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# Homecoming or Tourism?
# Diaspora Tourism Experience of Second-Generation Immigrants

**Abstract:** Diaspora tourism is often considered a form of "homecoming," but for the children of immigrants who are born in the new country, the question remains as to whether they perceive their parents' homeland as "home" or destination. Moreover, advancements in transportation and communication technologies allow contemporary immigrants to maintain transnational ties to their homeland, which in turn may affect the nature of diaspora tourism. The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experience of second-generation immigrants when they travel to their ancestral homeland, and explore the extent to which second-generation transnationalism shapes their diaspora tourism experiences. Using a phenomenological approach, twenty-six second-generation Chinese-Americans who had the experience of traveling in China were interviewed. Four themes were identified from semi-structured interviews: Language and Appearance, Search for Authenticity, Family History, and Sense of "Home." Proficiency in their parental language was found to be a main cause of negative experiences, yet occasionally a source of pride and attachment. Their search for authentic experiences was not unlike other tourists, while familial obligations sometimes limited their experience. Traveling back to the homeland not only allowed them to understand their parents and family history, but also reflect upon their life through experiencing contemporary China. Lastly, as the transnational attachment of second-generation immigrants was not rooted in a specific locale, they could feel connected to the homeland without actually visiting their family's place of origin. Findings contribute to transnationalism and diaspora tourism literature by comparing first and second-generation immigrants and identifying the difference between contemporary transmigrants and classic diaspora groups with regard to their diaspora tourism experience.

**Keywords:** diaspora tourism, transnationalism, place attachment, second-generation immigrants, homecoming, Chinese diaspora

## Introduction

People tend to remember and long for places from their past, be it their hometown, alma mater, or childhood home (Oxfeld & Long, 2004). In the past, international migrants often found it difficult, if not impossible, to re-visit places from "the good old days," given the geographic distance, political context, and economic considerations. However, recent technologies have enabled contemporary immigrants to be "transnational" in establishing virtual and physical connections with their homeland (Portes, 1999). As international tourism becomes more convenient and affordable, diasporic communities have more opportunities to visit their country of origin, and what used to be an "once-in-a-lifetime trip is now often an annual event" (Kasinitz et al., 2008, p. 258).

The phenomenon of people with migrant ancestry traveling to their homeland has been associated with many types of tourism, including "personal heritage tourism" (Timothy, 1997), "ethnic tourism" (King, 1994), "ethnic reunion" (Stephenson, 2002), "ancestral tourism" (Fowler, 2003), "genealogy tourism" (Meethan, 2004), "legacy tourism" (McCain & Ray, 2003), "pilgrimage tourism" (Schramm, 2004), "roots-tourism" (Basu, 2004), "diaspora tourism" (Holsey, 2004), and "visiting friends and relatives tourism" (Uriely, 2010). While all of these types of tourism have different meanings and foci, elements of each of them can be associated with one's personal diasporic identity, and "diaspora tourism" has become a broader term to describe the tourism activities produced, consumed, and experienced by people in diaspora (Coles & Timothy, 2004).

First-generation immigrants are often overwhelmed with nostalgia when traveling back to their country of origin. Their children, however, may or may not share the same experience. Being born and raised in their current homeland, second-generation immigrants[i] are visiting a *new* place when they go on diaspora tourism trips, and the question remains as to whether they perceive their parents' homeland as "home" or a foreign destination. Previous studies have found some evidence in support of second-generation transnationalism (e.g., Haller & Landolt, 2005; Kasinitz et al., 2008; Rumbaut, 2002), which has significant implications for diaspora tourism. The transnational ties between second-generation immigrants and their parents' homeland illustrate the possibility of establishing a connection to a place that one has never been. Attachment and loyalty to a destination are usually formed after repeat visitations and satisfying experiences (Lee, Graefe, & Burns, 2007; Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010). Second-generation immigrants, however, may feel attached to their parents' homeland before visiting it. Their sense of loyalty towards the homeland/destination may be based on emotional attachment or sense of obligation. Either way, how do their transnational ties shape their experience when they actually set foot into the country?

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experience of second-generation immigrants when they travel to their ancestral homeland, and explore the extent to which second-generation transnationalism shapes their diaspora tourism experiences. Specifically,

this study focuses on the experience of Chinese-Americans as they are the earliest Asian immigrants to the U.S. and the largest ethnic group within the Asian-American population to this day (Marger, 2012). Moreover, the target population is further limited to second-generation immigrants between the ages of 18 and 30. This life stage, known as "emerging adulthood," is important to the children of immigrants as they determine their identities and discover their roles in the greater society (Arnett, 2000; Takeshita, 2007). As young immigrants search for a sense of belonging, many will turn to their family origin for guidance, so a trip back to the land of their ancestors is not only a tourism experience but often a rite-of-passage (Di Giovine, 2009). The unique nature of this age segment differentiates their experience from that of their parents and older immigrant cohorts.

