

**The Journey “Home”:
An Exploratory Analysis of Second-generation Immigrants’ Homeland Travel**

Wei-Jue Huang
Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management
Clemson University

William J. Haller
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Clemson University

and

Gregory P. Ramshaw
Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management
Clemson University

ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between second-generation immigrants’ attachment to their ancestral homeland and their journey back “home,” focusing on whether or not the second generation could feel at “home” in their parents’ country of origin and how their travel experience influenced their feeling of attachment to their homeland after the trip. Using a mixed methods approach, this study employed secondary data analysis from three different sources, including both qualitative and quantitative data. Findings revealed that there was an association between the number of trips and feeling at “home” in their parents’ country of origin. Second-generation immigrants who considered both America and their ancestral homeland as “home” took the highest number of homecoming trips, and their transnational attachment to two countries reflects the dual loyalty and identity of people in diaspora. Findings also showed that the homeland trips created a complex experience of alienation and a sense of belonging simultaneously.

Keywords: *homecoming, diaspora, transnationalism, heritage tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Traveling involves leaving one's place of residence, and tourism is generally defined as the activities that take place outside of one's usual environment or immediate home community (e.g., Chadwick, 1994; Smith, 1988). Since the very definition of travel and tourism indicates the importance of being out and away from home, it is natural for the tourism and hospitality industry to distinguish between outside visitors versus local residents, as well as between domestic and international tourists. It is assumed that "outsiders" and "insiders" may have different demands, and therefore different tourism products and marketing strategies are needed. Research on tourist behaviors and experiences also commonly differentiates between the domestic and international.

However, the divide between foreign and local with regard to tourism business and research neglects a group of tourists who are *in-between*, such as college graduates taking a homecoming trip to visit their alma mater after twenty years, or immigrants travelling back to their country of origin. With modern advancements in technology and transportation, human mobility and migration have increased dramatically. Particularly, after the 1960s, international migration has become a global phenomenon (Castles & Miller, 2009). According to the OECD International Migration Database (2008), worldwide there are over five million people migrating to a foreign country every year since 2005. In particular, the United States is the world's largest immigrant-receiving nation, with an inflow of more than one million foreign newcomers per year. In fact, the U.S. is known for being a country made up of immigrants. With the exception of Native Americans, all race and ethnic groups in the U.S. can trace their family roots to another country. Since the Native-American population is less than one percent of the total U.S. population (CIA World Factbook, 2009), 99% of Americans have a distant "homeland" that they may be interested in visiting someday.

Immigrants to a new country often find the need to travel to their ancestral homeland or other destinations related to their personal heritage in search of information on their family history or to feel connected to their ancestral roots and culture (McCain & Ray, 2003). This phenomenon is known as "roots tourism" or "diaspora heritage tourism" and is a niche market and a sub-segment of heritage tourism and special interest tourism. The unique homecoming journey of immigrants points to a gap in current tourism literature. Previous studies on tourist experiences usually distinguished between domestic and international tourists. Immigrant tourists, however, are *in-between*. 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.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between immigrants' attachment to their ancestral homeland and their journey back "home." Most tourists become attached to a destination after repeat visitation, but second-generation immigrants (who were born in the current host country) are connected to a "homeland" that they may or may not have visited before. A strong emotional bond between tourists and the destination prior to the trip is one unique characteristic of homeland travel. Specifically, does traveling back to their homeland have an impact on whether or not second-generation immigrants can feel at "home" in their

parents' country of origin? How do they feel during the trip, and do they feel more or less attached to their homeland after the trip?

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). 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 relatives back in their homeland. And as traveling becomes cheaper and more convenient, more and more immigrants can afford to travel back and forth between two countries (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 2008). “Transnationalism” refers to the processes through which immigrants maintain social relations that connect their home country and host society (Basch et al., 1994). Many immigrants today live in a transnational social field and develop networks or communities across national borders. Therefore, their lives 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, Haller, and Guarnizo (2002) listed 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.

“Diaspora” is another concept that describes the connections between immigrants and their country of origin. It refers to ethnic groups of migrant origins who reside in the host country but maintain a strong sentimental and material connection to their country of origin—their homeland (Sheffer, 1986). Although diaspora originally refers to the Jewish population who were exiled from Israel and forced to settle outside of their traditional homeland, contemporary use of the term has grown to include many population movements, such as immigrants, political refugees, foreign workers, overseas communities, and ethnic and racial minorities (Shuval, 2000). Compared to “transnationalism,” the concept of “diaspora” is more emotional, because in a traditional sense it referred to a forced removal/displacement from the homeland (Castles & Miller, 2009).

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 amount of 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 homeland 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.

