TRANSNATIONAL LEISURE AND TRAVEL EXPERIENCE OF SECOND-GENERATION CHINESE-AMERICANS

Wei-jue Huang
Clemson University, weijue.huang@gmail.com

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TRANSNATIONAL LEISURE AND TRAVEL EXPERIENCE
OF SECOND-GENERATION CHINESE-AMERICANS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

by
Wei-Jue Huang
May 2012

Accepted by:
Dr. William C. Norman, Committee Chair
Dr. Kenneth F. Backman
Dr. William J. Haller
Dr. Gregory P. Ramshaw
ABSTRACT

In the past, international migration often required immigrants to uproot themselves completely from their old society in order to build a new home, start a new life, and pledge allegiance to a new country. However, new transportation and communication technologies allow contemporary immigrants to live in two worlds and maintain virtual and physical contact with their homeland through leisure and tourism. The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experience of second-generation immigrants as they engage in transnational leisure activities and trips to their homeland, as well as explore the relationship between second-generation immigrants’ transnational homeland attachment and diaspora tourism experience.

Using a phenomenological approach, twenty-six second-generation Chinese-Americans who had the experience of traveling in China were interviewed. Two themes emerged from their transnational leisure experiences, which described their approaches to Chinese culture through leisure and their transformation from the childhood “ways of being” to the more mature “ways of belonging.” Five themes emerged from their diaspora tourism experience. The first two themes focused on the positives and negatives, and how they handled the negative aspects encountered during the trips. The next two themes described what they were searching for in China and how they learned to appreciate their bi-cultural identity. The last theme examined the notions of “home” and “homeland” and the different ways they connected to China by relating it to their home, hometown, and family. Findings revealed how being a second-generation immigrant influenced the way they saw and experienced China through transnational leisure and diaspora tourism.
DEDICATION

To my parents, for their love and support, for being my role models, for letting me pursue my dreams, for giving me everything I need to succeed, and for believing I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have many people to thank for the completion of this dissertation. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. William Norman, for everything he has taught me and done for me in my four years here at Clemson University. Working with Dr. Norman, I learned how to be a better teacher and researcher. When it was time to start working on my dissertation, he encouraged me to pursue my interests, guided me through the entire process, helped me work through all the problems I encountered, and inspired me to think more and beyond.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my committee: Dr. Gregory Ramshaw, Dr. William Haller, and Dr. Kenneth Backman. They have been very patient and gave me a lot of suggestions as I struggled with changing methodologies and modifying my research design. Their comments and edits not only helped me improve my ideas, logic, and writing, but also opened my eyes to the possibilities of future research. I have learned so much from them, as every meeting and discussion showed me how little I knew and how fortunate I was to have such a great committee.

I also want to express my appreciation to all the faculty and staff in the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management. Specifically, I want to thank Dr. William Hammitt, who helped me in the study of place attachment and develop the initial stage of my research proposal. I am also very grateful to our PRTM Media Resource Specialist, Karin Emmons, who helped me solve all the technical issues I have encountered during the various stages of my research. Without their support, this project would not have been possible.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Traveling, in the traditional sense, requires the leaving of one’s residence, and tourism is generally defined as the businesses and activities that take place outside of one’s usual environment or immediate home community (e.g., Chadwick, 1994; Smith, 1988; WTO, 1991). Since the very definition of travel and tourism is based on a dichotomy between being “home” or “away,” tourists and tourism are often categorized by this home/away division. For example, hotel and restaurant patrons can either be local or from out of town, visitors to a tourist site can be traveling in state or out of state, and on a national level, the tourism industry distinguishes between domestic tourism and international tourism. In different instances, the concept of “home” can be the actual house, one’s neighborhood, hometown, county, state, or nation. But regardless of the different geographical levels of “home,” the distinction between the local and the foreign is common in tourism and hospitality research, and the industry. It is assumed that local visitors and foreign guests may have different demands, and therefore different tourism products and marketing strategies are needed. Research on tourist behaviors and experiences also commonly differentiates between domestic and international tourism.

However, the divide between the foreign and the local with regard to tourism business and research neglects a group of tourists who are in-between—that is, the people who travel to a place where they used to live, especially after moving away for an extensive amount of time. It is natural for human beings to remember and have a desire to
return to a place from their past (Oxfeld & Long, 2004). For example, college graduates may take a homecoming trip to visit their alma mater after twenty years, and immigrants may travel back to their country of origin to visit their relatives who stayed behind. This type of return or homecoming tourists is partially-local in the sense that they have some knowledge and familiarity with the area, and yet also partially-foreign because the place is likely to have changed since they moved away. Therefore, the travel experience of this "in-between" group is unique in its mixture of novelty and familiarity, and thus different from that of domestic and international tourists.

Moreover, the bigger the temporal and spatial gap between the past and present places of residence, the more interesting juxtaposition one would encounter when traveling back "home." The people who moved to a neighboring state are still rather close to their previous home compared to those who migrated to another continent, and the college students who go back to their parents’ house for every break and major holiday are much more “local” than the people who return to a childhood home where they have never been in twenty years. Considering the scope and magnitude of different types of return/homecoming travel, the trips taken by immigrants back to their country of origin, known as “diaspora tourism,” is a topic worthy of study, because it not only bridges the gap in tourism literature between domestic and international travel, but also highlights the unique characteristics of homecoming journeys through the strong cultural contrasts between immigrant-sending and immigrant-receiving nations.
Background

The desire to migrate is innate in human nature, and the history of migration is as old as the history of humans (Massey et al., 1998). As different forms of technology and transportation developed throughout human history, human travel and migration was made faster and easier. And as international migration became increasingly popular, the temporary travel of immigrants back to their homeland, whether it’s for business or pleasure purposes, has also become a common phenomenon. Before exploring the homecoming travel of immigrants, it is necessary to examine the significance of international migration, particularly its scope and impact on the United States.

Modern migration originated from European emigration and colonization in the 16th century (Massey et al., 1998). It wasn’t until the 1960s that international migration became a global phenomenon (Castles & Miller, 2009). Previous migration mainly consisted of people moving from Europe to the New World nations. However, after the 1960s, immigrant-sending and immigrant-receiving countries expanded to all regions of the world. For example, emigration flows from Asia, Africa, and Latin America increased dramatically, and even the previous immigrant-sending countries, such as Spain and the United Kingdom, began to receive immigrants. The general pattern of post-1960 international migration was from less developed countries to more developed countries, and three major migration streams could be identified (Marger, 2009). The first stream was mostly from Latin America and the Caribbeans to the United States, but also to Canada and Western Europe. The second stream was from Southeastern Asian countries to the U.S., Canada, and Australia. Finally, the third stream was from Southern Europe,
Northern Africa and the Middle East to Northwestern Europe primarily, but to the U.S.
and Canada as well.

As the geographical regions of migration expanded, the number of immigrants
around the world was also on the increase. In the year 2000, approximately 150 million
people, which were 2.5% of the total world population, resided outside of their country of
origin (Marger, 2009). By 2005, the number of international immigrants increased to over
190 million people, and its percentage in world population increased to 3% (United
Nations, 2009a). Moreover, dividing the world into *more developed regions* and *less
developed regions*, the number of people migrating to more developed regions increased
dramatically from 1990-2005 (82.4 million to 115.4 million), while the number of
immigrants in less developed regions only increased from 72.5 million to 75.2 million
(United Nations, 2006). More specifically, in 2005, the highest percentage of
international migrants concentrated in Europe (33.6%), Asia (28.0%), and North America
(23.3%).

According to the OECD International Migration Database (2010), over five
million people have migrated to a foreign country every year since 2005. By 2010, the
number of immigrants worldwide has been estimated to reach almost 214 million, which
is 3.1% of the world population (United Nations, 2009b). In more developed regions,
international migrant stock increased from 115.4 million to 127.7 million from 2005 to
2010, and in less developed regions, the increase was from 75.2 to 86.2 million. Although
the international migrant stock increased almost equally in both regions from 2005 to
2010, the average annual net migration indicated that the migration flow was still from
less developed regions to more developed regions. Moreover, Europe, North America, and Oceania have a positive annual net migration from 2005-2010, while Asian, Africa, and Latin America have a negative net migration (United Nations, 2009b).

Among the more developed regions in the world, the United States is one of the top immigrant receiving countries. Although World Wars, the Cold War, and the Great Depression had put a stop to international migration around the mid-20th century, after the 1960s, migration to the U.S. has been increasing steadily. Total immigration (i.e., aliens who were granted permanent legal resident status) increased from 4.5 million to 9.1 million from 1970-2000, and foreign-born residents and children of immigrants also grew from 34 million to 56 million during the same period (Castles & Miller, 2009). By the end of the 20th century, immigration has become a major population trend in the U.S. society. Hirschman and Massey (2008) argued that:

> Immigrants and the children of immigrants are a visible presence in American educational institutions, from kindergartens to graduate schools. Many businesses . . . are dependent on immigrant labor. All political parties are wooing Hispanic and Asian voters, many of whom are newly naturalized citizens. Immigration is very likely to be a continuing influence on the size, shape, and composition of the American population for the foreseeable future.

(p. 2)

The increasing importance of immigrants in the U.S. cannot be ignored. According to the OECD International Migration Database (2010), the United States is the world’s largest immigrant-receiving nation, with an inflow of more than one million
foreign newcomers per year since 2005. According to the Population Division of the United Nations, the U.S. is also the country that has by far the highest number of international migrants from 1990 to 2010 (See Table 1). Among the top ten listed, many countries have a slow and steady increase in the number of international migrants in the last two decades. However, the U.S. has experienced a dramatic increase of immigrants that far exceeds the other nations.

Table 1. Countries with the Largest Number of International Migrants, 1990-2010

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<td>Pakistan</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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In addition to recognizing the large number of people migrating to the U.S., it is also important to know what percentage of the U.S. population is composed of immigrants. The United States is said to be a country made up of immigrants. With the exception of Native Americans, other racial and ethnic groups in the U.S., which consist
of 99% of the American population, can trace their family roots to another country or continent (CIA World Factbook, 2009). Specifically, in 1850, the percentage of foreign-born population in the U.S. was less than 10%, and by 1910, the percentage had increased to 14.7% (Teitelbaum, 2006). The year 1910 was the peak for foreign-born population in terms of percentage. WWI and increased nativism resulting in the Nationality Quotas Act of 1924 led to a decline in the number of immigrants. Although immigration numbers were back on the increase after 1970, the percentage of U.S. population that was foreign born never reached 14.7% again. In 2000, the U.S. population percentage foreign-born was estimated to be 11.1% (Connolly, 2006). By 2010, the foreign-born population in the U.S. had increased to 12.4%, or approximately 37 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

In this globalized era, modern advancements in transportation and communication technologies have facilitated the growth of human mobility and migration. Although the international migration flow can be calculated every year, these statistics usually only include the newly-arrived immigrants, such as first and second generations. The actual number of the population that is native-born and yet has a foreign, immigrant origin is much higher. For example, the foreign-born population in the U.S. was approximately 12.6% in 2007. However, since Native Americans represent less than one percent of the total U.S. population, it can be argued that 99% of Americans can trace their immigrant roots to another part of the world. Likewise, the population with an immigrant origin worldwide is definitely higher than the estimated 214 million (United Nations, 2009b). Given the complexity of calculating the real population with immigrant origins, it is even
more difficult to estimate the size of the immigrant homeland travel market. Nevertheless, the world’s migrant population is significant in size and scope; they are not a group that can be ignored in the divide between domestic and international tourism. Particularly in the U.S., a significant percentage of the population has a distant homeland that they may be interested in visiting, and is a potential target market for “homecoming” travel and diaspora tourism.

**Rationale**

Population and immigration statistics revealed that a large percentage of the people in the United States have an immigrant origin. However, do immigrants and their descendants feel a certain connection to their country of origin and have the desire to travel there? Do they actually participate in this type of diaspora tourism? If so, how often do they go back? And is the homeland trip important and meaningful to them?

Recent studies on immigration argued that contemporary immigrants maintain a strong connection to their homeland and develop networks or communities across national borders (Glick-Schiller, 1996; Portes, 1997). Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Blanc (1994) used the term “transnationalism” to describe this interconnected social experience. They defined transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (p. 7). Research on immigration and transnationalism generally focuses on the connection and interactions between immigrants and their country of origin and how transnational ties influences both immigrant sending and receiving countries.
Immigrants can engage in different types of transnational practices and activities, including economic, social, familial, political, civic, religious and cultural activities (Basch et al., 1994). Some examples of transnational practice include attending hometown celebrations, owning or investing in real estate, sending money for hometown projects, and sending money for political campaigns (Portes, Haller, & Guarnizo, 2002). However, in order for an activity to be considered a part of “transnationalism,” it should have a certain level of significance and be a central part of immigrants’ lives (Castles & Miller, 2009). Portes (1999) identified three characteristics of transnational activities:

1) Activities that occur across national borders,

2) Activities that take place on a regular basis, and

3) Activities that require a significant amount of time commitment from the participants.

In other words, the border-crossing activities which only happen occasionally and are limited to specific aspects in life are not transnational, because they are unlikely to have long-term consequences (Levitt & Waters, 2002). By this definition, taking a trip back to one’s homeland every five years is not considered transnationalism. Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller (2003) also argued that sending remittances to relatives in one’s country of origin or traveling there occasionally is not enough to justify them being “transmigrants.”

Moreover, most research on the transnational practices of immigrants focused on the public activities that people participate in on a regular basis, such as political activities (Guarnizo et al., 2003), religious and civil engagement (Levitt, 2001), and economic activities (Portes et al., 2002). Although some scholars distinguished between
regular versus occasional transnational behavior, the emphasis was still on public activities. For example, Guarnizo (2000) divided transnationalism into “core” and “expanded.” “Core transnationalism” refers to the activities that are central in one’s life and undertaken on a regular basis, while “expanded transnationalism” refers to occasional activities, such as donating money after one’s home country encountered political crises or natural disasters.

The problem with these political and economic transnational practices is that they are not personal. They infer that immigrants maintain transnational ties to their country of origin with an extrinsic purpose, such as “to pursue economic mobility and make political claims in their home or host country or in both” (Levitt & Waters, 2002, p. 12). However, there should also be an intrinsic, emotional bond between immigrants and their homeland (Sheffer, 1986). For example, the connection between immigrants and their relatives back in the home country is about more than just financial remittances. For example, how often do they talk and provide emotional support for each other (Guarnizo et al., 2003)? Therefore, in order to capture the intrinsic and emotional aspect of transnationalism, it is necessary to not just focus on immigrants’ political, religious, and economic practices, but also examine their leisure activities. Leisure is said to be one domain in life where people have more freedom to express themselves (Kelly, 1987). If immigrants choose to engage in transnational activities as their leisure, they are intrinsically motivated to be transnational, not because of economic or political obligations. In other words, the emotional aspect of transnational ties is better developed through leisure.
Moreover, if participation on a regular basis is an important requirement for transnationalism, leisure is something that people take part in every day. Some individuals even center their lives around leisure, which indicates a serious amount of commitment to their leisure pursuit (Stebbins, 1992). Through the Internet and mass media, it is increasingly easy for immigrants to stay closely connected to their homeland, and the Internet also makes it possible for a lot of leisure activities to take place across national borders every day (Castles & Miller, 2009). There are many Internet-related activities that can be considered transnational leisure. For example, immigrants can listen to the music from their home country, catch up on the latest international news, and use online instant messaging to chat with their relatives back home, all through the Internet and on a regular basis.

**Transnational Leisure and Tourism**

Leisure activities have rarely been the focus of study in transnational migration literature. However, some cultural behavior and practices that have been studied fall under the leisure domain. Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002) examined the “sociocultural transnationalism” of first generation immigrants from Salvador, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. They defined sociocultural transnationalism as “the transnational practices that recreate a sense of community based on cultural understandings of belonging and mutual obligations” (p. 767). However, they focused on institutionalized sociocultural transnational activities, such as participating in township committees that facilitate traveling back and forth between two countries, and taking part in symbolic
events in their country of origin. Itzigsohn, Cabral, Medina, and Vazquez (1999) also studied the “cultural transnationalism” of first and second generation Dominican immigrants by dividing it into “narrow” and “broad” transnational practices. “Narrow” cultural transnationalism refers to institutionalized activities and practices, while “broad” cultural transnationality includes casual activities, such as dancing and listening to ethnic music. In Kasinitz, Waters, Mollenkopf, and Anil’s (2002) study of the children of immigrants in New York City, they discovered that 56.6% of second generation immigrants frequently watched or listened to ethnic media, and 85.4% were members of ethnic organizations. There were also some national differences in transnational cultural practices. For example, West Indian immigrants listened to more ethnic music, while Chinese immigrants were more likely to celebrate traditional holidays (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 2008).

It may be debatable whether these “narrow” and institutionalized sociocultural activities can be considered leisure or not. However, celebrating traditional holidays, listening to ethnic music, and watching TV programs in the native language can be all considered transnational leisure, but research on these activities are very limited. There should be a more extensive study on the transnational practices of immigrants from the leisure perspective. Moreover, the three studies discussed in the previous paragraph were all conducted prior to the year 2000. Since then, the influence of globalized media, such as the Internet and satellite TV, has changed immigrants’ transnational practices to a great extent, and enabled them to develop a connection to their country of origin more easily. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the transnational leisure of immigrants and
how it relates to emotional ties between immigrants and their homeland in the context of current information and communication technologies.

Taking a tourism trip back to the homeland is another type of transnational leisure activity. In fact, in the diaspora literature, one of the critical characteristics of diaspora is the desire to return to the homeland (Safran, 1991; Shuval, 2000). Although traveling internationally does not occur as often as everyday leisure activities, as travel expenses become cheaper, the frequency of homeland trip is increasing. What used to be “a once-in-a-lifetime trip is now often an annual event” (Kasinitz et al., 2008, p. 258). The Second Generation in New York Study also revealed that about two-thirds of the children of immigrants living in New York during that time period have visited their parents’ country of origin, with 40% having visited 1-3 times, 16% visiting 3-9 times, and 10% visiting more than 10 times (Kasinitz et al., 2002). Moreover, the time and money required to travel internationally is much higher than what it takes to participate in everyday leisure. Even though homeland trips may not take place on a regular basis, it still indicates a significant level of commitment to this activity and to the homeland community. Therefore, research on homecoming travel should explore beyond merely surveying the number of visits, and examine other aspects of the travel experience, such as the purpose of the trips and whether or not one has relatives living in the homeland destination (Haller & Landolt, 2005).

In the field of tourism, some scholars have also recognized the connection between diaspora and tourism in the context of globalization. Azarya (2004) discussed the importance of roots-seeking tourism, such as visiting one’s ancestral homeland, as a
growing phenomenon in contemporary society and an interesting topic of study. Franklin and Crang (2001) also argued that tourism has become “a significant modality through which transnational modern life is organised” (p. 3). The tourist experience can no longer be understood by what happens at the tourist site; instead, it must be examined in the context of global social life. For immigrants traveling back to their country of origin, their immigrant background and lifestyle in the host country may influence their homeland travel experience, and their homecoming experience may also affect their sense of belonging in both home and host nations. As immigration and relocation is increasing all over the world, there are more and more people with the need to search for their roots and personal history through travel, creating “a major global constituency active in the production and consumption of tourism” (Timothy & Coles, 2004, p. 295-296). Thus, it is necessary for the tourism field to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the meanings and links between tourism and other mobilities, such as diaspora and migration (Coles, Duval, & Hall, 2005).

**Problem Statement**

Within migration and transnationalism literature, it seems like leisure and tourism do not fit the general criteria of transnational practices, because they do not occur on a regular basis or are less likely to influence the community back home. Thus, the potential of leisure and tourism as important transnational activities of immigrants has not been explored to a great extent. Nevertheless, it is argued that transnational leisure and travel have a significant impact on the lives of immigrants, particularly on their emotional
connection to their distant homeland. As leisure activities are more intrinsically motivated, they signify an emotional and symbolic attachment to one’s roots and heritage, rather than a functional attachment. While the importance of political and economic transnational practices has already been established empirically, the more personal and cultural aspect of transnationalism could be further explored. Therefore, it is necessary to study the transnational lives of immigrants from a leisure and tourism perspective. For example, do traveling to one’s homeland and participating in ethnic-related leisure activities enhance the connection between immigrants and their country of origin? Is there a relationship between immigrants’ transnational leisure, travel experience, and their feelings of attachment to both home and host countries? This study examines these questions and addresses some of the issues associated with the transnational leisure and tourism experience of immigrants.

**Scope**

Although immigrants of every ethnic origin may engage in homecoming tourism, the scope of this study is limited to second generation Chinese-Americans who travel back to their ancestral homeland in China, and how the trip may influence their connection to their two “homes”—China and the United States. Immigrants often find themselves facing two different cultures and not sure where they belong. This identity conflict may be more obvious for Asian-Americans because of their physical distinctiveness, racial visibility, and the anti-Asian sentiments in the U.S. (Marger, 2009). In fact, early Asian immigrants experienced more prejudice and discrimination than any
other voluntary immigrant groups to the U.S., which may result in their need to maintain a connection to their country of origin. Moreover, although Asian-Americans are characterized as a “model minority” because of their high average levels of education and socioeconomic status, it doesn’t mean that all Asian-Americans are successful in their assimilation into the American mainstream (Zhou & Xiong, 2005). Even if one’s assimilation process is complete, assimilation and transnationalism are not binary opposites (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004). In fact, some studies have shown that immigrants who are well-adjusted into the host society are more likely to be involved in transnational activities (Guarnizo et al., 2003). In addition, the greater the cultural contrast between the immigrant sending and receiving nations, the more interesting one’s homecoming travel experience would be. Therefore, the cultural gap between the East and the West would be an obvious scenario.

Rather than studying all Asian-Americans, it is only necessary to focus on one original nationality. Previous migration research has shown that transnational practices vary greatly according to the immigrants’ national origin, or more specifically the contexts of their exit and reception (e.g., Haller & Landolt, 2005; Kasinitz et al., 2008; Portes et al., 2002; Rumbaut, 2002; Zhou & Xiong, 2005). It has also been suggested that research on diasporas needs to focus on a specific diasporic community rather than on pan-ethnic groups (Timothy & Coles, 2004). Thus, in order to examine the relationship between immigrants’ leisure, travel and transnational ties, this study is limited to one nationality. Among different Asian nationalities, Chinese-Americans were selected because not only were they the earliest Asian immigrants to the U.S., but they also
remain the largest ethnic group within the Asian-American population to this day (Marger, 2009).

In addition to ethnicity and country of origin, immigrants can also be categorized according to their generation cohort, which has a significant influence on their life and experience. Immigrants can be divided according to their family generation history in the destination country. Considering the most recent wave of immigration to the U.S., the first generation refers the foreign-born individuals who made the travel and arrived in the U.S. The second generation is the native-born immigrants with one or two foreign-born parents. The third generation is the native-born Americans with one or two foreign-born grandparents. There is also the so-called “1.5 generation,” who are the foreign-born individuals who came to the U.S. before the age of eighteen (Rumbaut, 2002).

Among different generations, this study will focus on the second generation for three reasons. First, recent statistics showed that the children of immigrants are the fastest-growing segment of the population under age eighteen (Rumbaut, 2002). First generation immigrants who arrived in the U.S. between 1990 and 2000 plus their children accounted for 70% of the U.S. population growth during that period. In 2000, the number of the children of immigrants reached 27.5 million, which was 10% of the total population (Levitt & Waters, 2002). In addition, the U.S. foreign-stock population (first plus second generation) was approximately 56 million in 2000, which was 20.5% of the total population, and by 2003, foreign-stock population has reached 60 million (24%) (Portes & Rumbaut, 2005). More recently, the new second generation accounts for one
out of four American children and one out of six 18-32 year olds in the U.S. (Kasinitz et al., 2008).

Second, the contemporary second generation is more likely to retain transnational ties to their homeland than previous migrants (Foner, 2002). Earlier European immigrants had less difficulty in assimilation and their transnational connection to their country of origin disappeared quickly after the first generation (Alba & Nee, 2003). However, given the increased awareness of multiculturalism in American society, it is now more acceptable or even encouraged for the current second generation to celebrate their cultural diversity and take pride in their connection to their homeland (Foner, 2002). Perlmann (2002) also pointed out that while first generation immigrants maintain economic and political ties to their country of origin, second generation transnationalism is more likely to occur in the cultural domain, which makes the second generation better subjects for studies on transnational leisure activities.

Third, there are some interesting aspects of diaspora tourism that can only be observed by examining the second generation. Most tourists become attached to a destination after repeat visitation, but second generation immigrants may feel connected to a “homeland” that they may have never visited before. The possibility of having a strong emotional bond between tourists and the destination prior to the actual trip is one unique characteristic of second-generation homeland travel. Since the second generation was born in the current host country, they are more removed from the memories and histories associated with the relocation process and the original conditions of exit.
Therefore, their attachment to their country of origin is sustained through transnational travel and leisure activities, not because of their previous life in the homeland.

Within second generation Chinese-Americans, the target population under study is further limited to young adults approximately between the ages of 18 to 30. This age range, known as “emerging adulthood,” is a stage in life for individuals to define who they are and find out what they want to do with their lives (Arnett, 2000; Russell, 2009). Particularly for the children of immigrants, their college years are an important period during which they discover their beliefs, determine their identities, and understand their connections to the larger society (Takeshita, 2007). As they search for their identity and a sense of belonging, many will turn to their family history and ethnic origins for guidance, and a trip back to the land of their ancestors may be a rite-of-passage for young adults in many immigrant communities. Therefore, the homecoming journey may be more important and meaningful for this population than other generations.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

*Purpose.* This study aims to understand the “lived experience” of second-generation immigrants in terms of their transnational leisure and travel as well as explore the relationship between second-generation immigrants’ transnational attachment and diaspora tourism experience. Study objectives are:

1) To explore the transnational leisure activities of second-generation Chinese-Americans.
2) To describe the experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans when they visit their parents’ country of origin and the different characteristics of their diaspora tourism trips, such as length, frequency, purpose of the trip, travel group size, travel style, and travel companions.

3) To investigate how the transnational homeland attachment of second-generation Chinese-Americans may influence their diaspora tourism experience in China.

4) To examine how the diaspora tourism experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans may also change their behavior, attitude, and attachment towards their homeland after the trip.