## Literature Review

As contemporary forms of mobility, tourism and migration interact with each other (Williams & Hall, 2000b). Tourism generates labor migration and consumption-led migration, and migration leads to various forms of tourism, such as immigrants traveling back to their homeland and folks from "home" visiting the new country (Coles, Duval, & Hall, 2005; Williams & Hall, 2000a). Among different types of migration-induced tourism, "diaspora tourism" usually refers to people of migrant origins visiting their ancestral homeland (Timothy & Coles, 2004). To understand the characteristics of diaspora tourism, it is necessary to first examine the notions of diaspora and transnationalism.

### *Diaspora and Transnationalism*

"Diaspora" originally refers to the exile and dispersion of Jews from the land of Israel (Cohen, 1997). Over the years, the term has grown to include many ethnic minority groups who relocate to a foreign land yet bond over a strong sense of community and attachment to their country of origin (Safran, 1991; Sheffer, 1986). Shuval (2000) identified two important characteristics of diaspora: alienation in the host country and desire for eventual return. Feeling alienated, people in diaspora long to return to their homeland, even after death (Mitchell, 1997). Contemporary use of the word diaspora has grown to include many population movements, and thus sometimes considered synonymous with the notion of "transnational communities" (Castles & Miller, 2009). While diaspora is an older term originating from Greek (e.g., Dubnow, 1931), transnationalism is a relatively newer concept used to describe "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch, Glick-Schiller, & Blanc, 1994, p. 7). The emergence of transnationalism signifies a paradigm shift in the lives of contemporary immigrants, from the one-and-only path of assimilation to a transnational lifestyle that crosses national borders. Transnationalism could be sustained through economic, political, religious, or cultural activities (Portes, Haller, & Guarnizo, 2002), as long as they: 1)

occur across national borders, 2) take place on a regular basis, and 3) require a significant amount of time commitment (Portes, 1999). With the help of modern technology, immigrants can now maintain virtual and physical contacts with their country of origin and strengthen their ties to the homeland.

Although diaspora and transnationalism literature both support the bond between immigrants and their homeland, the two concepts have different implications for diaspora tourism. Traditionally associated with forcible dispersion, the word “diaspora” arouses emotions of nostalgia and homelessness, while “transnationalism” often occurs in the context of voluntary migration (Castles & Miller, 2009). In addition, feeling alienated in the host society, people in diaspora are united as a community, while transmigrants could be successfully assimilated and maintain transnational ties on an individual level (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004; Sheffer, 2006). For voluntary migrants who have settled in the new country, transnationalism involves traveling back and forth regularly between one’s societies of origin and settlement, not a permanent return (Kasinitz et al., 2008). For classic diaspora groups, the homeland is an ideal place to which they cannot return, which not only reinforces their longing for “home,” but makes homecoming a once-in-a-lifetime experience (Shuval, 2000). However, as the concept of diaspora has grown to include diverse groups, it should be noted that not all diaspora groups long for permanent return, and nor do all members of a diasporic community share the same desire to return, especially the later-generations (Cohen, 1997; Tsuda, 2009).

***Diaspora Tourism***

Both diaspora and transnationalism theory illustrate the need for immigrants to visit their homeland. While the desire to remain connected to one’s roots may be the same, diaspora tourism experiences differ due to diverse migration histories and national origins. For the African diaspora, a journey back to “Mother Africa” to visit the historic sites of slave trade is a way for them to make sense of the tragic past and gain a sense of pride (Bruner, 1996; Ebron, 1999; Holsey, 2004; Schramm, 2004). For diasporic Jews, diaspora tourism often takes the form of educational group tours, allowing them to consider the issues of religion and identity in an all-Jewish environment (Cohen, 2004; Cohen, 2008; Ioannides & Ioannides, 2004). Supported by the Israeli government, such tours help to reinforce the connection between Israel and Jewish communities around the world (Di Giovine, 2009). The Chinese government also sponsors summer programs for young overseas Chinese, not only to instill in them a sense of Chinese nationalism but also to encourage material contributions (Louie, 2000). For other immigrant communities, especially recent migration waves, diaspora tourism can be less institutionalized and more family oriented, with purposes such as visiting family and relatives (Uriely, 2010), participating in ethnic family reunion (Stephenson, 2002), and taking part in family rituals (Long, 2004).