Both diaspora and transnationalism literature indicated a connection between immigrants and homecoming tourism. Traveling is one of the border-crossing activities through which overseas communities can participate in the affairs of their homeland (Coles & Timothy, 2004). In fact, migration and tourism are similar on a macro level, as both phenomena involve the movement of people across geographical regions, only of different durations (Williams & Hall, 2000b). 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).

Within tourism literature, studies on travel motivation and heritage tourism exemplify some characteristics of diasporic, homecoming travel. Crompton (1979) identified nine motives for pleasure vacations. Amongst the socio-psychological motives, "exploration and evaluation of self" and "enhancement of kinship relationships" are similar to the homecoming journey of immigrants. Poria, Reichel, and Biran (2006) 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 tourists' sense of national identity (Palmer, 1999). Similarly, for immigrants, a homecoming trip to their ancestral homeland may help them negotiate between cultural assimilation and maintaining their traditional identity.

In the U.S., people of European origins 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 Homecoming Scotland year and provided a series of special events to welcome returning Scottish descendants.

European immigrants in the U.S. have no physical characteristics that would distinguish them from mainstream Americans. Individuals from other countries have more difficulties blending into American life and culture. In particular, immigrants from third-world countries are more likely to be marginalized and underprivileged in first-world host countries (Bhatia, 2002). Therefore, they become “notably heritage hungry” and travel in search of their roots and heritage (Lowenthal, 1998, p. 9). For example, Stephenson (2002) examined the experience of the UK Afro-Caribbean diaspora who traveled back to the Caribbean for ethnic reunion. African Americans also have the need to travel back to their homeland and re-connect with “Mother Africa” (Bruner, 1996; Ebron, 1999; Schramm, 2004; Timothy & Teye, 2004).

Also popular with homecoming travel, Israel is the religious and spiritual center for the Jewish diaspora. For young Jewish-Americans, such a journey is more than a religious pilgrimage but a necessary rite of passage in the process of socialization and Jewish identity formation (Di Giovine, 2009). For example, Cohen (2003) studied the visiting students in Israeli universities, discovering that 90% of them are Jewish. He pointed out that Jewish visiting students had emotional attachment to the destination prior to the visiting experience, which was sustained through their family, social environment, and previous Jewish education. Cohen (2004) also examined an educational tour program of Israel designed for Jewish adolescents, which took young Jews through the migration path of their ancestors. 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).

The travel of immigrants is not limited to their ancestral homeland. Kang and Page (2000) studied the travel patterns of Korean-New Zealanders 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. and Jewish-only resorts, where their dietary and religious regulations were followed. Another reason why immigrants tend to visit places that are related to their ancestral heritage is because they may not be welcomed 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.

A review of the literature related to immigrants and tourism reveals that some groups are studied more than others. Compared to European, African, and Jewish diasporas, there are

relatively few studies on the immigrant heritage tourism of Asian-Americans. Since the homecoming journey experience is so diverse, current studies on immigrant and heritage travel need to extend to different ethnic groups. Moreover, as the research on diaspora and tourism progresses, it is no longer sufficient to study pan-ethnic labels such as Hispanic-Americans. Such generalization fails to take into account the cultural, religious, and generational differences within the same pan-ethnic group. There is a need to embrace different perspectives and focus on the homecoming tourism of specific countries and regions (Timothy & Coles, 2004). In addition, previous studies have shown that visiting one's country of origin shapes or reinforces one's ethnic identity. However, the homeland journey also influences the relationship between tourists and the destination. While it is natural for immigrants to feel connected to their homeland, the potential of tourism to increase such transnational attachment has not been explored. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the impact of travel on the connection between people and place in the context of migration and homecoming trips.

METHODS

This study used secondary data from three different sources to explore the relationship between second-generation immigrants' homeland travel and their attachment to their ancestral homeland, including both qualitative and quantitative data. Specifically, the qualitative data came from a book entitled *Balancing Two Worlds* (Garrod & Kilkenny, 2007), which consisted of fourteen autobiographies of second-generation Asian Americans. Most chapters in this book have sections related to homeland travel, including descriptions of the trips back to their parents' country of origin and reflections on the travel experience and its impact on their racial/ethnic identity. Qualitative textual analysis of these autobiographies was conducted, with an emphasis on the passages related to homeland travel. The underlying themes related to their homeland travel experience were identified.

The quantitative data came from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) and the Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA) study (Portes & Rumbaut, 2008; Rumbaut et al., 2008). CILS is a three-wave longitudinal study on the adaptation process of second-generation immigrants in the US. The first wave survey was conducted in 1992 on the children of immigrants in the 8th and 9th grades (average age 14) in Miami and Fort Lauderdale, FL and San Diego, CA. The second wave took place in 1995 when the respondents were about to graduate from high school (average age 17). Finally, the third wave survey was conducted from 2001 to 2003, with the respondents at the average age of 24. The sample size went from 5,262 of the first wave to 4,288 of the second wave, and 3,613 of the third wave. The IIMMLA study also examined the progress and mobility of second-generation immigrants in the US. It took place in 2004, focusing on the children of immigrants in the Los Angeles area in early adulthood (age 20-39), with a sample size of 4,655.

