotional experiences immigrants associate with these stressors. Finally, I use the illness narratives of my participants to move more deeply into the connections between these experiences of emotional suffering and physical health. Here I employ immigrants’ own words to draw a link between group level epidemiological data on health declines in the immigrant community and established research in biological anthropology and neurobiology that identifies individual emotional hardship as a biological pathway to disease. Given the heavy emotional toll of migration and the direct impact that regional legislation and border security has had on well-being, this thesis argues that emotion be considered an important mechanism for health declines in the immigrant community.