Compared to other groups, diaspora tourism to China has been less studied. Feng and Page (2000) investigated the outbound travel patterns of Chinese-New Zealanders, revealing that China was their most popular destination and recent immigrants had a higher propensity to visit China than earlier immigrants. Exploring diaspora tourism from the destination perspective, Lew and Wong (2002) noted that 15% of the foreign tourists in China were ethnic Chinese, and those residing in America had higher expenditure than those from Southeast Asia. Another study by Lew and Wong (2005) focused on overseas Chinese visitors in Hong Kong. Findings indicated that overseas Chinese residing within Asian countries was the larger group in terms of visitor numbers, but overseas Chinese living in long-haul, non-Chinese cultures had a stronger propensity to reconnect with their Chinese-ness than those residing in Asia. Taking geographic distance into account, it is not surprising that the Chinese diaspora in Asia could visit China more frequently and had higher visitor numbers. However, the Chinese diaspora in western countries had higher expenditure and a stronger desire to reconnect with their homeland.

***Place Attachment***

The transnational ties between immigrants and their homeland could be examined through place attachment theory. According to Williams et al. (1992), place attachment consists of two dimensions. *Place dependence* refers to a functional attachment to a place that can satisfy one's specific needs, and *place identity* is a symbolic or psychological attachment to a place that reflects one's self and sociocultural identity. While functional attachment is maintained through experience and interaction with a place, symbolic place attachment can be constructed through individual perception and imagination (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). As such, the attachment between diasporas and their homeland may be more symbolic than functional, especially for second-plus generations who do not have the actual experience of living in the homeland.

Besides dimensionality, place attachment research also considers the boundary of a place. When someone is "going home," "home" could refer to an actual house, hometown, or home country. Place attachment occurs on various geographic levels, including site-specific, area-specific, physiography-specific, and even specific environments, such as wilderness (Williams et al., 1992). Moreover, immigrants have two "homes"—their ancestral homeland and their current country of residence. According to Hammond (2004), "home" includes "locations of various levels of scale, including an individual dwelling, a village, a territory, region, or nation-state" (p. 37). 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' dual loyalty and attachment, diaspora tourism may influence their relationship to both "home" and "homeland." Manzo (2003) suggested that one's relationship to "home" would influence how

s/he felt about the place "away," and vice versa. To better understand diasporic communities, it is important to examine how transnational attachment changes through diaspora tourism.

Past experience and activity involvement have been identified as two main antecedents of place attachment (Backlund & Williams, 2003; Gross & Brown, 2008; Hou, Lin, & Morais, 2005; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2003; Lee, 2001; Lee, Backman, & Backman, 1997). Past experience is often conceptualized as number of visits or length of residency at a place. In general, the more time spent at a place, the stronger one's sense of attachment to it (Williams & Vaske, 2003). Activity involvement refers to one's level of interest in an activity and how essential an activity is in one's life (Kyle et al., 2003). Given the importance of past experience and activity involvement in the formation of place attachment, when second-generation immigrants visit their homeland for the first time, what factors contribute to their transnational attachment? Backlund & 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 learn about the homeland from their parents, teachers, peers, and the media, all of which shape their perception and place attachment.

The experience of diaspora tourists is influenced by their ties to two countries. Second-generation diaspora tourism is further complicated by their lack of past experience at the homeland/destination. For Chinese-Americans, the geographic and cultural distance between home and host societies also presents a unique context for transnational attachment. Therefore, this study focuses on second-generation Chinese-Americans, which highlights the contrast between home and homeland and the possibility of developing destination loyalty and attachment prior to actual visitation.

## Methodology

This study examines the diaspora tourism experience of second-generation immigrants by adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Based on the philosophical assumption that "we can only know what we experience," phenomenology is the study of lived experience and life world phenomenon as they appear through human consciousness (Laverty, 2003; Patton, 2002). There are two main traditions in phenomenology: transcendental versus hermeneutic phenomenology (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Transcendental phenomenology is a search for the *essence* and underlying structures of lived experiences (Creswell, 1998). It is positivistic in believing that there is "truth" to be found. To reveal the truth objectively, researchers must rely on bracketing out their preconceptions and look for universal structures within the data. Hermeneutic phenomenology, on the other hand, focuses on understanding the *meaning* of an experience within the sociocultural context. Following a constructivist paradigm, hermeneutic phenomenology sees individuals 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 (Obenour, 1999).

The diaspora tourism experience of contemporary, second-generation immigrants is different from that of their parents as well as classic diaspora groups. A phenomenological inquiry not only describes one's experience but situates its meaning within the society. As part of the hermeneutic circle, a person's historicality, background, and culture that were handed down in turn shape the way s/he interpret and understand the world (Laverty, 2003). Rather than investigating tourist experience at a specific site, this study focuses on people—the personal narratives of second-generation Chinese-Americans and their perspectives on their homeland, traveling, and bi-cultural identity. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain lifeworld descriptions from participants' viewpoints (Kvale, 1996). Through open conversation, interviewees share their thoughts and experiences, while the interviewer guides the flow of conversation. The researcher's own observation and knowledge of relevant literature allow the researcher to unfold the meanings of participants' experiences, and co-construct an *intersubjective* understanding of diaspora tourism (King & Horrocks, 2010). Diaspora and transnationalism are used as theoretical frameworks to help interpret participants' experiences and providing meaningful descriptions of diaspora tourism in the context of China.