This study used variables from the IIMMLA survey and Phase III of the CILS survey that are related to homeland travel, feeling at "home," and demographic information. Statistical procedures (T-test, Chi-square test, and ANOVA) were employed to analyze the data. Due to the use of secondary data, the choice of different analyses was limited by the level of measurement and number of categories of the variables in the original surveys. Table 1 shows the survey questions and variables from both data sets that are used in this analysis.

Table 1
Survey Questions and Variables

CILS—Phase III	
Survey Question	Variable
Q44. How many times have you ever been back to visit your or your parents' home country?	Number of trips
Q45. Have you gone back and lived there for longer than 6 months?	6-month stay
Q47. Which feels most like "home" to you: the United States, or your or your parents' country of origin?	Feels like "home"
IIMMLA	
Q154. While you have been an adult, on how many different occasions have you been back to visit (your) (your parents') country of birth?	Number of trips
Q178. When thinking about your own ethnicity or ancestry, how do you identify, that is, what do you call yourself?	Importance of ethnic self-identity
Q179. How important is this identity to you—very important, somewhat important, not too important?	
Q180. Which feels most like home to you—the United States or (your) (your parents') country of origin?	Feels like "home"

FINDINGS

Quantitative Findings

The CILS data revealed that there is an association between second-generation immigrants' perception of "where is home" and the number of trips to their parents' home country (chi-square = 465.193, $p < 0.001$). As the number of homeland visits increases, the percentage that feels at home in the US decreases and the percentage that feels at home in both countries increases (Table 2).

Table 2
Number of Homeland Trips and Which Country Feels Like Home

Number of Trips	Which country feels more like home?				Total ¹
	United States	My or my parents' country of origin	I don't feel at "home" in either country	I feel equally at "home" in both	
	% within number of trips				
0	94.5%	1.0%	1.2%	3.4%	100.0% (N=1560)
1	91.0%	1.0%	1.7%	6.2%	100.0% (N=577)
2	86.4%	1.3%	1.0%	11.4%	100.0% (N=308)
3	83.4%	2.8%	1.7%	12.2%	100.0% (N=181)
4	82.8%	0.8%	1.6%	14.8%	100.0% (N=128)
5	84.4%	3.7%	0.9%	11.0%	100.0% (N=109)
6	75.8%	4.5%	0.0%	19.7%	100.0% (N=66)
10	67.1%	3.5%	2.4%	27.1%	100.0% (N=85)

¹ Only the results for group total N > 50 are shown.

The average number of homeland journeys taken by respondents in the four “feels like home” groups (i.e., the U.S., Country of Origin, Both, & Neither) was also compared. ANOVA results indicated that there is a significant difference in the number of visits across the four groups ($F = 78.898, p < 0.001$). Post hoc LSD tests showed that the average number of trips of the “Both” group ($M = 6.64$) is significantly higher than the “Country of origin” group ($M = 4.31$) ($p = 0.002$). And the mean of the “Country of origin” group is significantly higher than “the US” group ($M = 1.92$) ($p = 0.001$) and the “Neither” group ($M = 2.05$) ($p = 0.029$). However, there is no significant difference between “the US” group and the “Neither” group.

Table 3
Average Number of Homeland Trips by 4 Groups

Which feels most like “home”	United States	Country of Origin	Equally at “home” in Both	Neither
Group Size (N)	2862	49	266	41
Number of Trips	1.92	4.31	6.64	2.05

In addition to the number of trips, the duration of the journey is also related to whether or not immigrants feel at home in their ancestral homeland. Chi-Square Test indicated that there is an association between the immigrants’ perception of “where is home” and whether they have visited their parents’ homeland for over 6 months (chi-square = 113.375, $p < 0.001$). Those who have visited for over 6 months have a higher percentage of feeling at home in both countries (29.0%) than those who have not experienced a 6-month stay (8.8%). And those with a 6-month stay have a lower percentage of feeling at home in the US (59.4%) than those without (88.4%).

Table 4
6-Month Stay and Which Country Feels like Home

6-month Stay?	Which country feels more like home?				Total
	United States	My or my parents’ country of origin	I don’t feel at “home” in either country	I feel equally at “home” in both	
	% within 6-month stay?				
No	88.4%	1.4%	1.4%	8.8%	100.0% (N=2507)
Yes	59.4%	7.7%	3.9%	29.0%	100.0% (N=155)

Data from the IIMMLA study also revealed a connection between the number of homeland trips and where the respondents feel at home. T-tests were conducted to compare the immigrants who identify the US as home with those who do not, and immigrants who identify their parents’ country of origin as home with those who do not. Results showed that there is no significant difference in the number of trips by those who feel at home in the US ($M = 2.80$) and those who do not ($M = 3.64$) ($t = 1.375, p = 0.169$). However, the number of homeland trips for the immigrants who identify their parents’ country of origin as home ($M = 5.77$) is significantly higher than those who do not consider the country as home ($M = 2.79$) ($t = -3.184, p = 0.002$).