In addition to migration and diaspora literature, the notion of place attachment also helps to explore the transnational bonds that immigrants maintain with their country of origin. Originating from environmental psychology, place attachment explains “the affective bonds that individuals develop with their physical environment” (Giuliani, 2003, p. 138) and is usually divided into different dimensions, such as place dependence, place identity, lifestyle, affective attachment, and social bonding (e.g., Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; Kyle, Grafe, & Manning, 2005; Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004; Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992). In the context of transnational migration, the different dimensions of place attachment provide a better understanding of the nature of immigrants’ attachment to their homeland as being practical, emotional, symbolic, or social.
Research has also shown that attachment to a place may occur on different geographical levels, including site-specific, area-specific, and physiography-specific (Williams et al., 1992). There is no exact size or boundary to a place that people may feel connected to. For example, if someone is attached to “home,” how big is this home? Is it the actual house, the street, the neighborhood, the city or the nation? Although international migrants have “homes” in two countries, their attachment to the two places may be different in terms of attachment dimensions and geographical levels. Being one of the largest countries in the world by population and land area, China, as a nation, encompasses a great deal of geographical, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. The Chinese government also has offices for Overseas Chinese at different administrative levels, from national, provincial, to specific cities and villages (Barabantseva, 2005). Therefore, this study will not only compare second-generation Chinese-Americans’ feelings of “home” towards China and the United States, but also explore the differences in the nature of their attachment and the geographical levels involved.

Research Questions. Using a qualitative, phenomenological approach, this study will answer the following research questions:

1) Are second-generation Chinese-Americans involved in transnational leisure activities?
   a. What types of transnational leisure activities do they participate in, be it individually, with their family, or with their peers?
   b. Do these activities play an important role in their current life or in their childhood and upbringing?
2) For second-generation Chinese-Americans, how was their diaspora tourism experience in China?
   a. What did they like and dislike about their trips?
   b. Which part of the trip exceeded or fell short of their expectations?
3) How did they feel about the specific places they visited in China?
   a. Which place was the most memorable?
   b. Which place was the most authentic?
4) How did being a second-generation Chinese-American influence the way they saw and experienced China?
   a. Where did they feel the most comfortable or “at home”?
   b. Was there a place where they felt a personal connection?
5) How did traveling to China influence their lives after the trip?
   a. Did they feel more or less attached to China?
   b. Did the trip influence the way they felt about themselves or their family?
6) How did their transnational leisure activities influence their travel experience in China? How did their travel experience in China influence their participation in transnational leisure activities?

Significance of the Study

In the era of globalization, more and more people are relocating temporarily or permanently. As migration increases around the world, there is also a growing demand
for homeland travel. The homecoming travel of second generation immigrants back to their country of origin create a type of special interest tourism that has not been studied to a great extent. This research contributes to a better understanding of the transnational attachment of second generation immigrants as well as the travel experience and unique characteristics of this niche market. First, destinations generally have different marketing strategies for domestic and international tourists, but homecoming travelers are a unique group that is in-between the domestic and international. Tourism planning, marketing, and programming may need to be adjusted for these transnational migrant tourists. By understanding the needs and preferences of homecoming travelers, destinations will be able to provide better service and increase tourism visits and revenue. For example, special events and activities that are of great interest to immigrant travelers, such as traditional festivals, re-enactments and story-telling, can be used to promote homecoming tourism.

Second, the results of this study apply not only to immigrants, but to all travelers. Global transportation and communication result in transnational cultures and lifestyles. Therefore, a personal connection exists between individuals and multiple places that transcend national boundaries, and one goal of tourism providers is to increase this connection. Particularly in the case of diaspora tourism, destinations should try to keep the travelers engaged and arouse their feelings of nostalgia and remembrance, thus creating a group of loyal visitors who take pride in their ethnicity and heritage and are willing to be involved in the affairs of the destination community. Besides the returning immigrant visitors, other tourists may also grow to be concerned about the well-being of
the destination, as long as they also feel that emotional place attachment during their trip. This study will shed light on the factors that may increase the bond between tourists and destinations, which benefits both sides by enhancing tourist experience, increasing destination loyalty, and creating responsible tourists.

Due to the diversity of migrant origins and receiving countries, it is difficult to estimate the size and value of this transnational travel market. Human mobility and migration is also domestic. Thus, homecoming journeys also exists in the context of domestic tourism, with individuals visiting their alma mater or the town where they grew up. Nevertheless, the homecoming travel of immigrants is a growing market with a lot of potential. Although this study targets a specific group of immigrants, its findings may be transferable to other immigrant populations. Regardless of their origins, one commonality among immigrant tourists is an emotional and symbolic attachment to the homeland. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the transnational ties between immigrants and their country of origin in order to understand the phenomenon of diaspora tourism.

**Glossary of Terms**

This section is a glossary of the terms related to this study. The terms include:

**Immigrant** – The term refers to a person who moves from one country to another and take up permanent residence in the new country.

**First-generation immigrant** – The term refers to an individual who immigrated to a new country and is thus “foreign-born” in the new country.
Second-generation immigrant – The term refers to an individual who was “native-born” in the new country with at least one “foreign-born” parent.

Second-generation Chinese-American – The term refers to an individual who was born in the United States with at least one parent who was born in China.

Transnationalism – Transnationalism refers to the processes through which immigrants create and sustain social relations between their country of origin and their current country of residence (Basch et al., 1994).

Transnational leisure – Transnational leisure is defined as the leisure activities that connect immigrants to the people and culture of their (or their parents’) country of origin, such as celebrating traditional holidays, listening to music in one’s (or one’s parents’) native language, and participating in ethnic or cultural organizations.

Diaspora – Diaspora refers to ethnic minority groups of migrant origins who live in the new, host country but have a strong emotional connection to their old country or their homeland (Sheffer, 1986).

Diaspora tourism – Diaspora tourism, in a broad sense, includes the different types of travel and tourism undertaken by immigrants and diasporic communities, such as immigrants traveling to their homeland, the folks from “home” coming to the new country to visit their immigrant relatives, immigrants visiting the spaces of transit in their ancestor’s migration process (e.g., Ellis Island), and diasporic communities having their own “ethnic” destinations where they can encounter people of similar ethnic backgrounds (Coles, Duval, & Hall, 2005). In the context of this study, diaspora tourism refers to immigrants traveling to their homeland for non-business purposes, such as to visit
relatives, to learn more about their culture and family history, and to feel connected to their roots.

**Country of residence** – The term refers to the country where one is currently residing. In the context of international migration, country of residence usually refers to the immigrant-receiving nation.

**Country of origin** – The term refers to the country where one is originally from. In the context of international migration, country of origin usually refers to the immigrant-sending nation.

**Homeland** – For immigrants or diasporic communities, homeland is their or their ancestor’s country/place of origin. While “country of origin” only applies to first-generation immigrants, “homeland” applies to people with immigrant backgrounds, even after multiple generations.

**Host society** – For immigrants or diasporic communities, host society is the society that receives them and the place where they settled outside of their traditional homeland. In most cases, “host society” refers to the same place as “country of residence.”

**Dissertation Outline**

This dissertation is composed of five chapters. This chapter, Chapter One, is an introduction of the background, rationale, scope, and purpose of this study. Chapter two is a review of the literature relevant to this study, from transnationalism and diaspora to diaspora tourism and place attachment. Chapter Three explains the methodology used in this study—hermeneutic phenomenology, and describes the sampling, data collection,
and data analysis process. Chapter Four presents the findings of this study, which consists of two main sections, transnational leisure and diaspora tourism. Chapter Five is the concluding chapter, which includes a summary of the findings, a discussion of the theoretical and practical contributions of this study, study limitations, and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past, immigrants were the people “who have come to stay, having uprooted themselves from their old society in order to make themselves a new home and adopt a new country to which they will pledge allegiance” (Basch, Glick-Schiller, & Blanc, 1994, p. 4). Upon their arrival into the New World, immigrants were often forced to settle in impoverished and less desirable areas, and then struggled to improve their living conditions and socioeconomic status (Handlin, 1973). Being separated from their native environment and desperate to belong in the host community, they gave up the traditions from the old world as they became assimilated into the dominant culture of their new home (Gordon, 1964; Warner & Srole, 1945). However, recent advancements in transportation and communication technologies allow contemporary immigrants to live in two worlds. While they strive to be incorporated into the new society, they also manage to maintain virtual or physical contact with their homeland. And as traveling becomes cheaper and more convenient, more and more immigrants are able to go back to their country of origin to visit relatives or simply to feel connected to their ancestral roots and culture (McCain & Ray, 2003).

Traveling to places related to one’s immigrant roots and heritage is known as “diaspora tourism” and is considered a sub-segment of heritage tourism (Timothy & Teye, 2004). The unique homecoming journey of immigrants points to a gap in current tourism studies. Previous research on tourist experiences usually differentiates between domestic
and international tourists. Immigrant tourists, however, are neither domestic nor international. Although they are “foreigners” in their country of origin, they share the same cultural background and connection to the destination as domestic tourists do. However, there has been a lack of research on the travel experience and consumer demand of immigrants visiting the land of their ancestry. Previous studies on the homecoming travel of immigrants and minority groups focused more on the conflicts between the production and consumption of culture and heritage at the destination, such as the contestation of heritage spaces and representations, and the power struggle between different ethnic and tourist groups (Coles & Timothy, 2004). However, traveling cannot be separated from the other aspects of one’s life. To truly understand the diaspora tourism experience of immigrants, it does not suffice to examine simply what happens at the tourist site. It is also necessary to look into the lives of immigrants in the host society and their transnational attachment to their country of origin. Therefore, it is suggested that research on diaspora tourism should be centered on the tourists and their immigrant background, not the destination.

This chapter reviews migration and tourism literature concerning the transnational ties between immigrants and their country of origin and the relationship between diaspora and tourism. The concept of place attachment is also incorporated to examine the transnational homeland attachment of immigrants and how such transnational ties may be sustained though travel and leisure activities. This review of literature is divided into the following sections: Transnationalism, Globalization and Transnational Leisure, Diaspora,
Migration and Tourism, Diaspora Tourism, Place Attachment, and Home/Homeland Attachment.

Transnationalism

Earlier sociological studies on migration generally focus on two themes. The first theme centers on the adaptation of immigrants in the new country, such as how they become assimilated into the mainstream or how the receiving country incorporates immigrants (e.g., Alba & Nee, 2003; Gordon, 1964; Iceland, 2009; Olneck, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Yinger, 1981). The second theme is the determinants of migration, such as the economic factors that caused people to migrate (e.g., Castles & Miller, 2009; Hatton & Williamson, 1998; Massey et al., 1998; Spellman, 2008; Stark, 1991; Thomas, 1973; Tilly, 2006; Trager, 2005). More recently, a third theme emerged in immigration research—transnationalism, which is about the connection and interactions between immigrants and their country of origin and how this attachment influences both the sending country and the receiving country.

In a globalized world, it is increasingly easy for immigrants to maintain a connection to their country of origin, and more and more immigrants are moving back and forth between two places (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 2008). Basch et al. (1994) were one of the earliest to use the term “transnationalism” to describe this interconnected social experience: We define “transnationalism” as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin
and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. (p. 7)

Moreover, they call the immigrants who develop and keep multiple connections across national borders “transmigrants.” The theory of immigrant assimilation argues that in order for immigrants to improve their socioeconomic status, they must abandon their traditional culture, values, customs, language, and ties to their homeland. Also, the longer immigrants stay in the new country and the more they are incorporated into the new society, the weaker their ties to the homeland will be (Alba & Nee, 2003). However, contemporary immigrants maintain a strong connection to their homeland, and they have developed networks or communities across national borders. Therefore, the lives of immigrants can no longer be understood by simply examining what is happening within national boundaries.

Immigrants can engage in different types of transnational practices and activities, including economic, political, social, familial, religious and cultural activities. For example, Portes et al. (2002) measured several activities that indicate transnational ties, including attending hometown celebrations, owning or investing in real estate, sending money for hometown projects, sending money for political campaigns, and participating in hometown associations, charity associations, political organizations, and sport clubs. Transnational practices can also be divided into personal transnational ties and collective transnational actions (Haller & Landolt, 2005). Personal ties include keeping in touch with your relatives across borders, providing personal support across borders, traveling as
tourists, sending or receiving remittances, and discussing homeland politics. Collective transnational actions include forming and transforming religious, civic, and political institutions and taking actions to parley home and host country social issues into transnational platforms. However, Castles and Miller (2009) pointed out that an activity should be central to the life of immigrants in order to be considered “transnational.” On the same note, Portes (1999) also identified three characteristics of transnational activities, which are the activities that 1) occur across national borders, 2) take place on a regular basis, and 3) require a significant amount of time commitment from the participants. By this definition, the personal border-crossing activities that only happen occasionally and do not have an impact on the participant’s life or influencing the home or host community cannot be considered transnational.

Another way to categorize transnational activities is to consider their meaning. Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) distinguished between transnational “ways of being” and transnational “ways of belonging.” Ways of being refers to the actual social relations and practices that immigrants engage in, such as having social contact with people in their country of origin. Ways of belonging refers to the “practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group. These actions are not symbolic but concrete, visible actions that mark belonging” (p. 7). Examples of ways of belonging include wearing a cross, flying a flag, or choosing your homeland cuisine. However, ways of belonging goes beyond just taking action to include awareness of the kind of identity that action represents. With ways of being and ways of belonging, it’s possible to have one but not the other. For example, immigrants may eat food from
their homeland only because they are accustomed to it or only because their mother does the cooking, but not because they identify with that place. On the other hand, some immigrants may have no actual contact back in their country of origin and they have never actually visited the place, but they still feel a sense of connection to the homeland through memory, nostalgia or imagination.

Glick-Schiller (1996) argued that the transnational movements and activities of immigrants between their homeland and host country is not new. However, Portes (1997) pointed out three new characteristics of the transnational practices by contemporary (post-1965) immigrants that make them different from the earlier European immigrants at the turn of the century. First, there are more people involved in transnational activities now than before, and they can represent a significant proportion. Second, modern technology provides the opportunity for instant communications across space. Third, the benefits of transnational activities may make participation “normative” within certain immigrant groups. Immigrants can also form or participate in “transnational communities,” which are the “dense networks across political borders created by immigrants in their quest for economic advancement and social recognition” (Portes, 1997, p. 812). The immigrants who participate in transnational communities are usually bilingual, which allows them to move easily between two countries and two cultures in order to pursue economic, political or cultural interests. And with modern technology, transnational communities no longer have to be face-to-face. Now there can be virtual transnational communities which allow people to connect together from a distance (Castles & Miller, 2009).
Although scholars generally agree that the majority of immigrants engage in some level of transnational activities at least once in a while, the next question is: how long would their transnationalism last? Would the transnational practices of first generation immigrants continue on to the second generation (Foner, 2002)? For the earlier European immigrants, their transnational connections to the homeland disappear quickly after the first generation. From the traditional assimilation theory perspective, transnational activities are transitional, so they will disappear over time as immigrants become better integrated into the host society (Alba & Nee, 2003). Therefore, immigrants’ level of transnationalism will decrease with the number of years they live in the U.S., and transnational activities are most common among the most recent immigrant cohorts. According to assimilation theory, transnational ties to the homeland will also decrease from generation to generation, as each generation is more assimilated than the previous generation (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004).

Various scholars have examined the second generation transnationalism of contemporary (post-1965) immigrants to see if their transnationalism is different from that of their parents and also different from previous second generations (of earlier European immigrants). Perlmann (2002) pointed out that discussions on second generation transnationalism seem to focus on the cultural domain, while for the first generation, the emphasis is on their economic and political ties. He also suggested that since the second generation is usually not as fluent as their parents in their parents’
original language, the possibility of them establishing economic ties (e.g., doing business in their country of origin) will be lower. On the other hand, Itzigsohn et al.’s (1999) study on the transnational practices of Dominican immigrants revealed that first generation immigrants also participated in cultural transnationalism. They divided cultural practices into “narrow” and “broad.” “Narrow” cultural transnationalism refers to institutionalized transnational activities and cultural production, such as joining ethnic social and cultural organizations (Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002). “Broad” cultural transnationality is sustained through associating with one’s ethnic identity through non-institutionalized activities, such as listening to and dancing merengue. In general, first generation Dominican immigrants engaged in both “narrow” and “broad” cultural transnationalism, while the second generation took part in “broad” cultural transnationalism (Itzigsohn et al., 1999).

In addition, it is generally assumed that second generation transnationalism depends on what their parents offered them. So the transnational activities of the first generation and the arrangements they made for their children will determine the level of transnational connection felt by the second generation. However, Perlmann (2002) pointed out that although first generation influence was important for previous second generations, this is not necessarily the case for the contemporary second generation. The current second generation may have more cultural experience outside of their parents’ control. Moreover, another difference between previous and contemporary immigrants is that now the education system is more aware of the issue of multiculturalism and tries to promote cultural diversity (Perlmann, 2002). This may help preserve immigrant cultural distinctiveness and facilitate transnationalism. Since transnational ties become acceptable
or even celebrated, the contemporary second generation can take pride in their connection to homeland (Foner, 2002). Having a transnational identity can even bring a sense of pride and help the second generation overcome the difficulties and discrimination they encounter at school.

Foner (2002) provided several other reasons for the possibility of second generation transnationalism for contemporary immigrants. Now dual citizenships are available in many immigrant-sending countries, and they even extend the dual citizenship to the second generation. In addition, cheaper air travel and global tourism development facilitate immigrants’ traveling back to their homeland. It has also become a trend for some immigrant parents who live in bad neighborhoods (e.g., inner-city areas occupied by native minority groups) to send their children back to the homeland to live with their grandparents during the teenage years, because parents are afraid that the second generation will be influenced by drugs, gangsters, and other criminal activities. On the other hand, well off professional parents sometimes choose to send their kids to live with relatives back home as well, because they don’t have time to take care of their children.

At times, the transnational ties of the second generation are weak during their youth, but grow stronger as they get older. One reason is because as the second generation grows up, they now have the money and resources to develop their transnational connections. Another reason is because after the second generation grows up, the first generation sometimes retire and move back to their country of origin. Therefore, some of the second generation has an incentive to go back there to visit their parents, which facilitates the growth of their transnational ties.
Although there is some evidence supporting second generation transnationalism, it has also been recognized that as a whole, the percentage of second generation transnationalism is not high (Jones-Correa, 2002). Compared to their parents, the second generation is less likely to return, more English dominant, more likely to marry outside of their original nationality or ethnic/racial group, has an increased percentage of acquiring U.S. citizenship, has an increased percentage of becoming homeowners in the U.S., and their frequency of sending remittances decrease over time. Moreover, the second generation has more social ties in the receiving society than their parents, such as through language, education, friendship, work, marriage, and children. Therefore, they may not find the need to participate in transnational networks so much (Jones-Correa, 2002). The loss of bilingual ability is also commonly identified as a problem for second generation transnationalism (Foner, 2002; Perlmann, 2002). Finally, Levitt and Waters (2002) questioned whether the transnationalism of the second generation will have any long-term, widespread impact. Compared to the continuing economic, political, and religious ties to the homeland of the first generation, if the second generation only engage in transnational activities occasionally and these ties are confined to specific arenas in life, it is unlikely that these activities will have significant long-term consequences.

Current literature on transnationalism and second generation transnationalism tend to focus on the public activities that immigrants participate in on a regular basis. For example, Levitt (2001) studied the political and religious activities of immigrants that took place across national borders and how they influenced the homeland. The transnational institutions she analyzed include a political party, a church, and a
community development organization. Guarnizo et al. (2003) also examined immigrants’ transnational political engagement, such as their participation in both electoral and non-electoral activities aimed at influencing conditions in the home country. The research by Portes et al. (2002), on the other hand, drew attention to the economic and business-related activities of immigrants. They discovered that the majority (58%) of self-employed immigrants in the communities they researched were transnational entrepreneurs and developed their business activities between the host and home nations.

Although public transnational actions are important for first generation immigrants, second generation transnationalism tends to be more cultural (Perlmann, 2002). Thus, instead of focusing on these practical transnational ties, research on second generation transnationalism can turn to more private and intrinsic activities, such as leisure and tourism. Traveling back to one’s country of origin is an important transnational practice, because it allows one to be in direct contact with the homeland. The purpose of the homecoming trip also matters. Those doing business between the home and host countries may be traveling back and forth on a regular basis. However, it is their job that requires them to travel. Their motivation for travel is mainly extrinsic, and their emotional connection to the homeland plays a minor role when compared to business. On the other hand, pleasure travel may occur less frequently, but the immigrants who visit their homeland for pleasure purposes are intrinsically motivated by their transnational attachment. Compared to business travel, choosing to visit one’s homeland for pleasure trips also indicates the freedom of choice, which is another determinant of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Research has shown that people
who participate in activities with intrinsic motivation are more likely to achieve positive outcomes and receive a meaningful experience (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, a homecoming journey for non-work-related purposes may be more meaningful than business trips. The notion of “transnational leisure” is a way to explore the more personal and intrinsically motivated aspect of transnationalism.

**Globalization and Transnational Leisure**

Although the leisure activities of immigrants and minority groups have been examined in leisure literature, the main theme was not their choice of transnational leisure, but their leisure participation within the dominant culture. Many studies focused on the relationship between acculturation and leisure. For example, Floyd and Gramann (1993) examined the effect of acculturation on Mexican Americans’ outdoor recreation patterns. Specifically, they compared Mexican Americans to Anglo-Americans to see if Mexican Americans’ activity patterns and site visitation would be similar to that of Anglo-Americans, based on different levels of acculturation and structural assimilation. Shaull and Gramann (1998) also compared Hispanic-Americans to Anglo-Americans to investigate the effect of cultural assimilation on one’s perceived benefits of outdoor recreation activities. On one hand, they found a strong Anglo-conformity pattern in Hispanic-Americans’ perception of nature-related benefits. On the other hand, Hispanic-Americans’ perception of family-related benefits was less prone to the impact of cultural assimilation, which illustrated the importance of family in Hispanic culture. Another study by Walker, Deng, and Dieser (2001) compared the motivations of Chinese-
Canadians and Euro-North Americans for outdoor recreation. Their findings indicated that the two groups differed in their motivation for outdoor recreation, and that acculturation had an influence on the recreation motivation of Chinese respondents. The relationship between acculturation and recreation participation was also examined in Yu and Berryman’s study (1996) on Chinese immigrant adolescents, which revealed a positive relationship between acculturation and number of recreation activities, and a negative relationship between acculturation and number of perceived barriers.

While studies on the leisure experience of immigrants examined different variables, such as number of activities, perceived benefits, barriers to participation, and motivation, many studies focused on the effect of acculturation and compared immigrants to the majority population. One exception was the study by Christenson, Zabriskie, Eggett, and Freeman (2006) on the family leisure behavior of Mexican-Americans. Being aware of the fact that “family” is an important institution in Hispanic culture, they explored the concept of family functioning and family leisure involvement among Mexican-Americans. Although Christenson et al. (2006) still examined the relationship between acculturation and family leisure involvement, at least they took the uniqueness of Hispanic culture into consideration, as opposed to focusing on how immigrants fit into the mainstream culture. The influence of cultural assimilation on the leisure participation of immigrants has been well documented. On the other hand, using a transnationalism perspective to examine the leisure of immigrants would be different. “Transnational leisure” involves the culture of their homeland, not the host society, and it’s about the immigrant population choosing to do something different for leisure, not about reducing
the constraints so that minority groups can also participate in the same activity as the majority.

In the past, it was more costly and time-consuming for immigrants to remain connected to their country of origin. Thus, the ability to assimilate into the life and culture of the host society was very important, and the process of assimilation influenced immigrants’ leisure activities as well. But more recently, with globalization and new information and communication technologies, such as the Internet and satellite TV, immigrants have the opportunity to engage in transnational leisure. Research has shown that new communication technologies have resulted in the globalization of culture and social transformations (Lull, 2001). In this new “information society,” geographical distance is no longer an issue. Human experience and social relations can be mediated by computer technologies, and be disembodied from geographical settings (Adam, Awerbuch, Slonim, Wegner, & Yesha, 1997; Gustafson, 2001). Through the Internet and mass media, people can consume foreign cultures and add new layers of global and transnational identity to their multilayered, local, regional, and national identity (Straubhaar, 2008).

Gentz and Kramer (2006) argued that in light of the transnational characteristic of media representations, “no community can now effectively protect itself from coming into contact with alien influences” (p. 4). However, the influence of foreign culture through the global media has been regarded as a form of westernization and cultural imperialism (Tomlinson, 1999). Therefore, many studies on globalization and culture focused on how the Internet and mass media have changed the local lifestyle and people’s
cultural identities. For example, Grixti (2006) examined how the lifestyle of the indigenous population of Malta was influenced by the global media as well as local traditions, and argued that even though Maltese youths were affected by the global consumer culture, they were able to appropriate foreign influences and form a hybrid identity that’s unique to Malta. D’Silva (2000) interviewed local people in India to see how they made sense of the new global information flows, and found that their lives were transformed by the consumerism of western societies, and their identity was influenced by how India and Indian culture were represented on British television. Another example is the study by Rahim and Pawanteh (2009) on media penetration in Malaysia. As the Internet and other forms of media allowed Malaysian people to be exposed to more liberal thoughts and foreign culture, the study found that young adults in Malaysia often struggled between contradictory values in the formation of their cultural identity as a result of globalization.

Globalization and new technologies not only introduce foreign culture to a society, but also result in the formation of one’s multicultural identity in the global environment (Jensen, 2003). The influence of the global media on the lives of immigrants is more complex, because they are not learning about new, foreign cultures, but keeping in touch with old cultures. Contemporary immigrants can maintain virtual contact with their country of origin through the Internet and the mass media on a regular basis. For first-generation immigrants, these transnational activities enable them to keep up with the news and events of their homeland, and maintain social relations with their family and friends back home. For second-generation immigrants, however, they can learn about
their parents’ country through these same activities. In a sense, they are learning about a “foreign” culture and the traditions of their parents and ancestors at the same time, and it would be very interesting to see how these activities influence the formation of their multicultural and transnational identity. Although these personal and cultural activities are less studied in transnationalism literature, they are particularly important for second generation immigrants. Many transnational cultural practices fall under the domain of leisure, and oftentimes it is through these everyday leisure activities that the second generation can learn about and perhaps begin to feel a connection to their homeland. For example, Kasinitz et al. (2008) presented one interesting case study about the influence of leisure activities on second generation transnationalism. One of their research participants was a Chinese-Dominican girl who, having spent most of her childhood in the Dominican Republic and the U.S., initially identified herself as a Dominican. It wasn’t until she saw a Hong Kong action film in college did she become attracted to Chinese culture. This interest in Asian films triggered her to re-evaluate her Chinese heritage, and later she even went to work in Hong Kong for a while.