***Sampling and Data Collection***

The target population was second-generation Chinese-Americans between the ages of 18 and 30 who had visited China. Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. Research has shown that 95.5% of second-generation Chinese-Americans were "currently attending college" around the age of 24 (Zhou & Xiong, 2005). Therefore, the first few participants were contacted through a Chinese-American student organization at a university in southern California. Afterwards, new participants were recruited through snowball sampling of existing participants. In the end, 26 interviews were conducted from June to August, 2011. Data collection concluded after the point of data saturation.

Interviews were designed to capture the tourism experience of participants as well as their feelings towards the homeland and bi-cultural identity. An interview guide was developed based on relevant literature, and questions were pilot-tested among a convenience sample of Asian-American students to ensure that the questions were clear and comprehensible. Questions were then revised according to expert opinions and feedbacks received from pilot-test participants. Specifically, interview questions include:

-Thinking about your travel experience in China:

--what did you like and dislike?

--which place was the most memorable?

--which place can best represent China/Chinese culture?

--where did you feel the most comfortable or “at home”?

--which place made you feel uncomfortable or like an outsider?

-How do you feel about China and the U.S.? Where would you consider as your home/homeland?

-Did the trip influence how you feel about: China/yourself/your family?

-Do you feel obligated to visit China? Would you prefer to visit China more than other countries?

All interviews were conducted in English, with occasional phrases or proper nouns in Chinese. The interview time ranged from 30 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes, with an average of one hour. Prior to the interviews, a one-page questionnaire was given to participants to gather demographic and tripographic information, such as frequency, length of stay, group size, and purpose of the trip.

### *Data Analysis*

To process the data, 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. The coding process consisted of three stages: descriptive coding, interpretive coding, and overarching themes. First, transcripts were read and highlighted, and descriptive codes were defined. Second, descriptive codes were clustered to form meaningful interpretative units. Third, interpretive codes are integrated and developed into overarching themes by comparing and analyzing their relationships. In order to obtain meaningful interpretations of the data, it is also necessary to establish valid connections between findings and relevant literature (King & Horrocks, 2010).

To enhance credibility and dependability, this study employed theory triangulation and expert opinion (Patton, 2002). Diaspora, transnationalism, and place attachment theory were all used to provide counter-perspectives and explain the dynamic relationship between immigrants and their homeland. The opinions of academic experts in relevant fields were also sought in the research process, and their feedbacks were incorporated prior to data collection and after preliminary analysis.

## Findings

The short questionnaire provided information on participants’ demographics and diaspora tourism tripographics. The 26 participants consisted of 12 males and 14 females, with an average age of 21.8. All participants were born in the U.S. with at least one foreign-born Chinese parent. On average, they took 3.68 trips to China at the time of data collection. Based on travel purpose and additional interview information, there are three types of diaspora tourism trips: 1) sightseeing tours with family, 2) independent family trips to visit relatives or attend family events, and 3) travel study programs held by their university. For

trip duration and group size, the average length of stay of leisure/family trips (n=17) was 21.2 day, with a group size of 5.3, while the average length of stay of travel study trips (n=9) was 84.8 days, with a group size of 11.9 people. Besides the basic tripographics of second-generation diaspora tourism, the interviews provided in-depth descriptions of their experience. Specifically, four themes emerged from the qualitative analysis: *language and appearance*, *search for authenticity*, *family history*, and *sense of "home."*

***Language and Appearance***

Proficiency in their parents' language played a crucial role in shaping second-generation diaspora tourism. Not being able to speak Chinese has been identified by participants as a main cause of their negative experiences. Frank had problems at a local foot massage place when the masseuse only spoke Mandarin: "*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*" (1 trip). Lane, whose parents came from Hong Kong, was fluent in Cantonese. Her experience in Hong Kong was much better than in Beijing:

> *In Hong Kong I feel like everything is pretty at home for me, just going out and talking to people, anywhere I go. But in China, whenever I had to speak to someone in Chinese, then I just feel like a foreigne*r. *It's just really hard for me to communicate with anyone in Beijing.* (5 trips)

*Appearance*. Participants' language proficiency was also perceived differently because of their appearance. Those who *looked* Chinese would be expected to speak the language, but those with a "foreign" look would be forgiven when they spoke bad Chinese. Jay, who was half-Caucasian, said that locals were impressed when he used simple Chinese, but his friends who "*look more Chinese, but don't speak at all*" would "*get all embarrassed when people talk to them, because they don't know or can't read Chinese*" (2 trips). As a result, those who looked more Chinese felt they were treated differently compared to their non-Chinese-looking counterparts. As observed by Leah: "*For the Caucasians, the locals would take pictures with them, 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?'*" (7 trips).

