

Arsht Research on Ethics and Community Grant

Asian Diasporas in Latin America: An Analysis of the Ethical Dimensions of Transnationalism

2013-2014

Faculty: Ariel C. Armony, M.A., Ph.D., and Alejandro Portes, M.A., Ph.D.

Student: Wu Wenyan

College of Arts and Sciences

Abstract

Sustained economic growth in several Latin American countries in recent years has been largely based on a momentous shift of their foreign trade toward Asia. While some countries have experienced rapid growth as a result of the booming export of commodities (such as Argentina and Peru), others (such as Mexico) have experienced serious challenges as a result of China's "landing" in the region. The growing relations between these countries and their new Asian commercial partners, primarily China but also including South Korea, has catapulted the previously existing Asian immigrant communities in each country to a new role as cultured mediators and facilitators of these exchanges. In turn, Chinese and South Korean embassies and diplomatic missions have tapped their expatriates as natural allies in their efforts to consolidate their economic and political influence in Latin America. These immigrant communities live in a transnational space that creates a fluid interconnectedness beyond nation-state borders. While these social relations facilitate the movement and exchange of goods, ideas, information and people, they also pose new challenges for immigrants as they struggle with ethical questions of inclusion and exclusion as well as questions of national identity and allegiance to different political regimes. This research will examine organizational networks of Chinese and Korean immigrants in Mexico and their interface with the respective sending country governments in order to build an understanding of the ethical dilemmas that shape the transnational lives of these communities. Our proposed research extends previous studies comparing the organizational activities of Latin American and Asian immigrants in the U.S., coordinated from the Center for Migration and Development at Princeton University. Our case studies will involve in-depth interviews with leaders of the most representative immigrant organizations and with government officials who interact with these organizations. This interdisciplinary project integrates sociology, political science, international studies, anthropology, and economics. We plan to publish this research in top interdisciplinary journals. Our goal for 2014 is to develop two additional case studies—Argentina and Peru—in order to produce a broader comparative study on ethics and transnationalism among Asian immigrant communities in Latin America.

Please do not copy or quote without permission. For more information, please contact the University of Miami Ethics Programs at ethics@miami.edu.