In all, it is argued that while most transnational leisure, such as using ethnic media and visiting websites related to one’s immigrant origin, takes place locally (i.e., in the host society), it may still have a profound impact on one’s transnational identity. And traveling back to one’s homeland for non-business-related purposes, although occurring with less frequency than business trips, may result in a more meaningful experience. Therefore, there should be more research on the transnational leisure and travel experience of second-generation immigrants.
**Diaspora**

As opposed to migration literature, diaspora literature provides more support for the importance of the homeland and homecoming experience in the lives of immigrants (Oxfeld & Long, 2004). “Diaspora” originally referred to the Jewish population who were exiled from Israel and settled outside of their traditional homeland (Shuval, 2000). However, the term has developed into a complicated concept with a plethora of definitions. For example, Sheffer (1986) defined diasporas as “ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their country of origin—their homelands” (p. 3). Braziel and Mannur (2003) saw diaspora as “a naming of the other which has historically referred to displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile” and that diaspora suggested “a dislocation . . . and a relocation” (p. 1). According to Coles and Timothy (2004), diasporas are “groups of people scattered across the world but drawn together as a community by their actual (and in some cases perceived or imagined) common bonds of ethnicity, culture, religion, national identity and, sometimes, race” (p. 3). From these definitions, the basic characteristics of diaspora are the physical relocation of a group of people, either forced or voluntary, and their connection to their country of origin. Interestingly, diasporas are often more attached to their traditional heritage than the people who still live in their homeland. For example, maintaining a Scottish identity and
a link to Scotland may be more important for the Scots outside of Scotland than it is for those living in Scotland (Harrison, 2005).

Building on the work of Safran (1991), Shuval (2000) identified the critical components of diaspora across different definitions, which included “a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return . . ., ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity” (p. 43). She pointed out two other important characteristics of diaspora: a sense of alienation in their current settlement and the desire to return home. Diasporic communities generally experience a sense of displacement in the host society (Mitchell, 1997). To them, “home” is not the place they currently live but the “homeland” that is elsewhere (Meethan, 2004). Therefore, they have the desire to return to their ancestral point of origin in search of a sense of belonging, even if after death. They also develop a strong connection to people of similar origins or ethnic backgrounds and form their own community or social groups within the host country. In addition, Butler (2001) proposed two more distinguishing features of diaspora. First, diaspora implies scattering and spreading. Therefore, the relocation must take place in more than one destination, “rather than a transfer from the homeland to a single destination” (p. 192). Second, diasporas must be multi-generational. The diasporic group should remain in the host country for at least two generations. Otherwise their migration or exile is just temporary.

Contemporary use of the term diaspora has grown to include many population movements, such as immigrants, political refugees, foreign workers, overseas communities, and ethnic and racial minorities (Shuval, 2000). Therefore, diaspora can
also be considered as an older term for transnational communities (Castles & Miller, 2009). Robin Cohen (1997) came up with a conceptual typology for diasporic processes and experiences. Diaspora in the classical sense refers to the Jewish tradition. Victim Diasporas involve the forced relocation of populations, such as the African diaspora. Labour and Imperial Diasporas are a result of colonization, such as the Indians under British colonization. Trade and Business Diasporas refer to international movements for work and trade, as exemplified by the overseas Chinese in South East Asia. Finally, Cultural Diasporas describe the postmodern fascination with homeland and cultural expressions of diasporic experiences through art, literature, and other cultural productions.

Cohen’s typology demonstrated that diaspora communities are diverse. They differ according to the reasons for their initial migration, their status and condition in the host country, their relationship with the homeland, and their interrelationships with other diasporic communities (Butler, 2001). For example, compared to other Hispanic immigrants, Cuban refugees received a warm welcome upon their arrival in the U.S. due to the political tension between the American and Cuban governments after the Cuban revolution (Marger, 2009). The political reasons behind their migration, the physical similarities between Cubans and Euro-Americans, and the relatively high economic and educational status of Cuban immigrants result in a better reception of Cuban immigrants than other immigrants in the U.S.. Therefore, the use of panethnic labels or “catch-all” terms, such as Latino-American and Asian-American, fails to acknowledge the diversity of migration experiences (Coles & Timothy, 2004). In some extreme cases, the notion of
homeland exists in a nostalgic memory and the immigrants may have no desire to physically return to the homeland (Falzon, 2003).

Despite the diversity of diasporic experiences, one characteristic that people in diaspora have in common is a connection to both their country of origin and the host society, resulting in sub-national, transnational, and non-territorial identities (Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2007). In fact, an alternative term for diaspora is “hyphenated community,” which refers to “the semantic coupling of the homeland and the host state” in labels such as Irish-Americans and Scottish-Canadians (Coles & Timothy, 2004, p. 8). The hyphenation indicates how immigrants must compromise and negotiate between different nationalities and ethnicities. For example, Lowe (1991) stressed the heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity of diaspora collectivity in the case of Asian-Americans. She argued that the Asian diaspora exemplified cultural hybridity rather than settling for assimilation and trying to become “native.” Mitchell (1997) also discussed the relationship between diaspora and hybridity, and how migration resulted in multiple loyalties and identities. Moreover, the migrating experience allows one to move between regions and cross national boundaries (Morley & Robins, 1995). The border crossing activities of immigrants can even be multi-locale (Clifford, 1994). As diasporic populations are often spread to several destinations, transnational connections also exist between diasporas in different host societies.

Diaspora and transnationalism literature both depict a transnational attachment between immigrants and their country of origin. However, there are also some subtle differences in their connotation. Castles and Miller (2009) described the word “diaspora”
as being more emotional, because traditionally it referred to a forced removal/displacement from the homeland. On the other hand, migration is oftentimes a voluntary action, so the concept of transnationalism is more neutral. Moreover, since the people in diaspora were forced to relocate, their ancestral homeland is their real “home,” and diaspora literature emphasizes on the desire to return “home” eventually. As for voluntary transnational migrants, they have settled in the host society, and their transnational activity is traveling back and forth, not necessarily to return to the homeland permanently. In addition, from the transnationalism perspective, transnational practices should take place on a regular basis and require a significant time commitment from the participants (Portes, 1999). But for diasporic communities, a homecoming journey is a dramatic and emotional experience, particularly if it were an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. In other words, it’s not the frequency of the diaspora tourism trips, but their meaning and significance that matters. Therefore, transnationalism is more concerned with immigrants maintaining regular homeland ties in everyday life, while the concept of diaspora is more concerned with the complex, emotional experience of displacement and return.

**Migration and Tourism**

In the past, when international migration was a more difficult, expensive, and time-consuming process, the opportunity for immigrants to travel back “home” was also rare, and perhaps even once in a lifetime. For some refugees and diaspora groups, it was impossible for them to return to their homeland, and they could only wish to return and
die at “home” (Stefansson, 2004). However, as modern transportation systems become cheaper and more convenient, contemporary immigrants are more likely to travel back and forth between two countries, and their relatives from “home” can also come for a visit. The ease and frequency of homecoming trips and other types of VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) travel resulting from migration all fall under the realm of tourism. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the relationship between migration and tourism.

Migration and tourism both involve the movement of people across geographical regions, but of different durations (Williams & Hall, 2000b). In fact, tourism is one of the transnational activities through which overseas communities can participate in the affairs that take place in their homeland (Coles & Timothy, 2004). Tourism allows immigrants to remain connected and enhance their attachment to their ancestral origin. The relationship between tourism and migration is two-fold. On one hand, tourism can generate two types of migration: 1) labor migration, which provides the labor needed in tourism-related services, and 2) consumption-led migration systems, which consist of tourists moving to their beloved destinations, such as retirement migration and second home development (Williams & Hall, 2000a). On the other hand, diaspora and migration can also lead to five modes of travel. First, immigrants can travel back to their ancestral homeland. Second, the folks from “home” can come to visit their immigrant relatives in their current place of residence. Third, the people in diaspora can travel to destinations other than their place of origin. Fourth, the spaces of transit in the process of migration, such as Ellis Island, are also destinations that immigrants return to. And fifth, diasporic
communities develop their own vacation places where they can encounter people of similar ethnic backgrounds (Coles, Duval, & Hall, 2005).

In particular, immigrants going “home” to visit the land of their ancestral heritage can be considered a form of heritage tourism. Heritage is an important travel motivation (Lowenthal, 1998). Within the trend of heritage tourism, researchers have emphasized the importance of personal connections between tourists and heritage sites with regard to tourist perception, behavior and motivation. A heritage site is more than its physical attributes; it must establish a connection between tourists and heritage. Cheung (1999) discussed how different people would have different understandings and interpretations about the meanings of the same heritage trail. Urry (1990) provided an example of how white tourists were more interested in British heritage while black and Asian tourists paid more attention to diversity in heritage. Tourists of different backgrounds and origins may perceive the destination according to their individual heritage, which would in turn influence their travel behavior and motivation (Poria, Reichel, & Biran, 2006a).

Moreover, traveling is more than just sightseeing. An essential part of the tourist experience is not only to “gaze” but to “feel” the emotional connection to the destination and the heritage it represents (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2003).

Nostalgia is one example of the connection between tourists and heritage sites. It is different from other types of feelings and memories because nostalgia emphasizes the positive aspects of the past and the negative conditions of the present. Dann (2005) considered nostalgia as an important motivation for heritage tourism. He argued that one of the main reasons tourists visit heritage sites is because they are not content with the
present. When the current life is unsatisfying and the future seems unpredictable, people long for the past. Therefore, nostalgia has nothing to do with how great the past is; instead, it points out the problems, anxieties, and discontents of the present (Hewison, 1987). From this respect, heritage tourism is not about the features of the site objectively, but the personal longings and emotions of the tourists subjectively.

Poria, Butler, and Airey (2003) divided the tourists visiting a heritage site into four groups, arguing that only those who are motivated by heritage and consider the site as part of their personal heritage are the real “heritage tourists.” Among heritage tourists, one group in particular experiences stronger personal connection to the culture and heritage of the destination than common tourists do—that is, the immigrants and diasporic communities who travel back to the land of their ancestors. This type of travel has been acknowledged by scholars and given different names, including “personal heritage tourism” (Timothy, 1997), “ethnic tourism” (Kang & Page, 2000), “ethnic reunion” (Stephenson, 2002), “ancestral tourism” (Fowler, 2003), genealogy/genealogical tourism” (Meethan, 2004; Nash, 2002), “legacy tourism” (McCain & Ray, 2003), “pilgrimage tourism” (Schramm, 2004), “roots-tourism” (Basu, 2004), “diaspora tourism” (Holsey, 2004; Timothy & Teye, 2004), and “VFR tourism” (Uriely, 2010). Although there is no unifying terminology, the concept of diaspora is widely used to understand the relationship between tourism and other mobilities. “Diaspora tourism” has become the more commonly used term to describe the phenomenon of people of immigrant origins visiting their ancestral homeland or other places related to their family’s migration history.
**Diaspora Tourism**

Within tourism literature, studies on travel motivation and heritage tourism in general exemplify some critical elements of diaspora tourism. In his seminal work on travel motivations, Crompton (1979) identified nine motives for pleasure vacations. Amongst the socio-psychological motives, “exploration and evaluation of self” and “enhancement of kinship relationships” are characteristic of diaspora tourism. Poria, Reichel, and Biran (2006b) also categorized five main motives for visiting heritage sites, including “connecting with my heritage.” Moreover, research has shown that heritage tourism contributes to the construction and maintenance of the tourists’ sense of national identity (Palmer, 1999). Similarly, for immigrants, a diaspora tourism trip to their ancestral homeland may help them negotiate between cultural assimilation and maintaining a transnational identity.

Diaspora tourism also received attention outside the field of tourism. Studies in anthropology, sociology, and ethnology have explored the experience of immigrants and their need to construct a hybrid identity. The United States is said to be a country of immigrants. Although people of German origins now outnumber those of British origins, British heritage is still the charter group, and immigrants from other European countries try to relate to their European heritage and identify themselves as being Irish, Scottish, Italian, Greek, and so on. Therefore, many European countries are popular for roots and genealogy tourism, including Ireland (Johnson, 1999), Scotland (Basu, 2004), England (Fowler, 2003), and Greece (Thanopoulos & Walle, 1988). Since these tourists have the
Demand to search for their heritage and identity abroad, tourism organizations in the host country also try to construct and market the history and heritage of the nation to these immigrant travelers. For example, the Scottish Tourist Board designated 2009, which was the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns, as the first “Homecoming Scotland” year and provided a series of special events to welcome returning Scottish descendants.

The further the geographical and cultural distance between immigrant-sending and receiving nations, the more difficulties immigrants have when trying to blend into the life and culture of their new “home.” Bhatia (2002) argued that Third World immigrants who settle in First World countries struggle between two identities, trying to assimilate to western culture while maintaining a strong identification with their traditional heritage and ethnicity at the same time. Diasporic communities are oftentimes marginalized and underprivileged in the host country. Therefore, they become “notably heritage hungry,” and travel in search of their roots and heritage (Lowenthal, 1998). For example, Stephenson (2002) examined the experience of the UK Afro-Caribbean diaspora who traveled back to the Caribbean for ethnic reunion. Not only did individuals have the desire to visit their ancestral homeland, but they also participated in such travel out of social obligations to their parents and grandparents. For minority immigrants, the need to reconstruct their hybrid identity yet maintain a connection to their place of origin is the same across different groups.

On the other hand, the diaspora tourism experience of minority groups also differs due to diverse migration histories and national origins. Rather than discussing every diaspora group within the literature, the following review would focus on the tourism
experiences of the African diaspora, Jewish diaspora, Chinese diaspora, and Vietnamese diaspora. Being a disempowered minority in America, many African Americans have the need to travel back to their homeland and re-connect with “Mother Africa” (Bruner, 1996). Through symbols and images of a remembered past, African Americans can experience spiritual reunion with the past. This homecoming journey not only helps the African diaspora find their roots, but also lead to their identity transformation and self-realization (Ebron, 1999). Moreover, slavery is the most fundamental element in African-American history. Schramm (2004) argued that African-American “homecomers” are like pilgrims in a spiritual quest. They re-live the traumatic memory of slavery to achieve cathartic healing. Visiting slave route heritage sites helps some of the African diaspora make sense of the tragic past and reevaluate their present, so as to “gain closure” and “begin the process of healing” (Timothy & Teye, 2004, p. 120). Although the more recent wave of African American diaspora tourists have not experienced slave trade personally, the history of slavery in the U.S. is still central to the African American collective memory through powerful media representations, such as the TV series Roots and Toni Morrison’s novel Beloved (Holsey, 2004). As a result, some African countries are perceived as “an imagined homeland” by African American diaspora tourists, “even in the absence of a genealogical certainty of their connection” (Holsey, 2004, p. 168).

Bruner (1996) also pointed out that as African-American tourists visit the historic sites of the slave trade, they experience feelings of sorrow for their ancestors as well as a sense of pride for having survived such cruel conditions. Since the purpose of their diaspora
tourism trip is to connect with the past, African-American tourists are often more interested in the history of Africa rather than its contemporary culture (Bruner, 1996).

Also a popular destination for diaspora tourism, Israel is the religious and spiritual center for the Jewish diaspora. Like African-Americans, Jewish people are a minority in the US. Thus, they go back to Israel in search of “an authentic and holistic Jewish experience” (Cohen, 2008, p. 189). Jewish diaspora tourism often takes place in the form of group tours, allowing diasporic Jews to consider issues of identity in an all-Jewish environment, which is rarely available in their host society. For young Jewish-Americans, approximately between the ages of 18 to 26, such a journey is more than a religious pilgrimage; it is also a necessary rite of passage in the process of socialization and Jewish identity formation (Di Giovine, 2009). Erik Cohen (2003) studied the visiting students in Israeli universities, discovering that 90% of them are Jewish. He pointed out that Jewish visiting students have emotional attachment to the destination prior to visiting. Their emotional connection to Israel is sustained through their family, social environment, and previous Jewish education. Moreover, Cohen (2004) examined the Exodus Program for adolescents of Jewish descent, which was an introductory program to an educational tour of Israel. The Exodus Program was designed to follow the Exodus voyage in 1947, which was a ship that transported Holocaust survivors from France to Palestine. The young Jews were taken through the path of their ancestors and the time on the boat was used to prepare them for the subsequent journey in Israel. Findings showed that the Exodus boat tour increased the participants’ understanding of Jewish history and strengthened their Jewish identity. The Israeli government also plays a part in establishing the relationship
between Israel and the Jewish diaspora. Supported by the government, organizations such as Taglit-Birthright Israel provide free trips to Israel for Jewish young adults as a way to reinforce the connection between Israel and Jewish communities around the world (Di Giovine, 2009).

Similar to Israel, the Chinese government also realizes the need to cultivate the relationship between the Chinese diaspora and motherland China, not only to strengthen their symbolic affiliation to China but also to seek material contribution (Barabantseva, 2005). There is an Overseas Chinese Affairs Office at the national government level, and every province and municipality in China (except Tibet) established their own office for overseas Chinese as well. Louie (2000) examined the youth festivals and summer camp programs sponsored by the Chinese government for young Chinese-Americans. Through these programs, the government’s agenda is to construct a new Chinese-American identity and provoke feelings of patriotism and Chinese nationalism so as to encourage overseas Chinese to invest in China. For example, young Chinese descendants are taken to visit the villages where their ancestors lived to arouse nostalgic emotions. However, Louie discovered that the identity formation of Chinese-Americans is more complex than what the Chinese government expects. Chinese immigrants need to negotiate their identities between Eastern and Western cultures. Strongly influenced by Western upbringing, young Chinese-Americans are more interested in their family history in China rather than Chinese national history. As a result, these youth programs for overseas Chinese create multiple narratives rather than a shared Chinese identity.
Visiting family and relatives who still live in the homeland is another important purpose of diaspora tourism, especially for first and second generation immigrants, whose migration experience was more recent (Uriely, 2010). Traveling to the homeland provides a chance for them to connect with their relatives and participate in some family traditions. Long (2004) argued that it was important for overseas Vietnamese to renew family relationships and kinship ties through annual rituals at family altars and graves of their ancestors, so they typically return to Vietnam during “Tet,” the Vietnamese Lunar New Year. For second generation Vietnamese immigrants, visiting Vietnam and taking part in family rituals also allows them “to establish a sense of place based on their own memories and experiences,” as opposed to knowing Vietnam only through their parents’ stories and previous experiences (Long, 2004, p. 87).

On the other hand, diaspora tourists’ encounter with their relatives who stayed behind is not always positive. Sometimes they have to face the jealousy and social expectations of their local relatives. For example, a Barbadian immigrant who returned from Canada to Barbados described that “If you come back with money, they are jealous. If you come back with nothing, they ridicule you” (Gmelch, 2004, p. 214). Moreover, Kim’s (2009) study on Korean immigrants visiting South Korea revealed that Korean Americans found themselves to be “culturally foreign” in their homeland, and realized that cultural familiarity was needed for them to feel at home in Korea. A collection of autobiographic essays by second-generation Asian Americans also demonstrated that it was the language barriers and cultural differences that made them feel like outsiders in their parents’ country of origin (Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007). What made the situation
worse was the fact that even their local relatives treated them like Americans. For example, an Indian American girl thought that “my relatives viewed me as an American; that’s what made me interesting to them” (Gupta, 2007, p. 125), and another Korean American was always being introduced as someone’s “daughter from America” and excused for her wrongful manners “because she’s from America” (Lee, 2007, p. 111). Being unable to connect to their homeland and the relatives who stayed behind, some diaspora tourists face “the authenticity dilemma,” because they feel inauthentic in both countries (Tuan, 1999).

The travel of immigrants is not limited to their ancestral homeland. Kang and Page (2000) studied the travel patterns of Korean-New Zealander in what they called “ethnic tourism.” They discovered that when traveling overseas, 61% of Korean-New Zealanders chose to travel back to Korea. And for the remaining percentage who didn’t travel to Korea, still they visited international destinations popular with Korean tourists. Therefore, the Korean immigrants in New Zealand managed to maintain a connection with the travel culture and preferences of their homeland. Similarly, Ioannides and Ioannides (2004) pointed out that in addition to Israel, Jewish-Americans were most likely to travel to other Jewish neighborhoods within the U.S., where their parents or grandparents grew up, such as neighborhoods in Brooklyn, New York. There were also Jewish-only resorts in the U.S., where the Jewish dietary and religious regulations were followed, and therefore popular with Jewish travelers. One reason why immigrants tend to visit places that are related to their ancestral heritage is because they want to find their roots, but another reason is because they may not be welcomed, or have their religious or
cultural needs met easily, elsewhere. Stephenson (2004) examined the experience of Afro-Caribbeans in the UK traveling domestically and to other places in Europe, revealing that Afro-Caribbean visitors encountered many racialized experiences when they traveled to destinations dominated by white ethnic groups. Therefore, minority immigrants and diasporas often choose to visit places with people of similar appearance and ethnic backgrounds when they travel.

Previous studies on the diaspora tourism experience of different immigrant populations reveal some unique characteristics of diaspora tourism. For example, immigrant travelers may be more interested in the history and heritage of their homeland, rather than its contemporary culture (Bruner, 1996). In terms of history, they are also more curious about personal family history, rather than the grand, national history (Louie, 2000). Therefore, considering the production side of diaspora and heritage tourism, there is an educational element involved when the destination (i.e., the homeland) tries to design events and programs that would create a positive image and instill a sense of national pride in the minds of immigrants, especially the youths (Cohen, 2004). But from the tourists’ perspective, immigrant travelers often need to negotiate between the culture and heritage that is represented by the destination and their own knowledge and perception of the homeland (Kim, 2009; Louie, 2000). Because of this negotiation and transformation process, diaspora tourism can help immigrants shape or redefine their identity (Di Giovine, 2009; Ebron, 1999).

However, the significance of these homecoming trips cannot be understood by simply examining what happens at the destination. The diaspora tourism experience of
immigrants is also related to their background and life in the host society and their emotional ties to the homeland destination. In fact, it is this transnational attachment that distinguishes returning immigrants from common international tourists. Diaspora literature argues that immigrants remain connected to their homeland because they are the minority in the new country. Feeling alienated and marginalized in the host society, they have the desire to return to the land of their ancestors to search for their roots and a sense of belonging (Bhatia, 2002). Therefore, the diaspora tourism trip is almost like a spiritual journey and a healing process for them to overcome the traumatic experience of displacement, relocation, and alienation (Schramm, 2004; Timothy & Teye, 2004).

Transnationalism literature, on the other hand, argues that the process of assimilation and transnationalism are not binary opposites (Levitt & Waters, 2002; Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004). It is possible for immigrants to become more assimilated and still maintain an enduring transnational connection to their homeland. People can also change and switch according to the context (Levitt, 2002). Most immigrants, instead of being fully assimilated or fully transnational, are a combination of both (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004). Moreover, the relationship between one’s level of assimilation and transnationalism may vary due to the differences in immigrant generations and national origins. Portes et al. (2002) and Guarnizo et al. (2003) discovered it was the better educated and financially stable first generation immigrants who were more likely to engage in transnational practices, while the study by Haller and Landolt (2005) found that unemployment and downward assimilation were both positively correlated to transnationalism, and that transnationalism was associated with lower level of parental
human capital and underprivileged nationalities among the second generation in south Florida. Foner (2002) also suggested that transnationalism might be associated with the underprivileged immigrant populations because transnational ties could bring a sense of pride and help immigrants deal with the prejudice and discrimination they encounter in the host society.

Taking into account both diaspora and transnationalism literature, perhaps the bigger question is: do immigrants engage in diaspora tourism because of their alienation in the new country, or can they be equally and strongly attached to both home and host societies? For diasporic and immigrant communities, the meaning of “home” is complicated. And when they travel to their ancestral homeland, are they going to a destination or coming home? The concept of place attachment provides a better understanding of the relationship between immigrants and their two “homes.” While they may feel connected to both their current place of residence and ancestral homeland, there may be some differences in the nature of their attachment and the geographical levels involved.

**Place Attachment**

Place, as opposed to “space,” is a physical environment that is meaningful to the individual (Stokowski, 2002). Physical space can be transformed into a place “when we attach meaning to a particular geographic locale” (Williams et al., 1992, p. 31). Place meaning is usually constructed by experience. People develop a sense of attachment to a location based on their past experience, so people can become attached to their home,
neighborhood, city, state, nation, and other types of environments. The theory of place attachment emerged from the field of environmental psychology to explain how people associate meaning and become personally and emotionally connected to a place. For tourism and outdoor recreation in particular, place attachment can be used to examine the influence of places and their meanings on people’s travel and recreational experiences.

Place attachment is divided into two basic dimensions: the functional dimension and the emotional/symbolic dimension. Place dependence refers to the functional attachment to a place. People develop a sense of place dependence because the place can satisfy their specific needs and goals. They would compare and analyze the attributes of different places to assess their functions, and the chosen place usually possesses some unique qualities. Specificity and functionality are important indicators of place dependence (Williams et al., 1992). For example, a whitewater recreationist may consider one particular river as the best place for rafting and kayaking when compared to other rivers (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000).

Apart from functional dependence, the symbolic or psychological attachment to a place is known as place identity. Place identity is:

a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of . . . cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives. These cognitions represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and conceptions of behavior and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being. (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983, p. 59)
That is, one’s environment-related cognitions play a part in defining one’s personal identity. A place is no longer an outside environment; instead, it becomes an integral part of oneself. Therefore, people develop a strong emotional connection to a place. For example, a person who identifies him/herself as a “New Yorker” is someone who takes pride in living or growing up in New York and whose feelings and memories of New York constitutes his or her self-identity.

Individual identity can be developed in relation to the physical environment. However, place identity goes beyond the individual. As places often have shared meanings among a group of people, places can also create or help maintain a sense of group identity and cultural identity (Williams et al., 1992). Another important feature of place identity is that it is constructed. Place identity can be a personal construction (Proshansky et al., 1983). Place dependence is usually maintained through personal experience, while symbolic place attachment can be constructed through individual perception and imagination. Moreover, “the creation of a sense of place can be seen as a social (not merely individual) task” (Stokowski, 2002, p. 372). The reason why a place becomes especially meaningful or memorable to a person is usually because of the people, events, and interactions associated with that place. Therefore, place identity is socially constructed through shared memories, meanings, and values of the place. Furthermore, as place identity is a social construction, research has shown that there is a connection between one’s social class and the depth of place attachment (Fried, 1969). That is, a sense of belonging and attachment to a place is fundamental to the working class, so dislocation results in “fragmenting the sense of spatial identity” (p. 157). But for people
of higher social status, external stability is not as important and therefore they do not suffer from dislocation.