*Local Dialects*. The different dialects in Chinese added to the complexity of one's travel experience. Participants fluent in one Chinese language/dialect still encountered unpleasant situations when they visited other regions. Matt, of Teo-Chew ancestry, said that Teo-Chew

was actually his first language. However, when he traveled 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*" (1 trip). In the rare cases when participants spoke the right dialect at the right place, they enjoyed surprising the locals. 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*" (10 trips). Sam, who spoke Taishan-ese, also took great pride in being able to speak the dialect and felt at home in the Taishan region:

> *A lot of times they have this preconception that us ABCs [American-Born Chinese] cannot speak Chinese. So when I start speaking Chinese, especially when I go back to the local area where my parents and grandparents lived, and you speak their dialect. They are happy*. (3 trips)

***Search for Authenticity***

*Backstage Experiences*. When visiting the homeland, participants pursued authentic, "backstage" experiences, not touristy encounters (MacCannell, 1973). For example, they chose to visit the "*not as touristy*" sections of the Great Wall, or a local dim sum place that was "*not super clean*" but "*more authentic*." Rather than visiting famous landmarks in China, participants enjoyed going to everyday places and interacting locals. Jay described his experience on a study abroad trip:

> *I played basketball at the Beijing Normal University, and I would talk to people on the court in Chinese. They would tell us some stuff, and we made some pretty good friends. 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.* (2 trips)

Dawn also had an authentic experience when she spent time with local Chinese tutors:

> *One of the most rewarding things I did was that I went to an underground rock concert. My friend's tutor was really into rock concerts. They are underground, so it's the things you don't really know about. I really valued the cultural experiences I had in China: the way they act, things they eat, the games they play, the music that they listen to.* (7 trips)

In another scenario, Ethan was in China during the World Cup, and he enjoyed: "*In the alleys, people would have a small TV and watch the World Cup together. So we would stand there with a bunch of guys, and beers. It's like the same medium, but seeing it in a different culture*" (2 trips). Other memorable "backstage" experiences included going inside the kitchen of a restaurant to make dumplings and renting ATVs from locals in Inner Mongolia. Interestingly, all "backstage" experiences took place during travel study trips, while trips to visit local relatives were quite different.

*Family Bubble*. Many participants had relatives still living in China, who could have given

them access into the local culture and lifestyle (Uriely, 2010). However, those who went to visit relatives were often trapped in a "family bubble" which prevented them from venturing outside. Some participants went back to attend family events, so they stayed with their relatives the whole time. As Helen described:

> *We didn't get a lot of time to 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.* (3 trips)

Since their relatives were busy with event preparations, there was no one to show them around. Moreover, the parents usually preferred to stay home and spend time with their relatives. According to 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 for a little bit*" (5 trips). Lane's mom took her to Mainland China for quick visits:

> *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. 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.* (5 trips)

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 more authentic in the sense that one is *living* with the locals. However, these participants felt trapped, as they didn't get the chance to experience Chinese culture.

While Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) is considered a form of tourism, VFR tourists are expected to engage in consumer activities outside of the homes of their hosts (Uriely, 2010). First-generation immigrants are more likely to purchase homeland goods and contribute to the local economy than their children. For immigrant parents, spending time with extended family is a critical component of the trip (Duval, 2004). The second generation, however, has a more "tourism" motive to venture outside and explore the destination. The notion of "family bubble" points to a difference between first and second-generation diaspora tourism. Although second-generation immigrants on VFR trips have fewer chances to engage in tourist behavior, they have the tourist mindset, while the motive of the first generation is more VFR than tourism.

*Authenticity Dilemma*. In addition to authentic cultural experiences, participants pursued another form of racial and ethnic authenticity. Minority groups have the need to express their racial/ethnic authenticity (Warikoo, 2007). The border-crossing and bi-cultural lifestyle of immigrants may result in an "authenticity dilemma" and lack of belonging (Tuan, 1999).

Although participants recognized their bi-culturality, the "American" part of their identity dominates, and they were less familiar with their Chinese-ness. Diaspora tourism

allowed them to get in touch with China and reinforce their bi-cultural identity. For example, Josh described: "Standing on the Great Wall and just looking over, like this is my culture, my ethnicity's background. I didn't know anything about it since I was born here. Going back there I felt more of a connection there" (5 trips). Similarly, Cindy explained: "*I know that I'm not China-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*" (2 trips). Diaspora tourism also helped them understand the meaning of being Chinese-American. As stated by Frank:

> *During the college applications, you would check what ethnicity you are. I would check I'm Chinese-American or Asian-American. But once you go to the place 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*. (1 trip)

***Family History***

*Understanding the Past*. For participants who traveled with their family, seeing China with their parents made stories come true: "*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*" (by Sam, 3 trips). Having left China many years ago, participants' parents would tell their children about the way things used to be. Melody's mom talked about the roads and cities, and felt nostalgic about the differences: "*We used to ride our bikes from our village all the way to the city, and now people don't ride their bikes anymore. It's so different now*" (3 trips). Some participants joined group tours, so they didn't visit their parents' original hometown. Nevertheless, their parents could still be reminiscent of the past:

> *They would compare places, to how their life was when they were growing up. They grew up in a smaller community where 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*. (by May, 2 trips)

The core of heritage tourism lies not in the physical attributes of the site, but in the tourists' perception of the site as a part of their personal heritage (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2003). Regardless of where they visited, first-generation immigrants could find ways to associate the site to their past and create a personal heritage connection, even if they didn't return to their hometown.

Traveling with their parents also helped participants understand their parents' current status as immigrants and still "outsiders" in the U.S. Cindy described how her father became very confident and "in control" once they arrived in China. Her father, who didn't talk much at home, suddenly seemed to know everything and told many stories about China:

> *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*. (2 trips)

Those who didn't visit their parents' previous home also expressed the desire to see where their parents came from. According to Matt: "*I want to sort of re-live the experience of my parents. They would tell me stories, 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*" (1 trip). Seeing their parents at "home" help participants understand the past and see their parents in a new light.

*Glimpse of Alternate Universe*. Participants not only perceived China as their parents' place, but also saw China as an "alternate universe" of the way their life could 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.* (3 trips)

Tony's cousins also told him how lucky he was to be in the U.S., which made him realize: "*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*" (2 trips).

Seeing the lifestyle in China made many participants appreciate their current life. Comparing themselves to the younger generation in China, they were surprised by the highly competitive environment: "*I heard that the students there are more hard-working, because there's so much more competition. If they want to succeed, they have to do well in school, to meet that high score*" (by Mia, 1 trip). Alex also explained:

> *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*. (3 trips)

After learning about the past and "alternate universe" in China, participants became more motivated and passionate about life.

***Sense of "Home"***

*Geographic Boundary of "Home."* When asked to choose between China and the U.S., all participants chose the latter as their home: "*I would say the U.S. is my home, but China is where my ancestors are from*" (by April, 3 trips). Sam considered the U.S. his "legal home"

and reserved the term "homeland" for China: "*Homeland I want to say China, although I'm born in the U.S. Legally, my home is the U.S. I feel there is more of an attachment to say 'homeland.' But I live in the U.S, and it's my home*" (3 trips). Some participants explained that the U.S. was clearly their home because they could identify with a specific place. According to Jack:

> *I grew up in Berkeley, and my dad grew up in Berkeley, so that was like his home. The house he grew up in was only like 15 minutes away from where we live now. So I do consider Berkeley as my home*. (10 trips)

In China, however, participants were not particularly attached to one locale. Matt, of Teo-Chew ancestry, explained, "*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*" (1 trip). Some participants couldn't even pinpoint where their parents were from. Oxfeld and Long (2004) argued that "a homeland has meaning even when people are ambivalent about it rather than identifying with a particular place" (p. 5). Without the experience of living in the homeland, perhaps second-generation immigrants identified more with the abstract notion of a country rather than a specific "home" place.

Participants were asked if they felt obligated to visit China. Most did not consider China an obligation and emphasized that they "really wanted to go," while some felt they should visit China because they were Chinese-American: "*I did think it's weird that I've never visited China up until my college life, so I'm very glad I did*" (by May, 2 trips). With regard to their future travel plans, however, many participants chose Europe, as they had already seen China. A few participants expressed a strong desire to visit China again and again, and nowhere else: "*I feel like I'm not interested in other parts of the world, because I don't have an INTEREST in them, an invested kind of interest. Europe is beautiful, but I would rather go to China*" (by Jeremy, 3 trips). Frank also explained why China was unique worthy of repeat visits: "*I want to learn more about who I am and my identity, so I can't get that in Europe. China is just that direct source to offer that experience that I cannot get from any other part of the world*" (1 trip). Moreover, those who showed a higher degree of loyalty towards China indicated that they would prefer to explore new regions in China, which suggested that their attachment to China went beyond their parents' hometown. As stated by Mia, "*there's so much in China that I have not see yet!*" (1 trip).