In addition to place dependence and place identity, Bricker and Kerstetter (2000) identified a third dimension of place attachment: *lifestyle*. This third dimension is somewhat related to place identity. Their difference lies in that place identity focuses on the symbolic and emotional attachment to a place, while lifestyle emphasizes how the place is integrated into a person’s life. For example, when a whitewater recreationist chooses to live close to a river and organizes his life around the river, he is not only identifying with the place but also integrating his lifestyle with the place. This integrated lifestyle dimension of place attachment, although not as significant as place dependence and place identity, reveals the possibility of other dimensions existing in place attachment. Kyle, Graefe, and Manning (2005) also tried to explore the possibility of other underlying dimensions in place attachment. Based on environmental psychology literature, they suggested a *social bonding* dimension, because people’s attachment to place is often formed through the social relationships and activities that they experience in specific settings. However, empirical data showed that the social bonding dimension has lower reliability and factor loadings than place dependence and place identity. In another study, Kyle, Mowen, and Tarrant (2004) further divided place identity into two dimensions. They argued that measures of place identity include both emotional attachment to place and the symbolic identification process between people and place. Therefore, the *affective attachment* dimension should be separated from place identity, resulting in a
four dimension scale of place attachment: place dependence, place identity, affective attachment, and social bonding.

Another issue to consider in the study of place attachment is the size or boundary of a place. If someone is attached to “home,” how big is this home? Is it the actual house, the street, the neighborhood, the community, the city or the nation? Research has shown that attachment to a place may occur on several geographic levels, including site-specific, area-specific, and physiography-specific (Williams et al., 1992). For example, one can be attached to the Oconee Station State Historic Site, or to the Great Smoky Mountains area, or to the whole Appalachian Trail. It is also possible for people to be attached to a certain type of environment, e.g. wilderness, regardless of whether they have been to the actual area or not. In addition to the different geographic levels of the place under investigation, place attachment can be applied to many different types of places as well. Early research concerning place attachment focused more on the built environment, such as people’s attachment to home and residents’ attachment to the local community (Williams & Vaske, 2003). As the literature grew, attachment to natural and wilderness areas also became a popular subject of research. In general, place attachment studies cover a wide range of physical settings, including birthplaces, second homes, cafes, public meeting places, tourist destinations, and other recreational areas.

Manzo (2003) pointed out two other characteristics of place attachment worthy of attention. First, place attachment is not necessarily a positive feeling towards the place. Although the majority of literature tries to explore the positive aspect of place attachment, it is possible for people to develop a negative emotional relationship with a place, when a
place is associated with painful memories and experiences. For example, the site of the September 11 attacks brings tragic memories to people, and so do many dark tourism sites, such as the site of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Such negative place attachment may be strong or slight, ranging from abused children’s thinking of home as a place of violence to travelers who have negative impressions of a destination from receiving bad service. Second, place attachment is not an everlasting emotional relationship between people and place. In fact, emotional attachment to place is a dynamic and changing phenomenon. People can be attached to both “home” and “away,” and “emotional relationships to places are a dynamic interplay between the residence and places outside of it” (p. 52). That is, what one feels about home would change his perceptions of the place away from home, and vice versa. For example, when someone is tired of daily routines and the same boring environment, s/he may long for a place far away. And when someone is homesick, a foreign destination may suddenly lose its fresh appeal and excitement.

Although people’s attachment to home may influence how they feel about places away from home, one’s feelings and preferences for “home” and “away” are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Research has shown that when tourists visit a place repeatedly, their experience with the place accumulates and they develop a “sense of home” towards the destination. Some tourists even try to have a closer relationship with the place by making it into their “second home” (Tuulentie, 2007). Kelly and Hosking’s (2008) study on second home owners in Australia found that second home owners had a high level of place attachment to the area, which was positively related to their
community involvement and support for local businesses. In some cases, second home owners’ place attachment may even be stronger than permanent residents. Stedman (2006) discovered that seasonal residents of a lakefront community had higher levels of attachment to place than year-round residents. However, year-round residents’ place attachment was sustained through social networks and sense of community, while seasonal residents perceived the place as an escape from everyday life.

The increasing popularity of second homes and vacation homes creates an interesting scenario in people’s experience with place as either “home” or “destination.” Second home owners cannot be categorized as tourists or locals, and they experience the place through ambivalent modes of movement such as “travellings-in-dwelling” and “dwellings-in-travelling” (Haldrup, 2004). Second home owners’ attachment to place is but one example of the blurred boundary between home and away, and between place attachment and mobility. Aronsson (2004) argued that “in a more and more placeless world, vacation residence stands out as meaningful and filled with sense of place” (p. 77). As society becomes more global and people increasingly mobile, the relationship between people and place is no longer a fixation on one place, but a complex interaction between an individual and multiple places.

Research on place and place attachment indicates that the relationship between people and place can occur on several geographic levels, relate to different types of environments, include both positive and negative feelings, and is a dynamic interplay between home and away. Given the importance of the setting in leisure activities and tourism experiences, place attachment can be applied to leisure and tourism research.
Some studies demonstrate the significance of place attachment by investigating its impacts. First of all, place attachment can influence people’s satisfaction and attitude towards leisure and tourism activities. Hwang, Lee, and Chen (2005) studied the interpretation services of national parks in Taiwan to understand the relationship between place attachment, tourist involvement, and satisfaction. Their findings indicated that place attachment to national parks would increase the tourists’ involvement with the parks, which would in turn influence the tourists’ level of satisfaction with the park interpretation services. Gu and Ryan (2008) examined the residents’ perception of tourism impacts on a heritage site in Beijing, and they identified “sense of place attachment” as one of the factors that can influence the residents’ attitude towards tourism development (p. 640). Trauer and Ryan (2005) also studied tourists’ emotional connection to a destination and how such attachment can increase the quality of travel experience. However, their definition of the relationship between people and place was rather unique. When discussing the connection between tourists and the destination, they were not focusing on the setting or the geographical location; instead, they examined the social bonding aspect of place attachment and argued that it is the people of the place, i.e. the hosts, who foster the intimate relationship between tourists and the destination. An intimate place is not sustained by the place itself, but by the social interactions between tourists and hosts.

Besides influencing people’s perceptions and attitudes, place attachment can also influence tourist behavior. Lee, Backman, and Backman (1997) discovered that children who travel with their family members to resorts may develop a psychological attachment
to the place, which results in repeat visitation after they grow up. Moreover, repeat visitors are more likely to spread positive referrals and word-of-mouth, leading to an increase in the number of tourists to the destination (Lee, 2001), and repeat visitors have been found to be more willing to spend money and have higher travel expenditure than first-time visitors as well (Alegre & Juaneda, 2006). Stedman (2002) also indicated the behavioral implications of place attachment, claiming that emotional attachment and place satisfaction can increase people’s concern for the environment and willingness to engage in place-protective behavior, such as maintaining and improving the environment (Vaske & Kobrin, 2001; Williams & Vaske, 2003). For example, visitors’ support for user fee policies in natural recreation settings would vary according to their level of attachment to the place (Kyle, Absher, & Graefe, 2003). Finally, strong place attachment results in destination loyalty (Alegre & Juaneda, 2006) and can “reduce the willingness to substitute settings” (Williams et al., 1992, p. 33).

**Home/Homeland Attachment**

Place attachment explains the connection between people and the environment. In the context of diaspora tourism, it can be used to explore the relationship between diaspora tourists and their homeland destination. Considering the different dimensions of place attachment, place dependence and place identity may have different significance for immigrants’ homecoming experience. Functional attachment is usually maintained through personal experience, while emotional attachment is constructed through individual perception and imagination. For second-generation immigrants who do not
have the actual experience of living in their parents’ country of origin, it would be interesting to see whether their homeland attachment is functional or symbolic.

Moreover, immigrants have two “homes”—their ancestral homeland and their current country of residence. The word “home” has multiple layers of meaning in the English language. According to Hammond (2004), the definitions of “home” include “locations of various levels of scale, including an individual dwelling, a village, a territory, region, or nation-state” (p. 37). Building upon the place identity dimension of place attachment, home is “not only a place, but a state of being which conveys a sense of personal or collective identity” (p. 41). That is, the term “home” implies that the relationship between an individual and a specific “home” place is the source of his or her primary identity, so “home” can be one’s birthplace, or where one feels the most comfortable or have a sense of belonging. In the context of diaspora and migration, “home” becomes a more problematic concept. For immigrants, which “home” place signifies their primary sense of identity? In addition to choosing between their ancestral homeland and current place of residence, there is also the question of the geographical scale involved in their perception of “home.” For example, do they identify themselves as an American or a New Yorker? Their sense of “home” may be derived from different types of attachment to different places.

While it is natural for immigrants to be attached to two (or more) countries, the nature and characteristics of the two bonds may be very different. Tsuda (2004) defined “home” as “a stable place of residence that feels secure, comfortable, and familiar” and “homeland” as “a place of origin to which one feels emotionally attached” (p. 125).
Considering immigrants’ attachment to the host society, does diaspora tourism influence their relationship to both “home” and “homeland”? According to Manzo (2003), emotional attachment to place is a dynamic phenomenon in that one’s relationship to “home” would influence his or her relationship to the place “away,” and vice versa. It would be interesting to see if this situation is the same for immigrants’ attachment to their “home” and “homeland.”

Another important issue in transnationalism literature is whether or not the transnational practices of first-generation immigrants would be passed on to the second generation. The notion of place attachment suggests that people can “form attachments to places outside of their local neighborhood or city” (Manzo, 2003, p. 50). In other words, immigrants can be attached to a place other than their current home. In fact, affective attachment to place “is not necessarily a direct result of any particular experience with the place” (Williams & Vaske, 2003, p. 831). So, for second-generation immigrants, it is possible to feel connected to their homeland without living or even traveling there before. Although international travel is increasingly common, there will always be some second-generation immigrants who never had the chance to visit their parents’ home country. For example, the Second Generation in New York Study found that approximately one-third of the second-generation Chinese-Americans living in New York City have never been to China (Kasinitz et al., 2002). But even without actual diaspora tourism experience, it is still possible for second generation immigrants to have a sense of transnational attachment towards their homeland.
From the tourism perspective, the possibility of diaspora tourists feeling attached without prior travel experience also means that destination attachment may occur for first-time visitors and before the trip, as opposed to after repeat visitations. If the transnational connection between second-generation immigrants and their parents’ country of origin can exist prior to the diaspora tourism experience, what are the factors that may contribute to their feelings of place attachment? Hou, Lin, and Morais (2005) argued that “visitors with different cultural background from the host culture may develop a different level of belongingness and identity to the destination” (p. 223). Immigrants who travel to their homeland are a hybrid between domestic and international tourists, and their unique transnational identity would lead to a different type of place attachment. Moreover, Backlund and Williams (2003) suggested that place attachment may “stem not from direct experience of a place, but as a consequence of hearing others’ stories and memories of these places” (p. 324). Second generation immigrants may have some knowledge and images associated with the homeland destination from the stories told by their parents or grandparents, the information they saw from the media or the Internet, and the things they hear from their friends and social circle—all of which fall under the category of leisure. It is these transnational leisure activities that stimulate their imagination and expectations of the homeland and help them develop a sense of place attachment before they embark on diaspora tourism.

The relationship between transnational leisure and diaspora tourism, as well as their influence on the home/homeland attachment of second generation immigrants is explored in this study, which fills some of the gaps in migration and tourism literature.
First, this study focuses on the transnational practices of second-generation immigrants, and the notion of “transnational leisure” is a part of the cultural aspect of transnationalism, which has not received a lot of attention and requires further investigation. Second, diaspora tourism is different from other forms of tourism because it challenges the dichotomy between “home” and “away.” The diaspora tourism experience of the second generation, in particular, is unique as it demonstrates the possibility of having loyalty and attachment to the destination without actual visitation experience. An examination of the experience of this in-between group—second-generation diaspora tourists—contributes to a better understanding of the connection between humans and different “home” environments.
This study explores the transnational leisure and travel experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans by adopting a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology, simply defined, is the science of phenomena and the study of human experience. Founded by German mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), phenomenology refers to a method as well as a philosophy that guides the entire research process. Based on the philosophical assumption that “we can only know what we experience,” the Husserlian notion of phenomenology focuses on how people describe their experience and the essence, or the true intrinsic nature, of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002, p. 105). As phenomenology became increasingly popular and widely applied in the social sciences, variations of phenomenological approaches began to develop.

**Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Among different types of phenomenology, such as social, psychological, transcendental, existential, hermeneutical, and linguistical (Creswell, 1998; Richards & Morse, 2007), Pernecky and Jamal (2010) have identified two main philosophical traditions: Hesserlian/transcendental phenomenology and Heideggerian/hermeneutic phenomenology. Assuming that experiences involve an outward “appearance” and an inward “consciousness,” transcendental phenomenology is a search for the essence and underlying structures of lived experiences (Creswell, 1998). Hermeneutic
phenomenology, on the other hand, focuses on understanding the meaning of an experience in the social and historical context. It is important to note that the differences between transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology originate from their paradigmatic assumptions (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Transcendental phenomenology is positivistic in believing that there is “truth” to be found. In order to reveal the essence objectively, researchers must rely on bracketing out their preconceptions and look for universal structures within the data. Following a constructivist paradigm, hermeneutic phenomenology sees people as interpreters of their personal experience, and it is through reflexive dialogue and interpretation that researchers and informants co-construct the meaning of lived experiences in relation to the social context. In other words, transcendental phenomenology aims to uncover the inner psychological consciousness of the participant, while hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on an intersubjective understanding of the social meanings of a phenomenon between the researcher and the participant (Obenour, 1999).

Another major difference between transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology lies in the role of the researcher in the research process. While both types of phenomenology require the researcher to self-reflect, the purpose of self-reflection in transcendental phenomenology is to emphasize the importance of research objectivity. The researcher should be aware of his or her biases and assumptions, and by bracketing one’s own assumptions, the researcher can investigate the phenomenon to get “a correct answer or valid interpretation of texts,” regardless of the background and experience of the researcher (Laverty, 2003, p. 27). On the other hand, the self-reflection and
assumptions of the researcher is a part of the interpretation process in hermeneutic phenomenology. Gadamer (1976) described a researcher’s frame of reference as a “horizon,” which is shaped by the researcher’s experience and knowledge of concepts, theories, and relevant literature. The interview data is another “horizon,” which represents the experience and perspective of research participants. In hermeneutic phenomenology:

- the meaning of a text arises through the interaction of the researcher’s horizon (i.e., theoretical and conceptual traditions) and the text’s horizon (i.e., narrative experiences of the traveler). Language mediates this interaction between the researcher and the text and enables the subject matter to be understood and interpreted as the meaning. (Obenour, 1999, p. 73-74)

Although the researcher’s knowledge and assumptions are embedded in the interpretive process, the researcher still needs to keep an open mind about message within the text and avoid the use of one’s personal, dogmatic opinions. The position of the researcher is particularly important in hermeneutic phenomenology, because it is up to the researcher to identify the connections between the textual data and previous theories and literature, so as to provide insightful interpretations of the participants’ experiences.

In tourism studies, phenomenology has often been used to describe or understand the lived experiences of tourists and hosts, such as visitor experience at heritage sites (Masberg & Silverman, 1996), in an urban historic precinct in Sydney, Australia (Hayllar & Griffin, 2005), at an exclusive and male-only sacred shrine in Greece (Andriotis, 2009), and the farm tourism experience of both hosts and guests in of Western Australia (Ingram,
However, previous phenomenological research in tourism tended to be ambiguous about its philosophical origins, using phenomenology as merely an approach, and lacked theoretical and philosophical discussions (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). There were a few studies in leisure and tourism that used hermeneutics as a qualitative method, which has the same philosophical assumptions as hermeneutic phenomenology. For example, Patterson, Watson, Williams, and Roggenbuck (1998) examined the nature of recreation experiences in the context of wilderness areas. Arguing that the quality of wilderness experiences lies in the process, not the outcome, they proposed the use of a hermeneutic approach to provide specific descriptions of the context in which experiences occur. Obenour (2004) studied the meanings and significance of “the journey” to budget travelers through philosophical hermeneutics. Rather than examining specific destinations, the study focused on personal travel history and illustrated the importance of personal development and “personal authenticity” through analysis of the participants’ narratives. Another study by Obenour, Patterson, Pedersen, and Pearson (2006) was also guided by philosophical hermeneutics, which used in-depth interviews to gather information on backpackers’ perceptions of the service environment. The authors suggested the use of meaning-based approach, as opposed to information-processing approach, to gain an in-depth understanding of the experience of backpackers and improve the quality of tourism services. Compared to the use of positivistic transcendental phenomenology, which was generally equated to “phenomenology,” fewer studies in the field of leisure and tourism employed hermeneutics. Therefore, Pernecky and Jamal (2010) suggested that the use of interpretive, hermeneutic phenomenology
should be further explored in the study of tourist experiences. While it may be necessary to describe what one’s experience is, the next important step is to explore how these meaningful travel experiences came into being.

The diaspora tourism journey of second-generation immigrants is a unique phenomenon and their experience is likely to be different from that of domestic and international tourists. A phenomenological inquiry makes it possible to not only describe what these diaspora tourists saw and how they felt, but also to analyze the underlying meanings of their experience. Moreover, a basic assumption of hermeneutic phenomenology is that human behavior occurs in a social context (Richards & Morse, 2007). Thus, the meaning of one’s travel experience cannot be understood without considering its relationship to the other aspects of immigrant life, such as their everyday activities and transnational attachments. Within the hermeneutic circle, all human beings are interpreters whose knowledge and background affect how they see and understand the world. As Pernecky and Jamal (2010) stated, “pre-understandings shape experience” (p. 1065). In tourism encounters, the same scenery, activities, and services can be interpreted differently due to the diverse backgrounds of tourists.

Through the use of hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher’s own background and “horizon” is also embedded in the data collection and interpretation process of this study. Being an international student studying in the United States, the researcher can relate to some of the cross-cultural experiences of the participants. Even though the researcher is not a second-generation Chinese American, her experience of living and going back and forth between two countries helped gain insight on the
transnational lifestyle of immigrants, and her familiarity with Chinese and American culture helped to interpret the participants’ struggle with their bi-cultural identity.

Moreover, the researcher’s role in this study is not based solely on personal experience. The researcher’s pre-understanding of the phenomenon is shaped by the earlier stages of this study, such as reviewing the literature, understanding theoretical frameworks, identifying important issues, and observing sociocultural trends, all of which allows the researcher and the participants to co-construct the meanings of immigrant experiences in the larger social context.

This study differs from previous phenomenological research in tourism, because it does not focus on how tourists experience a particular site, such as a farm, a shrine, or a historic precinct. Instead, it examines a complex phenomenon of immigrants visiting and experiencing the land of their ancestry. The place in question is not a destination, but the notions of “home” and “homeland” as they relate to one’s family, roots, and heritage. The paradigmatic assumptions of hermeneutic phenomenology fit well with the purpose of this research. Although one study objective is to describe the transnational leisure and travel of second-generation Chinese-Americans, the more important question is: how does being a second-generation immigrant influence the way they experience their country of origin as a destination? One’s ethnic origins, family background, social relations, and transnational practices are all “pre-understandings” that can shape his or her experience and make for a meaningful and transformative journey. By examining the leisure and travel experience of immigrants in the context of transnationalism, this hermeneutic phenomenological study will produce a synthesized description as well as an
in-depth understanding of the meanings and lived experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans.

**Sampling**

The target population for this study was second-generation Chinese-Americans between the ages of 18 to 30 who had the experience of traveling in China. This population group was selected for three reasons. First, Chinese-Americans were the earliest Asian immigrants to the U.S. and the largest ethnic group within the Asian-American population to this day (Marger, 2009). Second, the transnational practices of second-generation immigrants tend to focus more on the cultural domain (Perlmann, 2002), which makes the second generation better subjects for studies on transnational leisure. Third, the target population was limited to young adults between the ages of 18 to 30, because this is the stage in life for them to discover their beliefs, determine their identities, and understand their connections to the larger society (Arnett, 2000).

Moreover, this study only focused on Chinese-Americans, as Taiwanese-Americans were not included for two reasons. First, the political status of Taiwan as a sovereign state or a region of China is ambiguous. If second-generation Taiwanese-American participants were recruited for this study, it would be difficult to determine if their travel experience to their parents’ country of origin refers to Taiwan or Mainland China. To avoid political controversy and confusion in the definition of “homeland,” Taiwanese-Americans were excluded from the sample population. Second, the researcher, who was also in charge of conducting the interviews, is an international student from
Taiwan. If both Chinese-Americans and Taiwanese-Americans were included in this study, there might be some bias or favoritism towards Taiwan during the process of data collection and data analysis. Therefore, Taiwanese-Americans were not considered for this study so as to eliminate researcher bias.

The ideal sample size for this study was 30 participants, or to the point of data saturation. Since this study focused on a specific population of interest, the participants were recruited for semi-structured interviews through purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is appropriate when studying a small subset of a larger population (Babbie, 2008). It has been extensively utilized in the study of minorities and ethnic groups in both quantitative (e.g., Janta, Ladkin, Brown, & Lugosi, 2011; Li, Chick, Zinn, Absher, & Graefe, 2007) as well as qualitative research in leisure and tourism (e.g., Li, 2000; Li & Stodolska, 2006).

According to the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS-Phase III, San Diego sample), 95.5% of second-generation Chinese-Americans were “currently attending college” around the age of 24 (Zhou & Xiong, 2005). Since the majority of second-generation Chinese-Americans have some level of college education, a university campus is a good place to start the sampling and data collection process. The first few study participants were contacted through the Association of Chinese Americans (ACA), the largest student organization for Chinese-Americans at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The contact information for the officers of ACA was available on its website and Facebook group page. Initially, an e-mail recruitment letter (Appendix A) was sent out to six officers of ACA to see if they are willing to participate in this study,
or if they are willing to forward the e-mail recruitment message to other members of ACA who fit the criteria for this study. Afterwards, new participants were recruited through snowball sampling of existing participants. Participants were asked to provide the researcher with names and e-mail addresses of their friends, classmates, roommates, and club members who might be interested in taking part in the study, or to forward the e-mail recruitment letter to their friends. Snowball sampling is a research technique to recruit participants from existing friendship networks (Babbie, 2008). It is commonly used to get in touch with hidden populations that are difficult to access through traditional methods (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). Although there are some methodological concerns about the generalizability of snowball sampling, the purpose of this sampling procedure is to find participants who share the same unique experience, rather than achieving a statistically representative sample (Gustafson, 2002).

Among the top ten universities in terms of Asian-American student population, four schools are located in the southern California region: University of California Los Angeles, University of California Irvine, University of California Riverside, and University of California San Diego (aMedia, 2000). Among these four universities, UCLA is largest in terms of student enrollment. Therefore, the Association of Chinese Americans at UCLA was selected for the initial participant recruitment. However, through snowball sampling, the participants were not limited to the members of this organization, nor were they required to be students of UCLA. It is possible for their personal contacts and networks to extend to other universities in the larger Los Angeles metropolitan area or elsewhere, as long as the participants are second-generation
Chinese-Americans within the age range and had the experience of traveling in China. In the end, twenty-six interviews were conducted from June 4th to August 3rd, 2011. Data collection concluded after twenty-six participants because the point of data saturation was achieved. Among the twenty-six participants, twenty-five participants were students of UCLA, and one participant was a student from the City University of New York who was taking summer classes at UCLA.

**Data Collection**

In order to achieve the research objectives, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interview questions were designed to capture the transnational leisure and diaspora tourism experience of the research participants as well as their feelings and attitudes towards their parents’ country of origin and immigrant identity. An interview guide (Appendix B) was developed based on relevant literature. These open-ended interview questions were also pilot-tested among a convenience sample of Asian-American college students to ensure that the questions were clear and comprehensible. The questions were revised according to expert opinions and the feedbacks received from the pilot-test participants.

Each interview was expected to take approximately thirty minutes to one hour to complete. For semi-structured interviews, the set of interview questions serves as a guide rather than a word-by-word script, allowing for a certain level of flexibility in wording and sequencing of the questions (Richards & Morse, 2007). However, the major sections of the interview were asked in a reasonably logical order to facilitate the thought process
of the participants, starting from their transnational leisure experience in daily life, to their homeland travel experience, and finally to their post-trip reflections. The actual interview time ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes, with an average of approximately one hour.

Finally, to complement the data from the in-depth interviews, a short questionnaire (Appendix C) was given to the participants prior to the interviews. The questionnaire was designed to gather demographic information and the basic tripographics of their trips back to their parents’ country of origin, such as trip duration, frequency, purpose of the trip, travel group size, travel style (e.g., independent vs. package tours), and travel companions.

**Data Analysis**

All interviews were digitally voice recorded with the consent of the interviewees. Participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix D) prior to the interview. After each interview, verbatim transcripts of the recordings, along with the notes and observations of the interviewer, were made to ensure the accuracy of the transcribed data. The participant recruitment process, interview and transcription procedures, and security measures to protect the confidentiality of the information obtained have been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Clemson University. To ensure the anonymity of research participants, pseudonyms were used when reporting the findings of this study.
To process the data, the notes and transcripts were analyzed through systematic classification and identification of themes and patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The data was coded manually through a basic word processing program. Electronic coding, though time-efficient, does not eliminate the need to generate codes and “start list” categories (Basit, 2003). Therefore, qualitative coding software was not used in this study, as no pre-coding categories were determined prior to the analysis. The coding process consisted of three main stages: descriptive coding, topic coding, and analytical coding (Richards, 2005). First, descriptive coding is a means of storing the information and attributes of the people, places, or other units being analyzed. Within this study, descriptive coding is meant to describe the participants’ experience, such as the leisure activities they did, the attributes of their trips, the places they visited, and their likes and dislikes about the trips. The second step is topic coding, which involves labeling the text and allocating passages to topics. By giving labels to each meaning unit within the transcripts, massive textual data can be reduced to topics. Finally, the third stage is analytical coding, which is the process of interpretation and reflection on meaning. In this stage, labels and concepts are grouped into various categories through constant comparison of their similarities and differences. Conceptual categories are integrated and developed into themes. Underlying patterns within the data are identified by analyzing and interpreting the relationships between core concepts.

Although qualitative data analysis can be described as a series of steps or stages, it is important to note that the coding process is not linear, but iterative (Richards & Morse, 2007). That is, in the process of identifying themes and patterns, descriptive
labels and categories may continue to emerge and should be integrated into the analysis. At times it may be necessary to return to the original transcripts and reflect upon the new coding categories. Moreover, in order to obtain a meaningful interpretation of the data, it is also necessary to establish valid connections between the qualitative study findings and relevant literature and theories (Andriotis, 2009).

**Validation and Reliability**

The issue of validation in qualitative research has been perceived and described differently by various scholars (Creswell, 1998). For example, instead of using the terms “validity” and “reliability,” Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested alternative terms, such as “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability,” and “confirmability,” that were more suitable for qualitative studies. Different techniques can be employed to establish the “trustworthiness” of qualitative research. To enhance the credibility and dependability of qualitative analysis and findings, this study used different types of triangulation, such as data and theory triangulation, and expert opinion (Patton, 2002). Although the majority of the data came from semi-structured interviews, the websites of Chinese cultural student organizations at UCLA were also examined to provide some background information on their club activities and mission statement. Within the literature review, the book *Balancing Two Worlds* (Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007) consists of fourteen short autobiographies of the life and experiences of Asian American college students. Although this book is not a part of the data, similar stories are being told in the interviews conducted for this study and the first-person narratives in the book, which is another
source of evidence that supports the findings of this study. In addition to data
triangulation, the different theoretical frameworks used in this study, such as
transnationalism, diaspora, and place attachment, also create theory triangulation and
establish the connection between study findings and the literature. Finally, expert opinion
is achieved by seeking the opinions and feedback of academic experts in respective fields
to review the design and findings of this study.
A total of twenty-six second-generation Chinese-Americans between the ages of 18 to 30 and living in Los Angeles, California during the summer of 2011 were interviewed for this study. Participants also completed a short, pre-interview questionnaire regarding their demographic information and the characteristics of their trips to China.

Demographics

Study participants were all second-generation Chinese-Americans, who were born in the U.S. with at least one parent from China. Two of the participants were half-Chinese and half-Caucasian, while the others were of full-blooded Chinese ancestry. The 26 participants consisted of 12 males and 14 females, and their ages ranged from 19 to 28 years old, with an average age of 21.8. In terms of their education level, 22 participants were currently undergraduate students or college graduates, and 4 were currently graduate students. Moreover, with 5 participants declining or unable to answer the question regarding their household income, there was great variation in the participants’ total household income in 2011. Of the participants who responded to the question, approximately 28.6% (n=6) had an annual household income of less than $50,000, 38.1% (n=8) indicated an income category from $50,000 to $99,999, and 33.3% (n=7) had a
household income of more than $100,000. The median of their annual household income fell in the $50,000-$74,999 category.

As for the participants’ self-reported language competence in Chinese, 73.1% of the participants (n=19) indicated that they could speak and understand Chinese “well” or “very well,” but only 23.1% of the participants (n=6) could read and write Chinese “well” or “very well.” Table 2 shows the details of their language proficiency. It is worth noting that participants were asked to indicate their skill level for either Mandarin Chinese or Cantonese, whichever was the dominant Chinese language they used at home.

Table 2. Participants’ Chinese Language Proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None at All n (%)</td>
<td>A Little n (%)</td>
<td>Well n (%)</td>
<td>Very Well n (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening/Understanding</td>
<td>1 (3.8%)</td>
<td>6 (23.1%)</td>
<td>12 (46.2%)</td>
<td>7 (26.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>1 (3.8%)</td>
<td>6 (23.1%)</td>
<td>13 (50.0%)</td>
<td>6 (23.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>4 (15.4%)</td>
<td>16 (61.5%)</td>
<td>5 (19.2%)</td>
<td>1 (3.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4 (15.4%)</td>
<td>16 (61.5%)</td>
<td>6 (23.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diaspora Tourism Tripographics

Data from the short questionnaire also provided some descriptive information on the participants’ diaspora tourism experience. On average, participants took 5.3 trips to China in their whole life (before the age of 30), and an average of 1.7 trips to China in the last 5 years. Their past experience in China could also be reflected by the ages of their first and most recent visit. The participants’ age when they first visited China ranged from 1 to 20 years old, with a mean age of 9.0, and their age during their most recent trip
to China ranged from 5 to 27 years old, with a mean age of 18.3. Questionnaire data also revealed that 69.2% of the participants (n=18) had the experience of going on group tours or bus tours when they traveled in China. But when asked about their personal preference, 88.4% of the participants (n=23) chose “independent travel,” rather than “group tours,” as their preferred style of travel when visiting China. Moreover, 80.8% of the participants (n=21) had relatives still living in China, but only 53.8% (n=14) had local relatives who accompanied them while they were traveling in China.

The participants’ main purpose for visiting China was asked in an open-ended question. 13 participants (50.0%) had visiting family or visiting relatives as one of their travel purposes, 15 participants (57.7%) wrote either touring or sightseeing as part of their travel purpose, and 9 participants (34.6%) stated that learning Chinese or studying abroad (to learn Chinese) was their main purpose. All open-ended responses to this question could be coded within these three categories. However, the total percentage was not 100% due to participants listing more than one travel purposes.

The purpose of the trip may influence one’s length of stay and the number of people in one’s travel group. Given the context of this study, a study abroad trip to China is generally a lot longer than a leisure trip, be it for sightseeing or visiting friends and relatives. Therefore, the participants whose most recent trip to China was for “study abroad” or “travel study” (n=9) were separated from those who went on a leisure trip (n=17) when analyzing the trip length and group size of their most recent travel experience to China. In terms of the duration of their stay, the 9 participants who went on “travel study” trips spent an average of 84.8 days in China, while the 17 participants who
went on private tours or to visit relatives were only there for an average of 21.2 days. As for the number of their travel companions, study abroad participants had an average of 11.9 people in their travel group, while leisure trip participants had an average of 5.3 people in their travel party.

Although the sample size for this study was twenty-six, the short questionnaire provided a glimpse of some interesting characteristics of diaspora tourism that might be different from other types of international tourism. Being second-generation Chinese-American, these participants had a considerable amount of travel experience in China at a young age, with most of them taking numerous trips to China before the age of 25. The amount of time they spend in China was also significant. Without considering the study abroad trips, their leisure trips to China still had an average of approximately three weeks. As 80% of the participants had relatives currently living in China, it was not surprising that visiting family and relatives was a main travel purpose. Moreover, learning Chinese or participating in travel study programs that consisted of Chinese language classes was also identified as a main purpose of their traveling to China. Given the participants’ various levels of competence in the Chinese language, it would be interesting to examine the role of language on their motivation to visit their homeland. Another factor that might be related to the participants’ level of language proficiency, or perhaps their perceived level of deficiency, is their strong preference for independent travel when visiting China. As close to 90% of the participants preferred independent travel to group tours, the influence of language competence on their diaspora tourism experience is another topic to be further explored in the qualitative section of this study.
Transnational Leisure

To understand the transnational attachment between second-generation immigrants and their homeland, this study examined not only their travel experience when they visited their parents’ country of origin, but also their everyday lives in the host society before and after the trips. Specifically, being Chinese-American, how transnational are their lives? And to what extent are their leisure activities related to Chinese or Chinese-American culture? Findings revealed that participants took part in a wide range of culture-related leisure activities at different stages in life, from individual activities to social activities, and from traditional Chinese culture to modern culture. Two themes were identified from the transnational leisure participation of second-generation Chinese-Americans: 1) the contrast between contemporary and traditional forms of leisure, and 2) the transformation from “ways of being” to “ways of belonging.”

Traditional vs. Contemporary

When asked about their leisure activities that were related to Chinese culture, participants provided a great variety of answers. Table 3 is a list of all the activities that were mentioned during the interviews. They are categorized into two groups: contemporary or traditional. Traditional leisure activities refer to the activities that have a historic origin and have existed for at least hundreds of years. Contemporary forms of leisure are harder to define. Internet and pop culture related activities are certainly contemporary. Other activities, such as eating Chinese food, have both traditional and contemporary aspects. Participants may eat zong-zi and dumplings, which have a story
behind it, or they may eat food that is recently invented, such as bubble tea. But regardless of what they eat, this form of eating, cooking, and hanging out with friends is a contemporary activity, so it is labeled as contemporary. Joining Chinese cultural student organizations is also hard to classify. The format of this type of activity is contemporary, although sometimes the focus of the club may be on traditional Chinese culture. In the end, contemporary forms of leisure are classified based on the format, not the content, so watching a movie about the First Emperor of China would be considered a contemporary activity. It is, however, important to note that there may be some overlap between the two groups. Moreover, these activities were not ranked in terms of popularity. Only the food-related items (i.e., eating and cooking Chinese food, shopping for Asian groceries, and drinking bubble tea) were deemed the most popular and mentioned by almost all the participants. Other items on the list were generally less popular, and each participant was only involved in a few of the activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Contemporary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kung Fu/Martial arts</td>
<td>Chinese-related student organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional dance/Folk dance</td>
<td>Eating Chinese food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion dance</td>
<td>Cooking Chinese food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragon boat race</td>
<td>Shopping at Chinese/Asian grocery stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teo-chew opera/Peking opera</td>
<td>Drinking bubble tea (Chinese tapioca milk tea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Chinese instruments</td>
<td>Chinese/Cantonese films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese herbal medicine</td>
<td>Chinese/Taiwanese drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese chess</td>
<td>Chinese TV shows (e.g., magic shows)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese checkers</td>
<td>Chinese/Korean pop music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese yo-yo</td>
<td>Japanese comics and animation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese knitting</td>
<td>Karaoke in Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese ceramics</td>
<td>Watching YouTube videos related to Asian culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating Chinese holidays</td>
<td>Visiting websites related to Asian pop culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending special events and festivals</td>
<td>Shopping on websites for Asian style clothing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contemporary Forms of Leisure

Further analysis revealed that there were two distinct patterns of behavior with regard to “traditional” or “contemporary” forms of leisure. Aside from the food-related activities, which were a common form of social or familial gathering, other types of contemporary, pop culture related activities, such as listening to Chinese music or watching Chinese films and dramas, were usually considered an individual activity. When asked who they usually did these activities with, most participants answered along the lines of: “It’s more of an individual thing” or “I think they are things that I do on my own.” For some people, the reason why they did these activities on their own was because they no longer lived at home. When they were younger, they would watch Chinese TV programs or listen to music with their parents. But after they went off to college, these opportunities decreased. For example, one participant, Matt, explained:

“I love the tone or the melody of Chinese music, but I just don’t listen as much as I do back home. Because we’re limited to access and exposure to it, so it was limited for me, the pop culture. With my parents, they just loved it back home, like they would play it non-stop. Mandarin songs, like the karaoke. We would also watch shows back at home, like the local channels, the Chinese channel, 18.9 I think. So I watch more at home. Here we watch as much as we could online, because most of us don’t have TVs in our rooms.”

Another participant, Mia, also shared her experience of watching Chinese drama with and without her mother: “My mom watches a lot of them too. She’ll watch at home, I’ll watch
it here [at UCLA], or sometimes we can watch it together at home, and then we’ll discuss it.”

The limited access or lack of family members around was not the main reason why these Chinese pop culture activities were usually solitary activities. The bigger issue was that participants who were into Chinese pop culture could not find other friends who shared the same interest in college, even though most of their social groups consisted of Chinese-Americans. According to Jane, who was a staff member in a Chinese cultural student organization in college: “A lot of my friends here are Chinese-American. My closest friends are Chinese-American, which is why I’m in the ACA. We don’t normally talk about traveling in China, and most of them don’t talk about watching Chinese dramas. I feel like a lot of them are more Americanized, I guess, and they tend to not watch that stuff.” April, who was the president of another Chinese cultural student club also stated: “Sometimes I would meet people who share the same interest as me, but most of the time, it’s like in my group of friends, I’m probably the only one, one of the few that listen to Asian culture, music, and stuff.”

Most participants in this study had many Chinese-American or Asian-American friends in college, and several of them were heavily involved in student organizations related to Chinese culture or the larger Asian Pacific community. Nevertheless, they still had trouble finding people who shared similar interests in Chinese pop culture, and expressed the desire to find friends who had the same taste. When asked if she would talk about Chinese music or drama with her friends, Leah responded: “Rarely… we don’t really bond that way, I guess. But it’s something that I would actually like to do, but I just
haven’t actually found that group.” Another participant, Alex, also explained that he was exposed to Chinese pop music when he studied abroad in Beijing for one summer, but after he returned to the U.S.: “I wish I could find more people who like that kind of music. I feel like after I study abroad, I didn’t continue to learn the Chinese. That’s also because I don’t have many friends who share the same taste. So maybe I just listen to it myself, and appreciate it myself.” A similar comparison was made by Mia when she talked about her karaoke experiences in Hong Kong and the U.S.: “When I was abroad, I was with friends who knew Chinese songs too, so we would sing a couple of that together. It was fun. But when I go karaoke here, a lot of them don’t really know Chinese songs. If they don’t, then we just sing American songs.” Another participant, Jack, even stated that his friends hate Chinese music: “I actually would like to find people that I can talk about this stuff with, but my friends kind of hate Chinese music. They didn’t really know it when I play it.” The lack of interest among their friends was the main reason why this type of modern, pop culture related leisure was usually considered an individual interest rather than a social activity for young second-generation Chinese-Americans.

In addition to being personal and solitary, another interesting characteristic of these contemporary, pop culture activities was that they were not region or country specific. In other words, participants were not only interested in Chinese pop culture, but had a greater interest in pan-ethnic, Asian pop culture in general. During the interviews, participants were asked specifically if they listened to Chinese songs or music. While most participants would answer “yes,” they would go on to talk about Taiwanese, Korean, and Japanese music. For example, Josh stated: “Yeah, I do listen to Chinese music. I’ve
been listening to a lot more Asian music, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese music. That’s actually the majority of what I listen to.” Jack also said he listened to Chinese music, but then distinguished between Chinese and Taiwanese: “I do kind of listen to Chinese music, especially since I went to Beijing last summer. Although I tend to not like Chinese music as much. I listen to more Korean and Taiwanese music, and occasionally Japanese a little bit, but mainly Taiwanese and Korean.” Another participant, Sam, even explained that while he himself was interested in Chinese music, his peers were more into Korean pop music: “If we’re talking about Chinese music, I listen to more Chinese music, but I know my other peers are listening to more Korean music, K-pop, than I do. My American friends listen to western music. My Asian-American friends listen to a combination of western and Korean music, and very little Chinese music.”

When asked about their preference for Chinese films or TV programs, the same situation occurred. Many participants would watch movies or dramas in the Chinese language (i.e., Mandarin or Cantonese), but those that were not actually produced in China. For example, April, who claimed to “really like the Asian culture,” said: “I like those Taiwanese dramas. I grew up watching those Hong Kong dramas, and then recently I got into the Taiwanese ones.” Korean dramas were also popular among Chinese-Americans, as another participant, Dawn, stated: “Actually I watch more Korean dramas, but I have watched some Chinese.” Another interesting scenario was that some participants would watch Korean dramas that were dubbed in Mandarin Chinese or Japanese animation that were dubbed in English: “Dramas, yes, it would be a lot of Hong Kong dramas, mainly when I was at home. Or sometimes they have Korean dramas
translated, dubbed with Mandarin or Cantonese, so that all the characters are speaking Mandarin. I’ll watch those. I also watch a lot of Japanese anime,” said Sam.

When asked about their identity, most participants identified themselves as either American or Chinese-American, as opposed to the pan-ethnic term of “Asian-American.” Thus, their embrace of all Asian pop culture, regardless of national origin, as their individual leisure activity is quite interesting, especially compared to the regional focus of more “traditional” styles of leisure (which will be discussed in the next section). Previous research on second-generation immigrants provided some similar cases of the second-generation’s increasing acceptance of pan-ethnicity. In the San Diego sample of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), the percentage of respondents who used a racial or pan-ethnic term (e.g., Hispanic, Asian, etc.) to identify themselves increased as they went from being in middle school to graduating high school (Rumbaut, 2002). Specifically, at around age fourteen, 0% of second-generation Chinese-Americans self-identified as Asian or Asian-American, but as these respondents reached the age of seventeen, the percentage increased to 32.1%. A similar growth in percentage applied to other Asian nationalities as well (e.g., Vietnamese: from 0.7% to 16.3%; Laotian and Cambodian: from 0.8% to 15.3%; Other Asian: from 3.0% to 12.5%). The only exception was Filipino-Americans, as the percentage of those who self-identified as Asian went from 2.1% to 1.0%.

The CILS study revealed that children of Chinese ancestry might be more likely to choose a pan-ethnic identity as they grow up. A study of immigrants in New York also examined whether second-generation Chinese related to the pan-ethnic classification of
Asian-American, or identified themselves specifically as Chinese-American (Kasinitz et al., 2008). Findings showed that some young Chinese-Americans “do indeed consciously choose to be Asian American, often after taking Asian American studies classes in college or joining Asian American organizations or churches” (p. 81). Although these studies could not explain the all-inclusive nature of second-generation Chinese-Americans’ perception of Chinese/Asian pop culture, they did provide some evidence of an increasing level of pan-ethnicity as second-generation immigrants grew from childhood to early adulthood.

Finally, the Internet plays an important role in modern life as a form of leisure. For second-generation Chinese-Americans, the Internet is the main way they could have access to Chinese or Asian pop culture. When asked about their Internet related activities, most participants referred to YouTube as their main source to listen to Chinese music or watch videos of Chinese dramas and TV shows. For example, Josh described his experience: “Recently my mom sent me a video via email. It’s like America’s got Talent or Britain’s got Talent, but the Chinese version, maybe like China’s got Talent or something, so I watched that video. And sometimes when I don’t have the new songs that just came out, I would type up the pronunciation of the song, and see if they have it on YouTube, and I’ll listen to the music video that way.” The Internet was also a good source for comics and animation, as stated by Daniel: “Yeah, I get everything pretty much from the Internet. There’re websites where you can just read all the Manga [Japanese word for ‘comics’] or watch all the Anime [Japanese pronunciation of the word ‘animation’].”
Besides using the Internet as a viewing source, some participants also went to some websites to look for information on Asian pop culture. During the interviews, four specific websites were mentioned:


It is worth noting that G-music.com and 1ting.com are both in Mandarin Chinese with no English pages, Soompi.com is an English website with no content written in Korean, and YesAsia.com has four language choices: English, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, and Japanese. From these language settings, it is possible to distinguish whether these websites are based in the U.S. or not.

In addition to pop culture websites, there was one more website that was specified during an interview: YesStyle.com, which is an online retailer that sells clothing and accessories from China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong to people living in the United States and other parts of the world. Although only one participant, Karen, talked about using the YesStyle.com website, it was important because shopping for products from China and having them shipped to the U.S. was the only clear case of “transnational” leisure activity (other than traveling to China) that was brought up during the interviews. According to Portes (1999), one of the three defining characteristics of transnational practices was that these activities should occur across national borders. Therefore, while shopping online for products from one’s country of origin was clearly transnational, it
was questionable whether other types of modern, pop culture related activities that took place via the Internet could be considered “transnational” or not. For example, if a YouTube video was uploaded by someone in China and watched by Chinese-Americans living in the U.S., does that constitute as an activity occurring across national borders? Among the pop culture information websites discussed in this study, participants visiting G-music.com and 1ting.com might be considered “transnational,” because these two websites are based in Taiwan and China, respectively. However, websites such as Soompi.com and YesAsia.com are actually based in the U.S. and targeting Americans or Asian-Americans. Thus, for the majority of the participants’ experiences in contemporary forms of leisure, whether it’s watching Chinese TV or listening to music at home with their parents, or pursuing their interest in Asian music and dramas on their own through the Internet, it is difficult to argue that these activities are really of a “transnational” nature.

Traditional Forms of Leisure

The second-generation Chinese-Americans interviewed in this study also engaged in a lot of traditional forms of leisure. The main difference between the behavioral patterns of traditional versus contemporary leisure was that traditional activities were usually done in a group setting, and the focus was very region-specific. First and foremost, a lot of what the participants knew about the traditions of Chinese culture came from their families. It was at home when they first learned about traditional festivals and celebrated Chinese holidays. In addition to the Chinese Lunar New Year, which is
celebrated by every Chinese family, some participants also talked about the Tomb
Sweeping Day in April, when they would go to temples or cemeteries to “visit” and
honor their ancestors. Other holidays mentioned during the interviews included the Mid-
Autumn Festival in September and the Dragon Boat Festival in May or June, when
participants would either eat traditional food with their family or attend special events in
Chinatown.

Besides celebrating traditional holidays, a large portion of the participants’
“traditional” leisure activities usually occurred within their social groups. During their
college life, many second-generation Chinese-Americans belonged to some Chinese or
Asian oriented student organizations at one point or another. At UCLA, there are more
than 10 active student clubs related to different aspects of Chinese culture or different
sub-populations within the Chinese diaspora. Interestingly, there is a greater emphasis on
the traditional aspect of culture rather than contemporary culture in most organizations.
For example, the Association of Chinese Americans (ACA) is the largest Chinese-related
student organization at UCLA, and according to the ACA website, their programs are
“primarily geared toward the unique multi-cultural identity of Chinese Americans
striving to understand their heritage, history, and experiences” (ACA, 2011). According
to Jane (a member of the ACA), ACA also has fun, social events such as “Dumpling
Night,” but part of the reason for hosting Dumpling Night was “so that people will learn
about the dumplings and learn about the history.” The Teo Chew Association (TCA) is
another student club that is related to Chinese culture at UCLA, and their mission is to
“create bridges and connect with each other and their own families to preserve the special
Teo Chew language, culture, and heritage” (TCA, 2011). To do so, TCA has language lessons and also incorporates different themes, such as “family tree” and “Teo Chew origins” into their social activities. One participant, Ethan, described how the staff members “would push cultural things and traditions by making it into games, so people would be more interested. Whether it’s historical or recent, or about the food, or social culture, they would somehow integrate it into a lot of different activities.”

In addition to learning about Chinese culture and traditions in general, many of the extracurricular activities that participants were interested in involved traditional skills. For example, to celebrate the Chinese New Year, all the different Chinese organizations at UCLA got together to have a Lunar New Year Festival, and “we had activities like calligraphy. We had a few performances like Lion Dance and martial arts and singing and traditional dance,” as stated by Josh. Another participant, Daniel, was involved in a Chinese martial arts club in college, and he described how at first he was only interested in martial arts as a leisure activity, but later grew to appreciate the history and origins of different styles of Chinese martial arts: “Initially I did it because I was really bored, but then as I did it more and more, I started to watch more of the traditional old movies, started loving it more and more, and I started knowing the stories and traditional culture that was involved in Chinese martial arts as well.” There is also a Chinese Cultural Dance Club (CCDC) at UCLA, where members can learn and perform different traditional dances and folk dances from Chinese minorities, such as Dai dance (of the Dai ethnic group in China), jasmine dance, Beijing opera style dance, and aboriginal dance. Karen, who was involved in CCDC explained how they learned about Chinese culture and
Traditions through dancing: “I think you kind of see the culture through the dance. For example, some of the rural dances incorporated their relationships with the environment into their culture. Some of the dances we did included people from the mountains, so you can see it in their attire, and you can see it in the way they dance.” Chinese martial arts and traditional dance were the most frequently mentioned traditional activities during the interviews. Some participants also talked about their school’s Lion Dance club and Dragon Boat team, which are also skilled activities from traditional Chinese culture. However, no members of these two student organizations were available for interview. Another interesting case of leisure and traditional culture was the experience of Cindy, whose “biggest interest is traditional Chinese medicine.” Since her school did not have a special club for Chinese medicine, she became involved in a club for complementary and alternative medicine (which included traditional Chinese medicine), and this was a way for her to combine her interest with her Chinese heritage.

Being second-generation Chinese-American, participants in this study had room for both contemporary Chinese culture as well as traditional Chinese culture in their daily life. The difference was that they pursued their interest in Chinese or Asian pop culture on their own, while their club activities tended to focus more on the traditional aspects of Chinese culture. Moreover, while their interest in pop culture was extensive and included Taiwanese, Korean, and Japanese culture as well, their group activities were the opposite and focused on specific regions or sub-cultures within China. The Association of Chinese Americans (ACA) is the largest Chinese student organization at UCLA, with approximately 500 members every year (ACA, 2011). Some participants chose not to join
ACA “because I’ve heard about how big it is, and how you just become like a number in there, so I don’t feel comfortable with that,” according to Frank. Instead, they preferred to join Chinese cultural clubs that were region specific, such as Teo Chew Association (TCA), Hong Kong Student Society (HKSS), and Association of Hmong Students (AHS). Melody, whose mother was from Shanghai, said that there was also an informal Shanghai student group at UCLA, and they would meet for lunch and practice speaking Shanghainese. For Chinese-Americans who do not speak the mainstream Mandarin or Cantonese, they may have the need to find people of similar origins and speak the same dialect. April explained that she chose TCA over ACA to learn more about herself: “ACA incorporates everyone, all Chinese people, and TCA, that’s basically who I am, because I’m full-blooded Teo Chew. And I identify myself more as a Teo Chew, with my dialect and stuff. I really want to learn more about my culture, my background, and more about myself.”

Since China is a large country with many dialects and subcultures, minority groups in China have the desire to bring awareness to their own culture. The same phenomenon exists at the Chinese-American level, with minority ethnic groups struggling against the dominant, Mandarin-speaking population. For example, the mission statement of the Association of Hmong Students (AHS) is: “We will explore the Hmong American identity and experience by addressing, documenting, and raising awareness of Hmong history, community issues, and personal narratives” (AHS, 2011). Chinese-Americans of Teo Chew heritage face the same problem, as stated by Matt: “Our main dialect is not Cantonese and not Mandarin. Very few people speak it, especially in
our generation, since often one parent is Teo Chew and the other is Mandarin or Cantonese, so the dominant language would prevail over Teo Chew. We want to up-keep our language, and learn more about our background and history, because our focus is in Chaoshan, which is in southern China.”

An important issue to consider in migration studies is how much language and culture is lost or maintained after the first generation. In the case of second-generation Chinese-Americans, even though their English was more fluent than their Mandarin, Cantonese, or other dialects, Chinese culture still played an important part in their life. And through different forms of their leisure participation, Chinese cultural activities were a way for them to learn more about themselves and associate with other Asian cultures.