*"Home" as Household or Community*. Although most participants didn't visit their parents' original home, certain aspects of China gave them a sense of familiarity and reminded them of their home in the U.S. Some participants grew up being the only Chinese family in town, and visiting China made them realize what they thought was unique to their home existed in another part of the world. According to Frank:

> *Before I went, the Chinese culture would be like inside my household. But because I have a lot of Caucasian friends, when I go to their house it's really different. 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.* (1 trip)

Jay, who was half-Chinese on his mother's side, didn't distinguish whether his household practices were American or Chinese, and it was studying abroad in China that made him realize:

> *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.* (2 trips)

Diaspora tourism helped participants identify the Chinese elements of their life, and they were able to see their "home" in China because of the Chinese culture they grew up with.

For participants who lived in Chinese ethnic enclaves, China also reminded them of home. Cindy grew up in San Gabriel, a suburb of Los Angeles populated by people of Chinese ancestry. She felt that her university was less "Chinese" by comparison, but when she visited China: "*It did remind me a lot of my hometown, because there're Chinese people everywhere. That's what my home is like!*" (2 trips). She saw San Gabriel as *a bridge* between China and the U.S., and China as the *origin* of San Gabriel: "*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 illustrated the local specificity of transnationalism (Zhou & Tseng, 2001). Transnational practices often become *localized* within ethnic communities in the host society. As such, participants felt a sense of belonging in China because it reminded them of their home/hometowns in the U.S.

## Discussion

This study examined the diaspora tourism experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans. Data from the short questionnaire provided basic tripographic information on diaspora tourism, including number of trips, length of stay, purpose, and group size. The average trip frequency of second-generation Chinese-Americans in their 20s (mean=3.68) was found to be higher than that of previous studies (e.g., CILS: 1.35 trips; IIMMLA: 1.95 trips) (Portes & Rumbaut, 2008; Rumbaut et al., 2008). Two reasons may account for the higher number of diaspora tourism trips derived from the sample of this study. First, this study employed purposive sampling, while CILS and IIMMLA included respondents who have never visited China. Second, the data of CILS (Phase III) was collected from 2001 to 2003, and IIMMLA was conducted in 2004. Although this small-sample study cannot yield a generalizable number for the average frequency of homeland trips, it is possible that within the last ten years, there is an increase in the frequency of Chinese diaspora tourism, and the

current generation of Chinese-Americans in their early twenties is more transnational than the previous cohort.

Within the study sample, participants' number of trips to China ranged from one to ten trips. Given that past experience is an antecedent to place attachment (Backlund & Williams, 2003), how does trip frequency influence one's feelings towards China? Based on travel purpose, participants' diaspora tourism trips consisted of three types: sightseeing, travel study, and VFR/family reunion. As such, number of trips did not necessarily reflect the depth of their experience. Several participants visited China multiple times for family purposes, but felt trapped inside the family bubble, while others only been to China once, but went on a three-month travel study program. In terms of past experience, length of stay was found to be a more important factor than number of trips. Participants who spent a few months in China gradually felt more "at home" in China and had a more meaningful experience. Moreover, previous studies stressed the importance of activity involvement in the formation of place attachment (Kyle et al., 2003). In the context of diaspora tourism, activity involvement could be conceptualized as one's level of involvement in the lifestyle and culture of the homeland. According to McKercher (2002), tourists vary in their ability to feel and appreciate the destination. Likewise, among study participants, the difference in their language proficiency and familiarity with Chinese food/culture resulted in different depths of experience. Although most participants indicated that they felt *more Chinese* or closer to China after the trip, it is important to note that not all participants developed a strong sense of homeland/destination loyalty towards China.

Traveling to the homeland gave second-generation Chinese a chance to learn more about their heritage and identity (Iorio & Corsale, 2013; Long, 2004; Louie, 2000). Compared to "classic" diaspora groups (Cohen, 1997), however, the experience of contemporary voluntary migrants was also found to be different. For more historic diaspora groups, their genealogical roots are more difficult to trace. Thus, their ties to the homeland are symbolic, and their trips may focus more on collective history and identity. On the contrary, approximately 80% of the participants (21 out of 26) had relatives still living in China. Therefore, visiting relatives is an important travel purpose and gave them access to personal history. They also took great interest in the life of contemporary Chinese youths as an "alternate universe," and sought local, backstage experiences rather than historic attractions and national monuments. Within the Chinese diaspora, the most recent wave of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. is also distinct from previous populations. Early Chinese migrants faced the choice between sojourn or settlement, and traveling back to the homeland was a lifelong desire of "fallen leaves return to their roots" (Chinese proverb) (Yang, 2013). Contemporary overseas Chinese, however, are perhaps less *rooted* but *en route*. As border-crossing transmigrants, study participants were able to take multiple trips to China, and did not demonstrate a strong desire to visit their ancestral home. In some cases, first-generation

parents also took their children on sightseeing tours rather than returning to their family home. While the concept of diasporic return is not new, this study suggests that contemporary diaspora tourism is evolving to be less diasporic and more tourism.