*From Ways of Being to Ways of Belonging*

The contrast between traditional and contemporary forms of leisure for Chinese-Americans was discussed in the context of their current life, as young adults who were in college or graduate school. However, their experience with Chinese leisure or cultural activities might vary in its meaning and level of significance at different stages in life, from childhood, adolescence, to early adulthood. According to Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004), transnational activities could be divided into transnational “ways of being” and transnational “ways of belonging.” Ways of being refers to the actual practices that immigrants engage in, such as having social contact with relatives living in their homeland. Ways of belonging refers to the “practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group” (p. 7). In other words,
ways of belonging means that immigrants are taking an action that marks belonging and also aware of the kind of identity that action represents. Using the notions of “ways of being” and “ways of belonging” to examine the leisure activities of second-generation Chinese-Americans, there appears to be a transformation from childhood to early adulthood, and from being forced to participate in activities related to Chinese culture to actually understanding the meanings of one’s action and associating these activities with their Chinese-American identity.

Almost all participants had the experience of going to Chinese school on Saturdays when they were children. Since they were usually forced by their parents to attend Chinese school, most people hated it. They were not interested in learning Chinese, and as one participant, Tony, stated: “who likes going to school on a Saturday?!” In addition to teaching the Chinese language, many Chinese schools have some type of Chinese cultural activity for the kids to do. However, many participants felt that those activities were also forced upon them, so they didn’t really enjoy the leisure and cultural aspects of it. For example, Frank, who was interested in martial arts and practiced Judo in college, said he didn’t like learning Kung Fu in Chinese school: “When we were in Chinese School, we get to do one activity, and Kung Fu was my activity. Back then, I was really stubborn. Like I would do it, but I wouldn’t really do the forms. And I wasn’t interested in how we had to learn all the forms.” Karen also explained how she did Chinese cultural activities, such as calligraphy, Chinese knotting, and Chinese ceramics in Chinese school, but personally, she was always more interested in dancing. So she
took part in a Chinese dance performance as part of the International Day at her high school, and that was the activity that she truly enjoyed.

One’s personal choice of leisure activity may be a matter of interest and preference. But sometimes, people’s interest also evolves as they grow older. Alex experienced several types of Chinese activities when he was young, but didn’t like anything: “I tried Chinese yoyo once, but it’s hard. I didn’t really get it. I learned a little bit of Kung Fu growing up, but I didn’t really like it. My parents did try to initiate me to do things, like calligraphy and Tai Chi, but I haven’t really continued it. I just sort of started to learn, and then stopped.” It wasn’t until high school that he found the type of Chinese leisure he enjoyed, which was playing Chinese chess, Chinese checkers, Go, and Aeroplane chess. Interestingly, he learned about these Chinese board games in Chinese school, not in his high school or from his peers. Still, he liked these activities, and considered them “something that I would choose to do for leisure.” Another participant, Jack, first learned Chinese from a private tutor, and he remembered how his tutor used to make him memorize Chinese poems: “She made me recite those Chinese poems. I couldn’t do it anymore. I never really liked the poems. I thought it was weird. It doesn’t sound as nice as English poems.” But after he took Chinese classes in college, he discovered that he really liked learning four-character Chinese idioms and the stories behind them. He would look them up on the Internet, keep a list of the Chinese idioms, memorize them, and try to use them in his everyday conversations. Although these four-character Chinese idioms were a part of his Chinese class, he really liked reading about them and tried to learn more in his spare time.
From childhood to early adulthood, most participants had more and more freedom to choose the activities they preferred. When they were still children, the Chinese cultural activities they did were at most “ways of being.” But by the time they went to college, they developed a deeper understanding of the meanings of these activities, transforming them into “ways of belonging.” When asked about the importance of Chinese culture in her life, Karen compared the difference between the amount of time spent and the level of interest: “I think in the past, my mom kind of pushed it on me, so I feel like it was a bigger part of my life back then. But here, I did pursue it because I was genuinely interested in it. So I pursued Chinese culture more actively in college than in high school.” Although the amount of time she spent on these Chinese activities decreased from childhood to college, their level of importance increased because she chose to do them on her own. Jeremy also emphasized the importance of personal choice in his experience with Chinese leisure activities: “Before I thought Chinese culture was kind of boring and lame. I grew up learning about the festivals and celebrating the Chinese New Year, but to me it was very routine. It didn’t have much meaning…. Those things are not of interest to me. I like more personal things. I like to find out about it on my own. So for me, my pursuit of Chinese culture really took off after high school, and not influenced by my parents, or maybe even friends. It’s more just by myself.”

Even when people enjoyed taking part in traditional Chinese activities, it made a difference whether they understood the meaning of those activities or not. Dawn had an interesting experience of practicing religious ceremonies to honor her ancestors: “When I was little, it was something that my family did, and I just went along with it. I thought it
was cool though, because I liked having them give me responsibilities, like placing these things here, or holding the incense and bow 3 times. I enjoyed watching and being a part of that tradition.” While she liked the ceremony as a kid, she enjoyed it even more after she grew up, because “I understand more of what that traditional ceremony means. And it’s more of a cultural and family bonding experience for me now.”

In addition to understanding the meanings of Chinese cultural practices, participants also grew to acknowledge how Chinese culture was related to their identity. For example, Mia stated that: “Childhood, it was more like my parents made me do them, but I would not really understand why. Later, I started to explore more of my Chinese heritage, getting more into it, because I know this is part of who I am, because I want to do it.” The age period from late teens to mid-twenties, known as “emerging adulthood,” is important in one’s identity formation process (Arnett, 2000). For the participants in this study, their experience with Chinese related leisure activities in college was different from before because they viewed it as part of their identity. According to Matt, “I’m becoming more mature, more aware of who I am as a person, so that includes my identity as Chinese-American, so it [Chinese culture] is more relevant now than before. Now it’s like a way of life, because college is just that time when you find out more about yourself. So I’m becoming more involved in Chinese clubs and learning about my culture.” Therefore, the activities discussed in the previous sections, whether it’s listening to Chinese pop music or practicing Kung Fu, have become “ways of belonging.”

Although the participants in this study were fairly young with an average age of 22, they went through a transformation in terms of their Chinese leisure participation,
from being forced to choosing what they like, understanding the meanings behind the activities, and really associating with their Chinese-American identity. In the following sections, their travel experience in China, as well as the connection between their leisure and tourism activities, will be explored.

**Diaspora Tourism**

Data from the short questionnaire provided the basic information about second-generation Chinese-Americans’ travel to China, such as the number of trips they took, the duration of their stay, the size of their travel group, and whether they traveled independently or went on group tours. To understanding the meaning and significance of their diaspora tourism trips and how they experienced China from the perspective of a second-generation Chinese-American, five themes were identified from the qualitative interview data: destination image, language and appearance, authenticity, family history, and homeland attachment.

*Destination Image*

The theme of “destination image” revealed second-generation Chinese-Americans’ contradictory views towards the modernization and traditional aspects of China, as well as how they learned to negotiate the negative perceptions held by “Americans” and found ways to justify the issues they witnessed in China. First, findings showed that generally, there was a consensus in the destination attributes most participants liked and disliked about China. The top five “likes” that were most frequently mentioned by participants
were: delicious food, cheap prices, shopping in the local markets, convenient public transportation, and natural scenery. The top five things that they didn’t like about China were: hot and humid weather, sanitation issues, population density, crazy driving/traffic, and people trying to trick them out of their money.

However, given the size and regional diversity of China, participants differed in the places they have visited in China, and the region they liked or disliked. Specifically, Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong were the three places where most participants have traveled to. Some participants liked Shanghai the best, because it was a global city where different people came together: “Shanghai, the city life, how culturally blended it is. You can see some western influence on the eastern, all mashed together. Seeing Shanghai, the sceneries, I loved seeing everything there. The people were friendly. It was like tourists, local people, everyone together. All the different people there, centered in this one city,” as stated by Frank. Another reason why Alex liked Shanghai was because: “If you want to know where China is today, in today’s economy, you have to go to the metropolitan areas, like Shanghai and Beijing. I feel the real China would be in the cities, in Shanghai, the industrial places and also the natural parts too.”

While some participants saw Shanghai as the representation of modern China, others preferred Beijing because it was more traditional. According to Jeremy, “I really liked Beijing a lot, because it had a lot more cultural and natural scenery and attractions. Shanghai was too much of a metropolitan area. I associated a lot more with Beijing, because it was China, more cultural and traditional.” April also compared Hong Kong to Beijing and liked Beijing better: “Hong Kong was just very busy and crowded. I didn’t
like the atmosphere as much. Everyone is in a rush to get somewhere. And I’m just there, walking slowly and looking around, and everyone is rushing past you. After being in Beijing for so long, it was just totally different. I also feel like they are just rude, but the people in Beijing are so nice!” Interestingly, May, who visited Beijing near the Olympics had the opposite experience, and chose Hong Kong over Beijing: “The first time I visited Beijing, it was near the Olympics, so it was very crowded. I think Beijing felt more like a big city. Hong Kong was obviously still a big city, but what I saw was a bunch of small shops and businesses that all contributed to this big urban area.”

Obviously people have different preferences when comparing the places they visited in China. However, one thing that participants could agree on was that China was not one homogenous country: “China is very diverse, you know. People think either China is this backwards, farm country or this big, metropolitan city, but it’s really everything,” as stated by Jeremy. Karen, who went on a group tour to China also recognized its diversity because she traveled from city to city in a short period of time: “Every time we went to a new city, they would always introduce us to the culture’s food, and tell us stories about the people there, how they are different from every other culture in China. And sometimes I noticed too, how the accent or the language changed as we went from city to city.” Nevertheless, Beijing and Shanghai were the two cities that were often compared by participants as they described their travel experience in China, while Hong Kong was often distinguished from Mainland China.

The participants’ different preferences for modern cities or less developed areas in China stemmed from their attitude towards the modernization of China. Specifically,
while most applauded China’s rapid development, they also expressed their concern for the loss of its traditional culture and architecture. On one hand, they were proud of China’s modernization. According to Alex: “I feel like they want to prove to the world that they are a super power and that they can make it. I think they are doing that. They are already the second largest economic power in the world, so I think a lot of countries now are really looking to China as the future.” Tony even said that China might be better than the U.S. in the future: “As a country, they are definitely growing at a much faster rate than America. Right now I think America is still ahead, but China is growing faster. So in the future, definitely, China may be more ahead than America.” In addition to economic development, some participants noticed China’s progress in other aspects. For example, Jeremy, who was interested in Chinese pop culture, stated that: “A lot of things that China was lagging behind 20 years ago, now they’ve caught up. Sports, music, culture, a lot of things.” Those who have visited China multiple times also noticed some physical changes, such as people upgrading their bicycles to mopeds and squatty toilets being replaced by western style toilets. More importantly, being Chinese-American, participants had a better understanding of Chinese history than the average international tourist. Therefore, they were able to appreciate China’s modernization in light of its recent history. As April described, “It’s like I get to see how much China has changed over the years, and the strides that it has taken since being overrun by the Japanese, to Mao’s period, to Deng’s period, to now. They go through such drastic changes in like a decade. I feel like this really shows the endurance and the strength of the Chinese people.”
On the other hand, perhaps due to the same understanding of Chinese history and traditions, participants also took interest in the historical sites and architecture in China, and complained about the lack of historical preservation. According to Alex, “I noticed how modern China does not have much regard for historical sites. In China, because the land is owned by the government, if there’s a building that’s in the way, and it needs to be a hotel or a business, they just tear it down. It doesn’t matter that it used to be a former home of someone.” Helen also felt sad for the villages on the outskirts of Beijing that were torn down to make room for the Olympics facilities, and argued that “even though they are modernizing as a global economic power, I feel like they shouldn’t just leave behind the traditions and cultures.” One case that was particularly shocking was the Houhai district in Beijing, where old style homes were turned into a bar street. As described by April: “Every single home, they turned it into a place where you can smoke bongs. A smoking place, I was really surprised to see that. I didn’t expect to see that in those traditional homes, but they transformed it. They just keep the outside and redo the inside, so it’s like a bar place.” For the participants who appreciated the traditional aspects of Beijing, they didn’t want Beijing to follow Shanghai’s path: “Beijing is like China on the modernizing road, and Shanghai is like modern China. It’s like China is trying to redo the whole China into Shanghai!”

After understanding the participants’ perception of China and the different places within China, it was necessary to identify the source of their knowledge about China, especially what they knew before actually visiting China. One thing that differentiates the diaspora tourism experience of second-generation immigrants is that they may have more
knowledge and pre-trip expectations of the destination, because it is related to their personal heritage. According to Urry’s (1990) notion of the tourist gaze, “places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation…. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze” (p. 3). For a typical tourist, the mass media might be the main source from which one’s tourist gaze is constructed. But in the case of second-generation Chinese-Americans, only one participant, Lane, referred to the media as her information source: “For the whole last year, I really kept up with the news, and it’s always China this, China that, exchange rate, blah blah blah. I mean, I read it from the news, but I want to see from my own point of view, to see if what everyone says is right.” Another participant, Daniel, said that he learned about China from his peers in student organizations: “Being involved in ACA [Association of Chinese Americans], I’ve learned almost everything I know about China.”

For the most part, the participants’ perception of China was influenced by their parents and what was taught in school, either in high school or college. Josh described his experience of visiting Tiananmen Square and seeing the picture of Mao: “That’s something that you would see a lot in textbooks. But going there in person, and seeing that, ‘wow! the picture of Mao is still there,’ it’s a good experience.” At UCLA, there were also a lot of China-related courses, and many participants talked about how they learned about China from history classes, sociology classes, and Chinese language classes. For example:
“I also took a Chinese language class here. I learned a lot of culture from that class.”

“In college, I took a Chinese history class that studied China from 1000 A.D. to 1950. And then I took another Chinese class that studied more modern China, like communist China. So my interest in China really increased after taking those history related classes.”

“I took a sociology class on China, and from what we talked about in class, I learned to appreciate Chinese culture even more. I feel connected.”

In general, what the participants learned about China from school was positive, and it increased their attachment to China.

On the other hand, the messages they received from their parents were usually not so positive. Mia said that prior to her travel, her parents warned her about the danger in China, and “make sure you have all your belongings with you.” It can be argued that parents worry about their children’s safety, so they will always tell their children to be careful, regardless of the destination. However, the parents of the participants in this study were first-generation immigrants, and China was the place that they left for the United States. Therefore, the parents’ unpleasant memories of China might result in their children’s negative impression of China. For example, Emma explained that: “Before I studied abroad, my conceptions of China are just what my parents gave me. And my mom always told me that it’s a bad place to grow up in, so that’s just what I thought, like a lot of crimes, and kind of dirty, really dirty.” Cindy also shared what she thought about China before traveling there: “Before, my parents were saying that China is still being
developed, that kind of thing. I heard a lot of things about China, like reasons why my parents’ family left, so I already had this stigma.”

Being influenced by the media, their peers, classes, and their parents, participants had mixed images of China prior to travel. After their arrival, some people found China to be pretty much the same as they expected: “From what my parents talked about and what my grandparents kept talking about, I don’t think I was surprised by anything,” said Sam. Others found it to be better than, or even the opposite of, what they were told. According to Matt, “I never knew China was so beautiful! Because I was told that all parts of China are polluted, and that I won’t enjoy it.” Interestingly, even when participants felt that China fell short of their expectations, they still tried to focus on the positive. For example, after describing many negative aspects of China, such as the government, communism, pollution, and human rights issues, Tony still concluded by saying: “But at the same time they have positive things, like they work hard. I mean, I’ve been there, my parents are from there. My roots are from there. I can’t say I don’t like it.” Most participants seemed to feel that because of their connection to China, they were supposed to like China, even when they had negative impressions or experiences.

Among the top five destination attributes that participants didn’t like about China (i.e., hot and humid weather, sanitation issues, population density, crazy traffic, and people trying to trick them out of their money), they have found different ways to justify it or look at things from another perspective. The weather, especially the humidity, was the one thing they couldn’t change about China. As for the sanitation, Emma was told by her mother that the streets and the restaurants were dirty in China, but her own
perspective was: “I still think it’s kind of dirty. But I also have to think from the point of view that they are changing really fast. For the dirty, there’re so many people, so it’s kind of hard to keep everything clean.” Mia was also warned by her friends that Beijing was dirty: “Mostly they were negative about Beijing. Because they’re comparing it to other cities they saw in China, and then in comparison, they would say Beijing is dirty.” So her argument was that Beijing was not really that dirty; it only seemed dirtier in comparison to other places.

The population density in China was another issue participants complained about, such as how shocked they were to see so many people everywhere. However, the silver lining of overpopulation, as suggested by Tony, was that: “It felt really safe there, because there’re a lot of people there to watch you, like the people on the streets. In America, walking alone at night can be dangerous, like someone may rob you. But in China, because you’re surrounded by people, so you are always being watched. People watching other people, so that was nice.” Jeremy also described a scenario when he took the bus in China, with so many people packing in and squeezing between other people, and he tried to be more understanding about that: “If you can understand where they are coming from, there’re a lot of people! Then you’re willing to look past your own entitlement to space. It’s a spatial issue.” Participants often reminded themselves not to see things from the “American” perspective, but from the Chinese perspective.

As for the traffic problems, several participants noticed the “crazy driving” in China, especially when they took the taxi. Since there’s a lot of traffic, taxi drivers were usually really aggressive in China. Betty made an interesting comparison of the different
mannerisms of driving in Los Angeles and in China: “Here in LA, people are still aggressive, but I feel like people verbalize it a lot more. They give people the middle finger, they curse them. But in China, it’s like it’s expected for people to be aggressive, so I didn’t hear as often, like the driver cursing another driver.” Another traffic related issue that made Daniel uncomfortable was the amount of people riding bikes and crowding the streets in China, but then he focused on the positive and argued that “it saves money, it’s probably more efficient, and it’s less pollution.”

The last complaint that was often brought up during the interviews was the local vendors setting higher prices and trying to trick foreign tourists. Some participants argued that this was a western stigma about China, but “they weren’t always trying to get money” or “not everyone is out to get your money.” Ethan even said that, in spite of the bargaining of prices, “I just felt at least people were a lot more direct in what they wanted from me.” In all, participants have learned to negotiate the negative perceptions held by “Americans” and found different ways to justify the problems they experienced in China. Moreover, it should be noted that all the “issues” discussed here did not mean that participants had a negative travel experience in China. In fact, they were generally satisfied with their trips, and most people stated that they would visit China again. Being Chinese-American, they were able to overcome the negative and focus on the positive aspects of their trips to China.
Language and Appearance

Another factor that often plays an important role in second-generation immigrants’ diaspora tourism experience is their level of competence in their parents’ language. As with other forms of international tourism, the ability to speak the local language generally improves one’s travel experience. For the participants in this study, more than two-thirds of them indicated that they could speak and understand Chinese “well” or “very well.” However, due to the great variety of Chinese dialects, many participants still had some negative experiences in China due to language barriers. For example, Lane said she had a particularly hard time in Beijing, more so than in other places, because “they roll their tongues a lot when they speak in Mandarin, so I can’t really understand what they are saying. It’s just really hard for me to communicate with anyone in Beijing.” Frank also had problems when he went to a foot massage place with his parents. Since both his parents spoke Mandarin, the massage worker also talked to him in Mandarin, but: “I didn’t understand, and then there’s that awkward moment. Just in that situation it was weird, because I wasn’t getting the full experience. I was given a limited experience because I couldn’t understand the language.” Not being able to speak or understand Chinese was one thing, but the moment when local people realized that these Chinese-American visitors couldn’t understand Chinese—that was when they “just feel like a foreigner.”

Being second-generation Chinese-American, participants not only had to communicate with the locals when they visited China, but also with their Chinese relatives. From the short questionnaire, 80% of the participants had relatives still living in
China. Unlike the local vendors and masseuses, these Chinese relatives knew that the participants came from America. Therefore, if the relatives only spoke Chinese amongst themselves, and didn’t attempt to translate or use a little bit of English, participants would feel that they were being excluded. Oftentimes, being excluded by family members was much more upsetting than not being able to communicate with local residents. Jack, who could speak and understand Mandarin, felt frustrated when his relatives would use the local dialect rather than Mandarin Chinese: “They specifically talked so that I didn’t understand, because they didn’t want me to hear about it. Or they would make jokes about us, because they knew we didn’t understand, then we would feel kind of alienated. They sort of set that up.” Whether their relatives’ use of the local dialect was intentional or not, some participants had problems communicating with their own family when they were in China due to language differences.

Moreover, the different dialects of the Chinese language added to the complexity of one’s travel experience in China. Among the twenty-six participants interviewed, Mandarin and Cantonese were the two dominating languages. Other dialects that were brought up during the interviews included: Teo Chew, Hokkien, Yunnan-ese, Taishan-ese, and Shanghai-ese. Thus, even if the participants were fluent in one Chinese language or dialect, they still might have some unpleasant encounters when they visited other regions in China. For example, Matt said that Teo Chew was his first language, and English his second, so his Teo Chew was just as good as his English. However, when he was traveling around China: “I tried speaking English first, and then Teo Chew sometimes, but they didn’t understand that either. Because Teo Chew was just for that region, or that
province.” Lane’s parents came from Hong Kong, so she spoke both Mandarin and Cantonese. Her Mandarin was fluent enough for her to “never speak English” when she studied abroad in Beijing. However, “when I speak Mandarin I have like a Canton accent, so they [the local vendors] just think I’m from southern China, so they don’t even know that I’m American, but they still try to trick me.” It seemed like knowledge of one Chinese language was not enough, because even speaking in a different accent would make someone an “outsider” and result in him/her getting the “tourist price” and not the “local price.”

In addition to regional linguistic differences, the effect of language competence on one’s travel experience was also moderated by one’s appearance. That is, if the participants looked Chinese, they would be expected to speak the language, but if they looked “foreign,” local people would be more tolerant and understanding. For example, Jay was half-Chinese and half-Caucasian, so even though he couldn’t communicate all that well in Chinese, he felt okay about it. But for his friends who “look more Chinese, but don’t speak at all,” they would “get all embarrassed when people talk to them in Chinese, because they don’t know or they can’t read Chinese.” For Frank, who looked Chinese but couldn’t speak Mandarin, he said the most uncomfortable experience he had in China was at a local marketplace, where the vendors were asking him questions that he didn’t understand: “I was like, ‘sorry, no,’ just trying the best I could to tell them that I couldn’t understand them. I felt like people were giving me weird looks, like ‘you’re Chinese, you should know your own culture.’” Feeling bad about his lack of competence
in Chinese, Frank said his least favorite place in China was the local marketplace, and his favorite was Shanghai, because he could speak English there.

The participants who looked more Chinese were also jealous of their non-Chinese-looking friends, because “the locals approach Chinese-Americans very differently than they approach Caucasians.” This was more evident in the experiences of those who went on study abroad trips in China, because there would be people of different races in their group. As observed by Leah: “For the Caucasians, the locals would take pictures with them, and ask them about America, and super fascinated if you can speak any Chinese at all. People are much nicer to them, much more welcoming. It was very different.” But for Chinese-Americans: “The locals would look at them and not understand why they could not speak Chinese. So they sort of took a condescending approach, like ‘well, if you’re Chinese, why don’t you connect with your roots?’ They [the locals] are very proud to be Chinese.” On the other hand, Jack, who was half-Chinese and half-Caucasian, also complained that “Whenever people just assume I don’t speak Chinese. It used to bother me.” He described a situation on the plane and how he got annoyed because the flight attendant would speak to everyone else in Chinese but spoke to him in English. In a sense, these participants were not upset about their language ability, but about the different treatments they received from the local people.

Although most participants’ experience with the use of Chinese when they were in China as discussed earlier seemed negative, it should be noted that there were positive instances as well. In cases when the local people recognized that the participants were visitors from America, participants then had the pleasure of surprising the locals by
speaking Chinese fluently. According to Jack: “I like it better when people assume you
don’t speak Chinese, and then they are impressed when you do, than if they assume you
do and you don’t.” Sam said that he was the tallest person in his immediate family, and
he also dressed in the American style, so the locals could tell that he’s “American.” But
once he started speaking to them in good Chinese: “They would be like: ‘wait, what?!’
Because a lot of times they have this preconception that us ABCs [American-Born
Chinese] cannot speak Chinese.” Especially when he visited the rural area where his
parents and grandparents used to live, and he was able to speak the local dialect, the local
villagers were really happy to hear their language coming from the younger generation
and an “American.” And he also took pride in the fact that he could speak not only
Mandarin but the local dialect as well. Therefore, the language and communication issues
that influenced second-generation Chinese-Americans’ experience in China were not
necessarily related to their Chinese language proficiency, but caused by the variety of
Chinese dialects and the gap between one’s appearance and language ability.

Search for Authenticity

When second-generation immigrants visit their parents’ country of origin, they
are looking for something more than a tourism experience. For example, people of Jewish
ancestry take part in diaspora tourism to Israel to search for an authentic experience and a
holistic identity among diaspora Jews (Cohen, 2008). Like most tourists, the participants
of this study didn’t want the artificial, touristy stuff when they went to China. They
wanted to get an authentic, Chinese experience. What set them apart from other international tourists was that they also longed for a deeper connection to the destination.

Goffman (1959) used a front stage/backstage metaphor to explain how people behave in the presence of others. When an actor is performing, some actions and emotions would be exaggerated, while other aspects that may discredit the performance would be suppressed. In everyday life, people are also “acting” in front of others, and only when a person is alone or within a familiar social group can s/he have the freedom to express what was hidden in front of the audience. Goffman considered the front stage/backstage scenario from the perspective of the performer. Thus, what occurs in the front stage is an act of suppression, while the backstage signifies a chance for truthfulness and freedom. Moreover, Goffman viewed the difference between front stage and backstage as a form of power struggle. For example, a woman can “be herself” only when the male audience is absent. Unfortunately, people are not always in control of their own backstage. Between customers and service personnel, problems may arise when people lose control of the backstage, such as restaurants being forced to have an open kitchen in front of the customers.

MacCannell (1973) applied Goffman’s (1959) front stage/backstage dichotomy to tourism encounters. He argued that all tourism activities are “staged,” and proposed the idea of “staged authenticity” to explain tourists’ desire to see the backstage. The interaction between tourists and hosts, like other social interactions, takes place in the front stage, and the backstage exists when the locals are amongst themselves. Although MacCannell used the front stage/backstage metaphor in the context of tourism, he
differed from Goffman by focusing more on the perspective of the audience—the tourists. MacCannell considered the tourists’ quest of authenticity as a consequence of modernity. Due to the shallowness of their own lives, tourists are motivated to search for authenticity elsewhere. In a tourism setting, tourists have a desire to see the “backstage” and the real life of the local people. Even if they were only allowed to see the front stage—the tourist zones, they still try to take a peek at the backstage.

It is important to clarify that the “backstage” is not an equivalent of authenticity. In fact, the mere presence of tourists there makes it front stage, not backstage. In tourism settings, “especially in modern society, it may be necessary to discount the importance, and even the existence, of front and back regions except as ideal poles of touristic experience” (MacCannell, 1973, p. 597). However, even if the authentic backstage does not exist, tourists may still believe, or want to believe, that they are heading in the right direction. What’s important is not to determine whether an experience is truly authentic or not, but what the tourists believe to be authentic. MacCannell described six different stages of tourist settings on a continuum from pseudo-events to the most authentic backstage. Analysis of the participants’ travel experience in China did not reveal as many as six stages of front and backstage, but the participants were indeed searching for more authenticity, and they felt that some experiences were more authentic than others. First of all, results from the short questionnaire indicated that nearly 90% of the participants preferred to travel independently when they visit China. The interview data also showed that they did not like group tours, because:
“When you’re in the tour, you’re with other tourists, so you don’t get as much opportunities to talk to the local people.”

“When you’re on a tour bus, it really doesn’t give you a good idea about the culture, because you’re with a bunch of Americans all the time.”

“When you go on a tour, they specifically take you to certain places, tell you certain things. You get sort of a one-sided view of how things are.”

Therefore, most people wanted to travel by themselves and make friends with the locals, so that they could get a better understanding of the real situation in China.

Even when traveling independently, it was almost inevitable for them to visit some famous landmarks and attractions in China, which were usually “touristy” areas. Therefore, they tried to get the local, or at least the less touristy, versions of the place. For example, Betty explained that there were different sections of the Great Wall which were open for visitors: “Some are really really touristy, where people are trying to sell you things, and some are definitely not as touristy. So we really wanted to go to one that wasn’t so touristy. When I went to that, the view, the climb, it was just a pretty amazing experience.” Mia, who went to a dim sum place in Hong Kong, also emphasized that she went to a local one: “I went to the local one with some local friends. It’s not super clean, not like a nice, sit-down restaurant. Nothing like that. The rooms are more crowded and smaller. There would be like 6 people at this little table. But it’s more authentic. I enjoyed it. I didn’t try the touristy ones, but my friends tried the touristy ones. It’s like more expensive. It’s really nicely decorated, but everything is expensive.” It’s interesting
how the crowdedness and lack of cleanliness at a restaurant were considered a sign of its authenticity.

Rather than visiting the famous landmarks in China, what the participants really enjoyed was going to the everyday places, such as shops, restaurants and night markets, and talking to the owners and local residents. Street vendors and taxi drivers were also often mentioned as being friendly and an ideal source of conversation. Jay, who went on a study abroad trip, had a special experience, because he would play basketball with the local people: “I played basketball at the Beijing Normal University fairly often, and I would talk to people on the court in Chinese. They would tell us some stuff. And we made some pretty good friends through that. I felt like a large part that changed me was because I was actually able to talk to the locals. I was able to go out on my own, and see the day-to-day life.”

In addition to traveling individually, visiting local places, and conversing with locals, the ultimate form of “backstage” authentic experience was being able to go somewhere that even the locals did not have access to. Betty had a fun experience when she and her friends went to a local dumpling shop. Knowing that they came from America, the shop owner offered to let them try making the dumplings themselves by hand, and this was a unique experience for them. Dawn was excited when she got to go to an underground rock concert in China, because “they are underground, so it’s the things you don’t really know about. They’re very cultural, the things people don’t talk about on the surface.” The secrecy of the concert made the experience cultural and authentic for her. In another scenario, Ethan was in China during the World Cup, and his preferred way
of watching the World Cup in China was: “Sometimes in the alleys, people would have a small TV and they would watch the World Cup together. So we would stand there with a bunch of guys, and beers. It was really nice, because it’s like seeing the same medium, but seeing it in a different culture.” For him, watching the World Cup on a small TV in a dirty alley was more authentic than watching it in a sports bar with other foreigners in Beijing. Finally, even those who went on group tours might stumble upon an interesting “back stage” experience. Jay explained that as part of his tour of Inner Mongolia, everyone in the group was supposed to go horseback riding on a big grass field. However, there weren’t enough horses for everyone, so he asked the locals if he could rent their ATVs instead, and went around riding an ATV with the locals rather than riding horses with his tour group. For him, “that was probably one of the most fun times I had when I was in China, just something that was off the path of the tourists.”

As second-generation immigrants, many participants had relatives living in China. Therefore, their local relatives might have been the ones who led them into the authentic back stage. However, this study found the opposite to be true. Most of the authentic experiences discussed earlier were from local friends who took the participants to local restaurants, marketplaces, underground concerts, and so on. For those who went to visit their family and relatives in China, many were trapped in a “family bubble” which prevented them from venturing outside and interacting with the locals (other than their family members). For one thing, participants with close relatives in China often went there to attend family events, such as weddings and funerals. Thus, they stayed with their family the whole time, and couldn’t really experience the destination. For the second-
generation, these family events could be boring. As Helen described: “We didn’t get a lot of time to just go sightseeing. We didn’t have a lot of exposure to the things that I wanted to do. It was mostly whatever we had to do as a family. So a lot of the times I would be sitting in a room, entertaining myself, or sitting at the dinner table, listening to them talk.” Since their parents and relatives were busy with preparations, there was no one to show them around, and they were trapped in a “family bubble.”

For another, the parents of the participants were already familiar with China, so they would rather stay at home and spend time with the local relatives. As stated by Daniel, “My parents have been there so many times that they don’t really need to see the tourist attractions. So whenever we go there, it’s more like living there with them [local relatives] for a little bit. So we would do common things like shopping, eating, just simple things like that.” Lane’s situation was more complicated. Her parents were from Hong Kong, but she also had some relatives in Mainland China. So when she went to China: “I usually stayed in Hong Kong, and not too long in Canton and Mainland China. My mom only brings us back for a little bit to see our relatives, and then we just go back to Hong Kong right away. So I’ve never been anywhere outside of Canton, and even in Canton, my mom never let me go out on the streets, so I would always go to the same place, with my relatives, so I don’t see any cultural aspect at all.” This “family bubble,” like the “tourist bubble,” prevents diaspora tourists from interacting with locals. It may be argued that staying within the “family bubble” is authentic in the sense that one is really living with the local relatives. However, these participants didn’t get the authentic experience of Chinese culture that they expected.
Moreover, there are different types of authenticity in tourist experiences: objective, constructive, and existential (Wang, 1999). For the participants in this study, the authenticity they pursued when traveling in China was more than just experiencing the objective authenticity of Chinese culture. Being Chinese-American, their diaspora tourism experience in China increased their connection to China and helped in the making of their self-identity, which is a form of “existential authenticity.” Many participants acknowledged that they felt more connected to China after their travel experience. According to Sam, “going to China is an opportunity to see and learn more about China, learn more about where you come from. I always feel like that. Every time I travel I feel closer to China.” For some people, the connection was established or reinforced when what they learned about China from their parents actually came alive: “It’s the little things, like the origin of some customs or the old songs that my parents listen to. Those small things made me feel more connected to China, and also to my parents,” Emma said. For others, the connection was emotional, such as witnessing and feeling proud of one’s own heritage. As Josh described: “I would say China was more of an emotional experience, like standing on the Great Wall and just looking over, like this is my culture, my ethnicity’s background. And because I didn’t know anything about it since I was born here, going back there I felt more of a connection there.”

Traveling to China gave the participants a better understanding of China, of Chinese culture, of the lives of Chinese people, and of what it means to be Chinese. They could consider the issues of identity in another environment, by comparing with the local residents, with their Chinese-looking or non-Chinese-looking classmates, and with their
own family and relatives. This experience also gave them a sense of who they are as Chinese-American. As described by Frank: “During the college applications, you would check like how you identify what ethnicity you are. Then I would check I’m Chinese-American or Asian-American. But once you go to the place [China] yourself, you actually get a meaning of who you are, versus just that label or that category that you’re given. Like you can see yourself as Chinese American, and you can say it with pride.”

Nevertheless, the identity issues associated with being bi-cultural and a second-generation immigrant were complicated, so some participants were still confused: “It’s like I still don’t know who I am, but after the trip, I know more about myself, but I’m still confused. I was able to identify myself more as Chinese-American than before.” For those struggling with their bi-cultural identity, their travel experience influenced them, in a way, into putting more emphasis on the Chinese part of their identity. Cindy even called herself “American-Chinese” and referred to the locals as “China-Chinese”: “I know that I’m not China-Chinese, I’m American-Chinese, but I still feel more Chinese, culture wise, because now I know more of my background. So I’m American-Chinese, but definitely the Chinese part of that.” Daniel also expressed his desire to keep maintaining his Chinese heritage: “Because I feel it’s weird when you have this bi-culturality, and you kind of lose track of it. I don’t want to lose track of my Chinese side. Going to these places would help me learn more about it, so I wouldn’t forget it.” In all, the theme of “authenticity” described the different stages of authenticity encountered by the participants, the different types of authenticity they searched for through travel, and
discussed their desire to not only break free from the “tourist bubble” but also a “family bubble” that prevented them from getting the authentic, backstage experience.

*Family History*

With the exception of study abroad trips, most participants’ diaspora tourism trips to China were with their parents. Several of the nine participants who went on “travel study” programs in China also had the experience of traveling with their family there when they were younger. Therefore, meeting relatives and learning more about their family was also an important aspect of the trips. For those who visited China with their parents, they could understand their parents better by knowing where their parents came from and actually seeing the type of environment that their parents grew up in. The stories that they heard from their parents came true for them: “It’s kind of like their stories made sense. Something tangible, the places. They would say that: ‘oh this is where we blah blah blah,’ and you can see that there’s a pond, there’s the field, the actual place,” said Sam.

For most participants, their parents migrated to the U.S. more than 20 years ago. Therefore, the China they saw was different from the one their parents grew up in. During the trips, parents would often compare the past and present, and told their children about the way things used to be in China. For example, Melody said her mom would talk about the roads, the cities, the modernization, and feel nostalgic about the differences: “Oh we used to do this, we used to do that. We used to ride our bikes from our village all the way to the city, and now people don’t ride their bikes anymore. Everyone takes a taxi
or a bus to town. It’s so different now.” Some participants went on a group tour of China with their family, so they didn’t get to see the actual hometown of their parents. Even so, parents would compare different places and be reminiscent of their past. For example, May, who went to Shanghai and Beijing, said her parents would be reminded of their home village when they visited the local marketplace: “They would compare places, to how their life was when they were growing up. They didn’t grow up in the city. They grew up in a smaller community where everybody knew each other, where they could just go and maybe their neighbor would be selling some kind of food, so they could go and buy food from them every single day. I guess they were reminded of that at the night markets.” Cindy also described how when they saw a river, her mom would say: “oh yeah, we used to fish in the river,” and when they went into someone’s house, her mom would say: “oh this is kind of like our house.” It seemed like no matter where they went, her mother was able to find a connection to her past.

Visiting China with their parents also helped the participants to understand their parents’ current condition, as immigrants and still “outsiders” in the United States. Cindy described how her father became very confident and in complete control when they were in China. Her father, who didn’t talk too much at home, would start to tell stories from Chinese history, and even though they had a tour guide, her father spoke more than the tour guide, because that was the one time her father felt like “he knew everything.” In that moment, she felt that she understood her father a lot better: “That’s when I really saw that he was a foreigner here. Because I never really saw, in my head, acknowledge them as immigrants. Even though I know, it didn’t connect. But when they are in their ‘home’
and they acted differently, then I could see that this [China] is their home, and this here [the U.S.] is not their home. They don’t belong here, they belong there. That was apparent, for sure.” For those who traveled with their family but didn’t visit their parents’ previous home, they also expressed the desire to see where their parents came from and the history behind it. According to Frank, “I want to sort of re-live the experience of my parents. They would tell me stories, but I just get some imagination of what was going on. But I want to see for myself what type of place it was. I’ve seen pictures, but it’s not the same as going there to see the place directly. So I would definitely be interested in going.”

Moreover, when participants traveled to China, they were not just seeing China as their parents’ place, but also relating it to themselves, because China was where they would have been if their parents hadn’t migrated to the U.S. From that perspective, they saw China and the lifestyle in China as an “alternate universe” of the way their life might have been. According to Sam, “Being back home, you realize that this is where your parents came from, where you came from, and where you would be now if your parents didn’t immigrate to the U.S., so you get the backstory. And you feel that you were given a chance of a lifetime to have a good life in the U.S., so work hard for it. That’s the biggest [change] for me, just knowing the backstory.” When they had the chance to meet with their relatives or other local people in China, the locals’ fantasy about America reinforced the comparison between China and the U.S. Tony said that his cousins always told him how lucky he was to be in the U.S. and how the U.S. was much better than China. Therefore, he became more grateful for what he had in America, because: “I could
easily have been born there if my parents hadn’t come here. So my life could have been totally different if I was there. Being there makes me think about that.”

Seeing China as the “alternate universe” of the life they could have had made many participants appreciate their current life. Specifically, they compared themselves to the young people in China and were surprised by the level of pressure and competition there. As Mia stated, “I heard that the students there are more hard working, they are more studious, because I understand that there’s so much more competition. If they want to succeed, they have to do well in school, to meet that high score or whatever.”

Although most participants felt similar pressure for academic success from their parents as they were growing up, it was different to hear it from their cousins or local friends. So they learned to appreciate their life and even became more motivated. According to Alex, “You have to be much more self-determined to succeed in order to make it in China. That’s why I feel very blessed and very lucky to grow up here. I feel like I have more privileges, and also spoiled too, in a way, not really appreciating what I have here until I went to China. So I’m definitely more grateful for that, more driven towards success.”

Traveling to China not only gave them a better understanding of what their parents went through, but also made them more driven and passionate about their life, after getting a glimpse of the “alternate universe” in China.

Homeland Attachment

Being born and raised in the host country, second-generation immigrants generally consider their “country of origin” as their parents’ home, or their parents’
country, and not their own home. When asked to choose between China and the United States as “home,” all participants were clear in considering the U.S. as their home. However, they still expressed some emotional connection to China, as a place related to their roots and heritage. For example:

“China is my parents’ homeland.”

“I would say that the U.S. is my home, but China is where my ancestors are from.”

“I would think about it [China] more as my heritage than as my home.”

“I know that my homeland is back in China, that’s where I identify with, but that’s not where I feel my home is.”

“I really value China now. It definitely has a place as a home for me. I really learned to hold a place in my heart for China.”

“I think of the U.S. as home, but I do miss Hong Kong, when I don’t go back for a long time. And there are a lot of things that Hong Kong has that I wish are here too.”

Sam even considered the U.S. as his “legal home” and reserved the term “homeland” for China, because of its emotional connotations: “Homeland I want to say China, even though I’m born in the U.S. Legally, my home is the U.S. I feel like there is more of an attachment to say ‘homeland.’ I feel like it’s strange to say I have an attachment to China. But I do live in the U.S, and I will call it my home.” But for most participants, they definitely felt that America was their home, the place they were born and raised, and the place where they wanted to live.
Even though all participants considered the U.S. as their home as opposed to China, there were some differences in their travel experience that made them feel more comfortable and “at home” in certain places or regions in China. First of all, length of stay was an important factor. Many participants said they felt at home in China after spending the summer in their relatives’ house, or after living in the dorms for a while during their study abroad experience. Language differences also played a role in determining where the participants felt the most comfortable in China. For example, Cantonese-speaking Chinese-Americans would feel more at home in Hong Kong than in Beijing: “In Hong Kong I feel like everything is pretty at home for me, just going out and talking to people, just anywhere I guess, anywhere I go. But in China, I think whenever I had to speak to someone in Chinese [Mandarin], then I just feel like a foreigner,” said Lane. Interestingly, most participants did not have a particularly strong attachment to the city, region, or village where their parents used to live before migrating to the U.S.

Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong were the three cities that most people traveled to in China, for both leisure tours and travel study programs, so many of the participants didn’t even go the place where their family was originally from. For example, April, whose parents were from southern China, said that “we were originally planning to go from Hong Kong to southern China, but my parents heard that it was such a dangerous place, like people get killed, so we didn’t go. I wanted to go, but we didn’t go, maybe next time.”

However, without visiting their parents’ original home, certain aspects of China gave the participants a sense of familiarity and reminded them of their home in the U.S. For the participants who grew up in a community that did not have a lot of Chinese or
Asian ethnicities, their previous Chinese culture experience was limited to their own home. Being in China made them realize that what they thought was unique to their home life existed in another part of the world. According to Frank, “Before I went [to China], the Chinese culture would be like inside my household. But to go outside, because I have a lot of Caucasian friends, so when I go to their house it’s really different, the culture and how they behave. Now when I went to China, it was like what was once in the house, now it’s everywhere. Just a sense of reassurance, and familiarity, that your culture is being practiced.” For Jay, who was half Chinese on his mother’s side, he didn’t distinguish whether his household practices were American or Chinese, and it was studying abroad in China that made him realize how “Chinese” his life was: “Most of what I consider to be my Chinese culture would just be food and little social habits, like things that my mom taught me to do at the dinner table. I didn’t necessarily realize we’re Chinese until I saw it was heavily practiced in other places. Once I studied abroad, it shed light on so many things that I’ve learned in my whole 18 years of being in the U.S. A lot of the things my mom would teach me, that I just kind of associate with American culture, really weren’t.” Going to China helped them identify the Chinese part of their life, and they were able to see their “home” in China because of the Chinese culture they grew up with. In another scenario, Tony had his grandmother live with his family up until he was fourteen, when his grandmother moved back to Shanghai. Later, when he visited Shanghai with his family, they stayed in his grandmother’s apartment, which was not the same house that his mom and his grandparents used to live. But for him, that apartment in
China “actually reminds me of America. It reminds me of home in America, like living with my grandma.”

On the other hand, for participants who lived in places with a large Chinese community, China still reminded them of home, but in a different way. Cindy grew up in San Gabriel, California, which is a suburb of Los Angeles populated by many people of Chinese ancestry. Going to UCLA for college, she felt that UCLA was a lot less “Chinese” in comparison to San Gabriel. Thus, when she visited China, she was reminded of San Gabriel: “It did remind me a lot of my hometown, because there’re Chinese people everywhere, which is interesting. That’s what my home is like!” She saw San Gabriel as being “a bridge, a culture mash” between UCLA and China, and China was the place where the people and the culture of San Gabriel came from: “It’s almost like you took a pinch of China and sprinkled it in the United States, that’s San Gabriel. So there’s like a taste of it everywhere, but then I get to see what it really was in China.” Cindy’s description of San Gabriel illustrated the local specificity of transnationalism (Zhou & Tseng, 2001). Although transnationalism involves border-crossing activities and connects the home and host societies of immigrants, transnational practices are still embedded in the community. They not only influence the community network back home, but are becoming localized in the immigrant-receiving community as well. San Gabriel is a perfect example of “a prototype of a transnational community where global ties intersect and take root in the network of a local community,” as described by Zhou and Tseng (2001, p. 150). Jack grew up in northern California, which also has more Chinese food and culture than the UCLA area of southern California. Therefore, he felt that China was
more similar to northern California than southern California was: “I used to say that I got more of a cultural shock going from Nor-Cal [northern CA] to So-Cal [southern CA] than I did when I went to Beijing.” His main complaint of UCLA was the lack of Chinese food. And when he went to China, even though his friends warned him that he might get sick there, he felt: “This is what I grow up eating, so I felt more normal there. In Beijing, I felt really comfortable, because all the snacks and stuff, I eat all the time. The thing that made me felt most at home in China was the food. When you’re around the food that you’re used to, that’s always something that makes you feel at home, at least for me.” Whether it’s the people or the food, some participants felt a sense of familiarity and belonging in China because it reminded them of their hometowns in the U.S.

When asked to compare their feelings of “home” towards China and the U.S., some participants explained that the reason why they thought the U.S. was clearly their home was because they could identify with a specific place within the U.S. For example, Jack described that “I grew up in Berkeley, and my dad grew up in Berkeley. My dad’s like 65 now, and he spent all but 6 or 7 years in Berkeley. So that was like his home. The house that he grew up in was only like 15 minutes away from where we live now. So I do consider Berkeley as my home, because he would tell me stories.” But when they think about China, most participants were not particularly attached to one place in China. For example, Matt, whose family originally came from the Teo Chew area, was asked if he identified with China or Teo Chew. He responded, “I can’t really say for myself, because I haven’t been all around China. I think I identify myself as Chinese. My family was from Teo Chew, so I should have more connection with that region, because of my family,
versus like the whole country itself. But I can’t really say.” Some participants couldn’t even pinpoint where their parents were from. They only knew the general region, such as Guangdong Province or Southern China, but they cannot identify their parents’ hometown. According to Oxfeld and Long (2004), “a homeland has meaning even when people are ambivalent about it rather than identifying with a particular place” (p. 5). For the second generation, perhaps because they did not have a lot of experience or direct contact with a specific “home” place in China, they were able to form an attachment to China as a whole country.

The theme of “homeland attachment” identified the elements that made participants feel at home in China and demonstrated that “home” was not necessarily the village or region their family was from but a different geographical entity. Interestingly, participants were not particularly attached to the actual original “home” of their parents. The previous section discussed how the first generation—the parents—could relate the things they saw during the trips to their past or their childhood home, even though they never visited their hometown. Likewise, what the second generation felt attached to was not the physical “home” place, but things that reminded them of home. Poria, Butler, and Airey (2003) argued that what defines heritage tourism is not the physical attributes of the heritage site, but whether or not visitors perceive a place as part of their personal heritage. For second generation diaspora tourists, their homeland attachment was not centered around old houses and buildings, but how they felt a connection to the different places they visited.
Moreover, according to Urry (1990), tourists gaze at the destination “through the contrasts implied with non-tourist social practices, particularly those based within the home and paid work” (p. 2). That is, tourists choose to gaze upon things that are extraordinary and different from what they can see at home. However, in the case of diaspora tourism, these second-generation immigrants were not looking for contrasts but similarities. And regardless of whether they lived in Chinese ethnic enclaves or not in the U.S., they were able to feel connected to China through some elements that reminded them of “home.”

**Summary**

To summarize the transnational leisure and travel experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans, two themes were identified from their Chinese-related leisure activities, which described their different approaches to Chinese culture through leisure and their transformation from the childhood “ways of being” to the more mature “ways of belonging.” Specifically, their transnational leisure activities could be contemporary or traditional, pan-Asian or region-specific, and an individual interest or a group activity. As for their diaspora tourism experience, the first two themes of destination image and language and appearance focused on the positives and negatives, such as what they liked and disliked, why they preferred some places more than others, why some people had a better or worse experience, and how they handled the negative aspects encountered during the trips. The next two themes of authenticity and family history provided a deeper understanding of what they were looking for in China, such as
authentic culture, Chinese identity, and family history, and how they learned to appreciate their bi-cultural identity and current life in the U.S. Finally, the theme of homeland attachment explored the notions of “home” and “homeland” and the different ways they connected to China by relating it to their home, hometown, and family.

Moreover, is there a relationship between second-generation immigrants’ transnational leisure and diaspora tourism? Does their transnational leisure influence their travel in China? Or does their experience in China influence their choice of leisure activities afterwards? Findings suggested that traveling to China has a stronger impact on the participants. Several participants said that they bought CDs in China, so they listened to more Chinese music after they came back. Jack stated that his Chinese improved after his travel study experience in China, so he was able to visit websites written in Chinese afterwards. Frank visited China the summer before going to college, and that experience made him more driven to look for clubs that pertained to Chinese culture at UCLA. Cindy said that after traveling to China, she paid more attention to Chinese news when browsing the Internet, because she made some friends in China. Finally, many participants stated that they became more willing to talk to their parents in Mandarin after their travel experience in China. These findings are supported by the literature, as studies on Jewish diaspora tourism also demonstrated that traveling to Israel influenced the life of Jewish youth by instilling “an increased sense of the importance of participating in the local Jewish community” after they returned from the trips (Cohen, 2008, p. 117).

As for the effect of leisure on tourism, it was surprising that only one person mentioned the media as her source of information in that she learned about China from
watching the news. For the most part, participants said that most of what they knew about China came from school classes and from their parents, but not from their leisure activities. And when describing their experience in China, only one pop culture reference came up. Dawn said that she went to the Birds, Flowers, and Bees’ market in Beijing, where she saw people selling “lucky crickets,” like the one from the movie “Mulan.” Other than that, there was no obvious connection between their everyday leisure activity and their travel experience in China. Although many participants watched Chinese movies or dramas, there was no film-induced tourism when they visited China. It was also interesting how some participants chose to join the region-specific Teo Chew Association, as opposed to the all-inclusive Association of Chinese Americans, for their extracurricular activity, but when they actually went to China, they didn’t visit the Teo Chew area.

It is hard to account for the gap between participants’ transnational leisure activities and diaspora tourism experience. Isn’t leisure, as a part of one’s everyday life, more likely to have some type of long-term, significant impact? People’s motivation for leisure and tourism can be similar. Leisure provides people with the “freedom from” work and obligations, and the “freedom to” pursue personal interests (Kelly, 1987). Tourism motivation can also be categorized as “escaping” (e.g., troubles, pressure, daily life, etc.) and “seeking” (e.g., pleasure, knowledge, relaxation, etc.) (Iso-Ahola, 1982). With regard to the leisure and travel of second generation Chinese Americans, perhaps the question is: Are they searching for the same thing through transnational leisure and diaspora tourism? Or is leisure a part of the “home environment” that one is trying to
escape from through traveling? Moreover, for an activity to be considered “transnational,” it should be a central part in the lives of immigrants, which is why scholars focused on activities that took place on a regular basis (Portes, 1999). Within scientific research, a narrow definition was necessary to establish the empirical reality of a social phenomenon (Merton, 1987). Once the existence of transnationalism has been established, the possibility of broader forms of transnationalism can be explored. Based on a narrow definition of transnationalism, border-crossing activities that only happen occasionally are not a part of transnationalism, because they are unlikely to have long-term consequences (Levitt & Waters, 2002). However, findings of this study suggested that taking a trip to one’s homeland, even if it’s once every five years, has more influence on one’s life than everyday leisure activities that occur on a regular basis, perhaps because international travel occurs with lower frequency but requires more time commitment than everyday leisure activities.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand the “lived experience” of second-generation Chinese Americans as they engage in transnational leisure and diaspora tourism, as well as to explore the relationship between second-generation immigrants’ transnational attachment and travel experience in their parents’ country of origin. Using a phenomenological approach, twenty-six second generation Chinese Americans between the ages of 18 to 30 were interviewed about their leisure and travel participation. Major findings are summarized in the following section.