Lastly, the difference between first and second-generation diaspora tourists should be considered. Diaspora tourism allows first-generation immigrants to re-visit past homes and re-connect with distant relatives (Oxfeld & Long, 2004). The second generation, however, tend to perceive their parents' homeland as a destination. It was found that most participants' authentic experiences took place during travel study trips, with their new Chinese friends and tutors, but not so much with their local relatives. In fact, those who attended family gatherings often felt trapped inside the "family bubble," which prevented them from exploring the destination. Participants' Chinese proficiency was another cause of their negative experiences. Language retention is a serious problem for second-generation immigrants, and often a constraint to their transnational activities (Foner, 2002; Perlmann, 2002). Specifically, Chinese-Americans experience more difficulty learning their parental language due to linguistic differences and non-phonetic writing system. The wide variety of Chinese dialects further complicates diaspora tourism encounters. Language barrier is another reason why second-generation immigrants may not perceive China as their own home or feel close to their Chinese relatives.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the diaspora tourism experience of second-generation Chinese-Americans and explored how their transnational status influences their travel experience. Findings contribute to tourism literature in two ways. First, rather than examining the experience of more "historic" diaspora groups, this study focused on the tourism experience of contemporary voluntary migrants. With increasing mobility around the globe, their attachment to "homeland" was broader geographically, and their tourism experience is less diasporic and more transnational. Second, this study found some differences in the diaspora tourism experience of first and second-generation immigrants, and identified some factors that may be the cause of negative experiences for second-generation diaspora tourists. Moreover, diaspora tourism differs from other forms of tourism. While most people travel to see something different from home, diaspora tourists pay attention to things that reminded them of home. Although participants did not necessarily have a lot of past experience with the homeland, their effort to make or enhance their transnational attachment was obvious, in their attempts to relate what they saw to their personal heritage and justify some of their negative experiences.

Findings also contribute to transnationalism literature. King and Christou (2011) argued that the notion of transnationalism can be rescaled. The transnational activities of migrants are rooted in local spaces within the home and host societies, such as the village

community where one was raised or the urban neighborhood where one relocated. The term "trans-locality" is used to describe such localized yet border-crossing external connections (Zhou & Tseng, 2001). Trans-locality in the host society can be observed in the participants' comparison of China with their hometown community in the U.S. In their ancestral homeland, however, their transnational ties were not as localized. Perhaps due to their second-generation status, they did not have so strong an attachment to a specific "home" place in China, and saw China more as a nation different from the U.S. Transnational ties tend to decrease from one generation to the next (Levitt & Waters, 2002). Findings suggest that first and second-generation transnationalism may also differ in the degree of "translocality."

This study has its limitations. First, focusing on second-generation immigrants between the ages of 18 and 30, study results could not be generalized to other immigrant generations and age groups. Second, only those who had already visited their homeland were interviewed, and the experiences of those without the means or opportunities to travel were excluded. Third, the diaspora tourism destination examined in this study was China, one of the world's fastest-growing economies. Its rapid development influenced the way returning migrants feel about their homeland, which might not be the case in other countries. Reflecting upon these limitations, some suggestions are provided for future research. First, this study presented some first-generation diaspora tourism experiences when the children of immigrants recalled and described their parents' actions. Future studies can attempt to conduct family interviews on both parent and child to understand the parents' perspective and their expectations of family diaspora tourism trips. Second, given the regional and linguistic diversity in China, future studies can examine diaspora tourism to specific regions, which would allow for group comparisons, such as different generations, overseas Chinese residing in different countries, and diaspora versus international tourists. Future research can also explore diaspora tourism not to the homeland but other places related to one's ethnic origin, such as the Chinatowns and Little Italy's around the world. Especially when the homeland no longer exists or is inaccessible due to political issues, diaspora tourists may seek alternative destinations to fulfill their desire to go "home."

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[i] Immigrant generational status has been labeled in different ways. In particular, the children of immigrants could be regarded as the “second generation” of immigrants or the “first generation” to be native born. Warner and Srole (1945) called the native-born children of immigrants as the “filial first” (F1) generation, and the grandchildren the “F2” generation. On the other hand, both foreign-born immigrants and their native-born children are considered the immigrant-stock population in the U.S. (Rumbaut, 2002). Since the 1990s, there has been a proliferation of studies on the native-born children of immigrants in the U.S., and they are more commonly referred to as second-generation immigrants (e.g., Portes, 1996; Waters, 1994).