Research Objectives and Major Findings

1) To explore the transnational leisure activities of second-generation Chinese-Americans.

Findings revealed two dichotomous patterns in the transnational leisure activities of the second generation Chinese Americans in this study. While they participate in both contemporary and traditional forms of leisure that are related to Chinese culture, their contemporary transnational leisure activities are usually done individually, while traditional activities usually occur in a group setting. For example, they listen to Chinese pop music and watch Chinese drama alone, and they practice martial arts and take part in dragon boat races as a club. Moreover, activities that are associated with traditional culture tend to have a specific regional focus within China, while contemporary forms of
leisure incorporate other Asian cultures. For example, they learn the traditional dance of
the Dai ethnic group and the language and customs of the Teo Chew area through club
activities, and their interest in contemporary, pop culture related activities (e.g., films,
music, drama, and anime) is pan-Asian and often includes not just Chinese pop culture,
but Taiwanese, Japanese, Korean, and so on.

In addition to the dichotomous patterns in their transnational leisure activities,
their participation also demonstrates a progress from transnational “ways of being” to
transnational “ways of belonging.” Most participants started learning about Chinese
culture from their parents and when they attended Chinese schools in their childhood.
These activities were usually forced upon them and therefore practiced without
comprehending the origins and meanings of these activities. However, after they enter
high school and college, they have more freedom to choose leisure activities according to
their personal preferences. Even though they choose to take part in different activities,
they grow to appreciate the meanings of transnational leisure and how these activities
reflect their identity as a Chinese American.

2) To describe the experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans when they visit
their parents’ country of origin and the different characteristics of their diaspora tourism
trips, such as length, frequency, purpose of the trip, travel group size, travel style, and
travel companions.

With twenty-six participants, the quantitative data from the short questionnaire
cannot be generalized. However, most participants have visited China multiple times
(M=5.3) before the age of 30, and their average duration of stay is long, being approximately three weeks for leisure trips and three months for study abroad trips. Visiting family and relatives, sightseeing, and learning Chinese have been identified as the three main purposes of their diaspora tourism trips to China. As for their preferred style of travel, most participants (n=23) would choose independent travel with family and friends, as opposed to group tours, when they visited China.

3) To investigate how the transnational homeland attachment of second-generation Chinese-Americans may influence their diaspora tourism experience in China.

Being second generation Chinese American, participants gaze at China differently than other tourists. On one hand, they take pride in the rapid modernization of China and were impressed by the convenient public transportation and modern skyscrapers. On the other hand, they express a concern for the loss of historic buildings and architecture that were torn down to accommodate urban development. Moreover, their destination image of China is mostly constructed from the stories told by their parents and what they learned in school, and not so much from the media or their peers. Although they have positive as well as negative experiences in China, they find different ways to justify some of the negative things they encountered, such as explaining why the streets are dirty and traffic condition is bad.

The multitude of dialects in the Chinese language also contributes to the negative travel experience of second generation Chinese Americans. Participants may speak Mandarin, Cantonese, or a local dialect, but even if they were fluent one language, they
still encounter language barriers when they visit other regions in China. They also face communication issues with their local relatives, particularly when their family members, knowing fully that the participants are “Americans,” still choose to use a dialect that they couldn’t understand. Moreover, some participants feel that the local people expect them to speak Chinese, and look down on them if they couldn’t. Therefore, it is their level of competence in the Chinese language in conjunction with the expectations of the locals that leads to negative experiences. Appearance-wise, participants who do not look Chinese have an easier time coping with language barriers, because the locals do not expect them to speak Chinese.

Besides the positives and negatives of diaspora tourism, participants are searching for an authentic experience when they travel in China. They generally prefer to break free from the “tourist bubble,” visit less touristy places, and take an interest in the lives of local people. Most of their memorable experiences in China occur when they are able to enter the “back stage,” to get a glimpse of the unique culture that even the locals may not be able to experience, such as watching the World Cup in a small alley and riding ATVs in Inner Mongolia. Moreover, the study found that having local relatives in China is not always a ticket to experience authentic Chinese life and culture. On the contrary, many participants feel that they were trapped inside a “family bubble” that prevented them from going out and actually interacting with local residents.

Finally, as second generation Chinese Americans, traveling in China allows participants to get a better understanding of their family history. When they see older villages, streets, and buildings in China, they can relate to the way their parents and
grandparents used to live. When they see the current life of their local relatives, they perceive it as an “alternate universe” of the way their life could have been if their parents didn’t migrate. Both the traditional and contemporary lifestyles they witnessed in China are connected to their personal life and give them a greater appreciation of their current life in the United States. In addition, all participants indicated that the U.S. is their current and legal “home,” while they see China as their roots, homeland, and heritage. However, eating Chinese food and staying at the same place for a longer period of time make them feel “at home” in China. In some cases when they are familiar with the local dialect, language also increase their sense of belonging in China. More importantly, the place where they feel most comfortable and “at home” in China is rarely the hometown of their parents. Regardless of whether they visited the region where their parents’ were originally from or not, they can be reminded of “home” when they travel in China by comparing different aspects of China to their hometown or their household in the U.S., which in turn enhance their homeland attachment to China.

4) To examine how the diaspora tourism experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans may also change their behavior, attitude, and attachment towards their homeland after the trip.

After traveling to China and seeing what their parents went through before coming to the United States, second generation Chinese Americans feel closer to their parents and can understand their parents better. Even though some participants didn’t travel with their parents, their experience in China still improved their relationship with
their parents by building a shared topic and interest. They also feel more “Chinese” after
their diaspora tourism experience. While they still identify themselves as “American,”
and specifically “Chinese American,” they become more comfortable with the Chinese
aspect of their bi-culturality, and they learn to see the problems and issues in China from
not only the American perspective, but also the Chinese perspective. Traveling to China
also has an impact on some of their transnational leisure activities after the trips. Some
participants bought CDs in China and listened to more Chinese music afterwards, some
joined Chinese cultural clubs after entering college, and some became more motivated to
learn Chinese. In general, their diaspora tourism experience in China has more influence
on their transnational leisure than the influence of leisure on their travel experience. But
in both transnational leisure and diaspora tourism, there is a transformation from “ways
of being” to “ways of belonging” as participants grew up from childhood to emerging
adulthood.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the body of literature on migration and transnationalism
by examining the transnational leisure activities of second generation immigrants.
Previous studies on transnationalism focused more on economic, political, civil, and
religious practices (e.g., Guarnizo et al., 2003; Levitt, 2001; Portes et al., 2002). There
are fewer studies on the personal and cultural aspects of transnationalism. Scholars have
also categorized transnational practices according to the level of efforts involved and
significant impact achieved, such as “narrow vs. broad” transnationalism (Itzigsohn et al.,
“core vs. expanded” transnationalism (Guarnizo, 2000), and personal transnational ties vs. collective transnational actions (Haller & Landolt, 2005). Although these terminologies may differ, narrow, core, and collective transnational practices are usually considered more important than broad, expanded, and personal transnational activities.

The concept of transnational leisure, which may overlap with cultural transnationalism, is a take on the broad, personal, and non-institutionalized aspect of transnational practices. Compared to other domains in life, such as work and family obligations, leisure activities are more intrinsically motivated and provide people the freedom of choice and self-expression (Kelly, 1987). It is also argued that cultural transnationalism is “more affective oriented and less instrumental than political or economic transnationalism” (Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002, p. 768). Therefore, what second generation immigrants choose to do in their leisure time is not so much for pragmatic purposes but because of an emotional attachment to their homeland. This study on the transnational leisure of second generation Chinese Americans shows that they are interested in both traditional and contemporary Chinese culture, and they participate in activities related to Chinese culture for leisure, not trying to establish connections and networks with people in China. While traditional activities tend to occur in a group setting, modern information and communication technologies allow them to pursue their interest in Chinese pop culture individually. So even if they have some difficulty finding friends who share similar tastes in music and film, they can still keep up-to-date with contemporary Chinese culture through individual pursuits. And perhaps because of the
breadth of information available through the Internet, they can expand their interest and explore the pop culture from other Asian countries as well.

Moreover, one of the defining characteristics of transnational practices is that the activity should take place on a regular basis (Portes, 1999). Comparing the second generation’s leisure experience in the United States and their travel experience in China, the former obviously occurs more frequently than the latter. However, findings show that their diaspora tourism experience has more impact on their lives and identity as a Chinese American after the trip, while their leisure participation exhibit a gradual transformation from transnational “ways of being” to “ways of belonging” and is not as life-changing as their travel experience. Nevertheless, another defining characteristic of transnationalism is that these activities should require a significant amount of time commitment from the participants (Portes, 1999). Therefore, it can be argued that taking a month-long trip to China indicates a much more significant amount of time commitment than, for example, eating Chinese food every day. Examining the transnational leisure and travel experience of second generation Chinese Americans provides an interesting perspective on the criteria for transnational activities.

The notion of “transnational leisure” not only contributes to transnationalism literature, but to leisure research as well. Immigrants generally fall under the category of minority groups and diverse populations. Many studies on the leisure behavior of immigrants were comparative in nature and examined if there were cultural or racial-ethnic differences in leisure behavior and participation (e.g., Carr & Williams, 1993; Floyd & Gramann, 1993; Stodolska & Yi, 2003; van Wel, Linssen, Kort, & Jansen, 1996).
By comparing immigrants to the majority of the population, the focus of study was not on what these immigrants did for leisure, but on why they didn’t or couldn’t participate in certain activities, and the underlying purpose was to increase their leisure participation, such as their involvement in sports or visitation to national parks. On the other hand, the transnational leisure activities of immigrants are what they choose to do for leisure. In the case of Chinese-Americans, the first generation may have some constraints, such as language barriers, which prevent them from taking part in certain leisure activities. However, the second generation usually has a higher level of assimilation than their parents, with the ability and resources to experience all types of American leisure, so their participation in Chinese cultural activities as leisure is a personal choice. Studying the leisure activity of immigrants from a transnationalism perspective provided some interesting findings, which are different from previous studies that focused on the relationship between leisure and assimilation.

This study also contributes to the literature on tourism and specifically heritage tourism. First, diaspora tourism for first generation immigrants involves the concepts of “return” and “homecoming” (Oxfeld & Long, 2004; Stefansson, 2004). They are returning to a previous home and re-connecting with their past. But for the second generation, regardless of whether they consider their parents’ country as “homeland” or not, they are going to a new destination, not coming home. In the case of second generation Chinese Americans, most participants did not have the chance to visit the actual hometown of their parents. Nevertheless, they feel a personal connection to the places they visited in China from the stories told by their parents, when they eat Chinese
food, when they hear a familiar dialect, and when they see things (in China) that remind them of their “home in the U.S.” When they think about their “home” in the U.S., participants can identify a specific hometown where they were born and raised. But when the second generation thinks about China as their “homeland,” “homeland” becomes an abstract concept that includes the country of China in its entirety, as opposed to a specific location on a smaller geographical scale.

Moreover, since the second generation’s attachment to China is not limited to a specific site or their original family home, they are almost creating this imaginary homeland attachment regardless of the locations they visited, which is a unique characteristic of diaspora tourism for second generation immigrants. Poria, Butler, and Airey (2003) argued that the core of heritage tourism is not the physical attributes of the site, but the visitors’ perception of the site as a part of their personal heritage. Likewise, the diaspora tourism experience of the second generation is not about returning to the actual birthplace of their parents, but being able to establish a personal connection to the different places they visited.

Like most tourists, second generation Chinese Americans have their own preferences, likes, and dislikes when they travel in China. Most participants indicate that they had a positive experience in China, and would visit again. What makes diaspora tourists different from other tourists is that they feel an obligation to view the destination—their homeland—in a positive manner, so they try to find different ways to justify their negative experiences. In addition, when they gaze at the destination, they are looking for similarities, not differences. According to Urry (1990), “tourism results from
a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary” (p. 11).

What tourists choose to gaze at when they are on vacation is in contrast to their experience within the home and paid work. However, the Chinese American participants in this study are gazing at similarities when they travel in China. They go to China looking for things that remind them of “home” in the U.S., which demonstrates an interesting scenario of the tourist gaze.

**Practical Implications**

There are also some practical implications of this study for the tourism industry. First, the transnational attachment of second generation Chinese Americans is not region or hometown specific. From the destination’s perspective, it is not necessarily a good thing when tourists have too strong of an attachment to a particular location. When tourists are very loyal to one destination, other destinations would not be able to target them and try to bring them in. So if the second generation were only interested in visiting the village where their parents were from, other cities and regions in China cannot benefit from their diaspora tourism activities. But in the case of second generation Chinese Americans, the boundaries of their notion of “homeland” are blurry; they identify with China in its entirety, not just the hometown or birthplace of their parents. Therefore, tourism businesses and organizations in different regions in China can market to the second generation in general, and not limit themselves to the immigrants who were originally from the region. However, it is important for the destination to create an environment that can enhance diaspora tourists’ sense of homeland attachment. One
major challenge for the tourism industry in China is the issue of linguistic diversity and its impact on the travel experience of these second generation diaspora tourists. For example, can Beijing appeal to the Cantonese-speaking Chinese Americans and make them feel at home?

This study also revealed some of the visitors’ preferences in the context of diaspora tourism. While second generation Chinese Americans take pride in the modernization of China, they value the traditional culture and historic buildings that are being replaced. As observed by one participant: “It’s like China is trying to redo the whole China into Shanghai!”, and that is not something they want to see. It is necessary for the Chinese tourism industry to preserve more historic sites and traditional architecture for these diaspora tourists, and for other visitors as well. On the other hand, China has a lot of famous landmarks and UNESCO-designated World Heritage Sites, which are being preserved. The challenge, however, is to make these world famous tourist attractions less “touristy.” The crowdedness and “touristy” atmosphere of these historic landmarks in China is what prevents diaspora tourists from feeling a personal connection to the area.

Moreover, although Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong are the three places most often visited among the participants in this study, they also enjoyed visiting rural areas. They are interested in the lives of common people, and just taking a stroll in the village and seeing local farmers hard at work are some of their most memorable experiences. With regard to their interaction with locals, they don’t like talking to the vendors in the night markets, who are trying to get their money. What they enjoy is a nod and a friendly
smile from the local farmers, through which they feel a genuine interpersonal connection. They are also attracted by the “back stage” experience, where they can see some unique aspects of the local lifestyle that may not even be available to local residents. The question is, however, whether these personal experiences should be random encounters, or should they be incorporated into tourism planning?

**Limitations**

This study has several limitations. First, in order to examine both transnational leisure activities as well as diaspora tourism experience of second generation Chinese Americans, only those who have traveled to China before were interviewed. By focusing on this specific group of interest, this study fails to explore the experience of those who do not have the means or opportunities to travel to China. The transnational leisure activities and pre-trip destination image of the people who didn’t have a chance to visit their homeland were not included in this study. Second, this study focuses on second generation immigrants between the ages of 18 to 30, so the results cannot be generalized to other immigrant generations and age groups. With twenty-six participants, study findings are not generalizable to all second generation Chinese Americans. However, the themes and patterns of behavior in their transnational leisure and diaspora tourism experience are transferable to other people within the second generation Chinese American population.

Moreover, the findings of this study are limited to Chinese Americans, and not immigrants of other national origins. While the research objectives and methodology of
this study can be duplicated in studies on second generation immigrants of other national origins, there are some differences between China and other “homeland” countries that prevent the generalization of study findings to immigrants from other countries. For one thing, the regional differences and linguistic complexity within a country as big as China has an influence on one’s diaspora tourism experience. The multitude of dialects in the Chinese language is one of the main causes of the second generation’s negative experience in China. The 292 living languages being used in China currently cannot be applied to other countries (Lewis, 2009). For another, within the second generation Chinese American population, this age cohort (18 to 30 years old) has witnessed the rapid development and modernization of China as they are growing up. The Beijing Olympics of 2008 and Shanghai World Expo of 2010 are two mega events that placed China on the international stage, and they took place as most participants in this study are in high school and college, going from being teenagers to early adulthood. Given the context, their transnational leisure and diaspora tourism experience may be different from the experiences of immigrants from other countries.

Finally, most participants in this study grew up and went to college on the west coast of the United States, where there is a larger Asian population. Whether the participants grew up in Chinese ethnic enclaves or a more diversified environment may influence their perception of and familiarity with China. Their hometowns and their school surroundings also provide the setting for their transnational leisure activities. For universities with a large Asian American student population, there will be student organizations for different Asian nationalities. For universities with a large Chinese
American student population, their Chinese cultural student organizations can diversify and further divide into specific regions and different types of activities. But in schools without an array of Chinese cultural student clubs, the students’ choice of transnational leisure activities may be limited, or become more of a personal interest rather than a group activity. Therefore, the results of this study are limited to universities with a larger Asian American student population.

**Future Research**

Reflecting upon the limitations of this study, there are a few suggestions for future research. First, given the regional and linguistic diversity in China, future studies can focus on diaspora tourism to specific regions. It would be interesting to examine areas less populated by the dominant Han ethnic group, but by some minority groups. There may be something different about being from a minor ethnic group within China, and how much of their ethnic identity and homeland attachment is passed on to the second generation. For example, UCLA has the Association of Hmong Students and the Teo Chew Association (TCA), but the participants who are in the TCA have never visited the Teo Chew area in China. It seems like their transnational leisure activities can be region-specific, but their diaspora tourism experience is not. Future studies can explore this issue by examining diaspora tourism to specific regions. Another interesting topic for future research is to compare different diaspora tourism experiences. One way to achieve this is to focus on specific tourism sites or attractions in China so as to compare the visitor experience of different groups, such as the first generation versus second generation, or
diaspora tourists versus international tourists. It is also possible to compare the experience of Chinese Americans with immigrants of other national origins, or compare the experiences of overseas Chinese living in different parts of the world.

In addition to focusing on specific sites, regions, and populations within China, future research can also explore diaspora tourism to other countries. Besides the Jewish, African, and Chinese diaspora, international migration occurs between countries all over the world. The way migrants remain connected to their homeland and the different forms of transnational leisure and diaspora tourism would vary based on different immigrant-sending and receiving nations. If future studies were to explore the experience of immigrants from other countries, it would be interesting to examine places where diaspora tourism trips are unavailable or prohibited because of one’s refugee status or other political concerns. If some second generation immigrants can never visit their homeland, it might be even more worthwhile to study their transnational leisure activities, image of their homeland (without actual visitation experience), and desire to visit a homeland that no longer exists or is currently inaccessible.

It is also possible to look beyond recent migration. For example, do the people of Brazil see the Portuguese as their ancestors or former colonizers? And if they were to travel to Portugal, would they consider it their ancestral homeland? Historically, imperialism and colonialism have led to large-scale migration. Although the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is very different from that of the diaspora and their homeland, there exists a historic and cultural connection between former empires and colonies, and such a sense of shared history and cultural familiarity may also
influence people’s travel experience. Hall (2000) argued that “ex-imperial capitals” may still perform important commercial and cultural roles for their former imperial territories, and it would be interesting to explore the tourism implications of this relationship. In the recent era, globalization and cultural imperialism have also changed people’s attachment to different places. For example, the Japanese cultural imperialism in Asia resulted in a transnational consumption of Japanese culture in East and Southeast Asian countries (Iwabuchi, 2004). The effect of cultural imperialism on one’s choice of leisure activities and travel destinations, and specifically one’s experience when visiting these culturally dominant countries, may be somewhat similar to the transnational leisure and travel experience of immigrants, and could be an interesting topic for future research.

Finally, nine out of the twenty-six participants in this study have been on travel study or study abroad trips to China, where they take language classes in the morning and travel on the weekends or in the afternoon. Thus, it is suggested that future studies can investigate this combination of educational tourism and diaspora tourism. While it is debatable whether short-term study abroad trips can be considered tourism or not, findings of this study revealed that a lot of what the participants know about China came from their classes in high school and college. Therefore, an educational setting plays a role in their perception and destination image of China. It would be interesting to see if a more educational style of travel would provide a different diaspora tourism experience or have more influence on second generation immigrants than leisure travel. Moreover, the participants in this study were college students or recent graduates during the time of data collection, so a lot of their leisure activities took place in a school setting. A longitudinal
study on their transnational leisure and diaspora tourism experiences at later stages in life would foster a better understanding of the transnational lifestyle of second-generation immigrants as they leave school, enter the work force, start a new family, and continue on the journey of life. Such study could not only examine the changes in their transnational leisure and travel, but also explore the possibility of second-generation transnationalism being passed on to the third generation.
APPENDIX A: E-mail Recruitment Letter

Dear (First Name),

Hi. My name is Wei-Jue Huang and I am a PhD student working under the supervision of Dr. William C. Norman in the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management at Clemson University. I am contacting you because you are a member of the Association of Chinese Americans at UCLA, and your contact information is listed on their website.

Dr. Norman and I are conducting a study on the leisure and travel experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans, and we are currently seeking Chinese-American students who have had the experience of traveling in China to participate in this study. Specifically, we would like to ask you some questions regarding your leisure activities, your involvement in the Association of Chinese Americans, and your travel experience in China. The interview process will take approximately 30-45 minutes. Your participation in this study will help us understand the life and experience of Chinese-Americans as well as the relationship between immigrants and their country of origin.

We would like to assure you that the study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (864-656-6460). If you are interested in participating, please contact us at weijueh@clemson.edu or 864-985-3835. We will then send you a confirmation e-mail to discuss about the time and location of the interview. We appreciate your willingness to consider this request and thank you in advance for your help in understanding the leisure and travel experience of Chinese-Americans.

Sincerely,

Wei-Jue Huang
weijueh@clemson.edu
Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management
Clemson University
APPENDIX B: Interview Guide

- What type of leisure activities do you do that is related to China or Chinese-American culture? (e.g., pop culture, food, traditional holidays, student organizations, Internet-based activities) Who do you usually do these activities with?
- Do these activities play an important role in your current life? Did these activities play an important role in your childhood and upbringing?

- Tell me about your personal travel experiences. When, where and how much traveling have you done in the last five years?
- Tell me about your travel experience in China. What did you like and dislike about your trips?
- Which part of the trip exceeded or fell short of your expectations? Where did your expectations or your knowledge of China come from?

- Thinking about the different places you visited in China:
  - Which place was the most memorable for you?
  - Which place do you think can best represent China or Chinese people and culture?
  - Where did you feel the most comfortable or “at home”? Which place made you feel uncomfortable or like an outsider?
  - Was there a place where you felt a personal connection or experienced some type of emotion (e.g., sadness, pride, anger)?

- If you were to compare China and the U.S., how do you feel about these two countries?
- Do you consider the U.S. your “home” or “homeland”?
- Do you consider China your “home” or “homeland”?

- Does the trip influence the way you feel about China? Does the trip influence the way you feel about yourself or your family?
- Do you feel obligated at all to go to China? Would you prefer to visit China rather than visiting other countries? Have your visits to China influenced (positively or negatively) your leisure travel within the United States?
- Do you have relatives in other Asian countries or other parts of the world? Do you have a stronger preference for visiting those countries rather than visiting other places?
APPENDIX C: Short Questionnaire

ID#_______

Section I: Tripographics

1. How many times have you ever traveled to China in your whole life? _____ times
   How many times have you visited China in the past 5 years? _____ times

2. How old were you when you first visited China? Age: ______
   How old were you during your most recent trip to China? Age: ______

3. Considering your past trips to China, how long did you typically stay? _____ days
   Considering your most recent trip to China, how long did you stay? _____ days

4. What was your main purpose for visiting China? ______________________

5. How many people were in your travel group in your most recent trip to China,
   including yourself (but not including your local relatives in China)? ______

6. Do you currently have relatives living in China? □Yes □No
   Did your Chinese relatives accompany you when you traveled in China? □Yes □No

7. Did you go on any group/bus tours when you traveled in China? □Yes □No
   When traveling in China, would you prefer: □Group/bus tours □Independent travel

Section II: Demographics

8. In what year were you born? _____

9. What is your gender? □Male □Female □Prefer not to answer

10a. How well do you speak Chinese?
    □ None at all □ A little □ Well □ Very well

10b. How well do you understand Chinese?
    □ None at all □ A little □ Well □ Very well

10c. How well do you read Chinese?
    □ None at all □ A little □ Well □ Very well

10d. How well do you write Chinese?
    □ None at all □ A little □ Well □ Very well

11. Which category best describes your total household income in 2011 before taxes?
    □ Less than $24,999 □ $25,000 to $34,999 □ $35,000 to $49,999
    □ $50,000 to $74,999 □ $75,000 to $99,999 □ $100,000 to $149,999
    □ $150,000 to $199,999 □ $200,000 or more □ Do not wish to answer
APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form

Information about Being in a Research Study

Clemson University

Homeland Travel and Transnational Attachment of Second-Generation Chinese-Americans

Description of the Study and Your Part in It
Dr. William C. Norman and Wei-Jue Huang are inviting you to take part in a research study. Dr. Norman is a Professor at Clemson University. Wei-Jue is a student at Clemson University, running this study with the help of Dr. Norman. The purpose of this research is to understand the leisure and travel experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans.

Your part in the study will be to complete a short questionnaire and an interview about your everyday leisure activities and your travel experience in China. It will take you about 30-45 minutes to be in this study.

Risks and Discomforts
We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study.

Possible Benefits
We do not know of any way you would benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, this research may help us to understand the travel experience of Chinese-Americans when they visit their country of origin.

Audio Recording of Study Activities
Interviews may be recorded using audio recording to assist with the accuracy of your responses. The audio recording will be transcribed, and a copy of the transcript will be emailed to you, if necessary. These records will be reviewed only by persons involved in the study and used only for academic purposes. The records will be erased five years after the study has been completed. You have the right to refuse the audio recording. Please select one of the following options:

I consent to audio recording: Yes _____ No _____
Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality
We will do everything we can to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that you were in this study or what information we collected about you in particular. Your name and e-mail address will not be recorded in association with the survey and interview data. The information will be stored on a password-protected, secure computer and will be destroyed approximately five years after the study is complete. All information will be kept confidential and will be reported in an anonymous fashion.

Choosing to Be in the Study
You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. William Norman at Clemson University at 864-656-2060. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

Consent

I have read this form and have been allowed to ask any questions I might have. I agree to take part in this study.

Participant’s signature: ____________________________ Date: ___________

A copy of this form will be given to you.
REFERENCES


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