Another variable that signifies immigrants’ attachment to their ancestral heritage is the importance of their ethnic self-identity. On a scale of 1 = Not too important to 3 = Very important, the perceived importance of ethnic self-identity for the immigrants who consider the US as home ($M = 2.354$) is significantly lower than those who do not consider the US as home

($M = 2.561$) ($t = 3.741$, $p < 0.001$). On the contrary, the importance of ethnic self-identity for the immigrants who identify their parents' country of origin as home ($M = 2.8$) is significantly higher than those who do not consider their parents' country of origin as home ($M = 2.357$) ($t = -7.545$, $p < 0.001$). Previous analyses showed that the variables "number of trips" and "importance of ethnic identity" behave in the same way when tested across different groups. Therefore, the correlation between these two variables was tested, resulting in a positive and significant correlation between number of trips and importance of ethnicity ($r = 0.044$, $p = 0.012$).

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data also indicated that there was a connection between traveling back to one's country of ancestry and feelings of belonging and alienation. From qualitative content analysis of the autobiographies of second-generation Asian Americans, three themes relevant to the homeland travel experience of the second generation were identified: 1) Alienation vs. sense of belonging, 2) Twofold and complex experiences, and 3) Collective and relative identity.

Alienation vs. sense of belonging. On one hand, some children of immigrants were surprised when they arrived in their parents' country of origin. The language barriers and cultural differences made them feel like "foreigners." For example, one Korean American college student stated that, "The several times I have returned to Korea, I felt completely the foreigner, and Korea seems for the most part unfamiliar to me." Another Japanese American girl also described the funny smell of incense candles, the weird monotonous chanting, and the Buddhist shrines and rituals as her most vivid memory of her childhood visits to Japan. For those who traveled back to their homeland at a later age, sometimes it was their high expectation that led to their disillusion. A Chinese American student who really looked forward to her trip in China found that "because of my linguistic shortcomings and a mismatch between what I expected to feel and what I actually found, instead of experiencing the homecoming I had expected, I felt locked out of the culture I had hoped to be welcomed into." What made the second generation feel even more like outsiders in their country of origin 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," 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." Such feelings of alienation not only pertained to their travel experience in the ancestral country, but also made them feel alone in the world. Many second-generation immigrants described the feeling of being an outsider in both the U.S. and their country of origin. For example, "Even though I say I can choose to be one or the other, I also feel as though I don't really belong anywhere. When I'm here in America, most Americans identify me as Korean. When I'm in Korea, most Koreans identify me as American."

On the other hand, the homeland trips also instilled a sense of belonging for these second-generation Asian Americans. For the first time in their lives, they were the majority, not minority. As stated by a second-generation Indian American, "when I went to India, I was surprised to feel like I was at home. Everyone looked like me." Some people emphasized that the sense of belonging was only in terms of physical appearance. A Chinese American girl stated that, "Visually, I blended into crowds of Chinese people better than I ever hope to blend into crowds of Caucasian Americans." Another Chinese American student also described, "It was an amazing sight, to walk in streets where *everyone* had black hair and narrow eyes, where no one

gave a second thought about me. I blended in totally and completely, at least physically.” However, others found a sense of belonging internally and felt more connected to the homeland. For example, an Indian American girl described that, “I remember thinking on several occasions, ‘This country is *me*. This is where I come from.’ It was overwhelming to feel a sense of place, a kind of responsibility to the land because it had become a part of me.”

Twofold and complex experiences. Feelings of alienation and belonging seemed like two contrasting experiences. However, second-generation immigrants might experience *both* when traveling back to their country of origin. For some people, the difference lay in the timing of the trip. Many second-generation Asian Americans spent their childhood and adolescent years rejecting Asian culture and trying to be more American, and “it is often in the college setting that second-generation Asian Americans . . . begin to revise and refine their identities, to articulate and negotiate issues of race, gender, and generation both within and outside of the classroom” (Leong, 2007, p. 5). Therefore, although they might have visited their homeland several times during childhood, it was the one trip that took place during their college years that was the most meaningful to them. For example, an Indian American student described that, “My own thoughts about Indians changed when I went to India the summer after I graduated from high school. I had been there six times before, but I had not been there since the summer after seventh grade. On this particular visit, I discovered what an amazing nation India is. I had never before learned about the rich cultural and artistic history of India.” While he tried to alienate himself from Indian culture in the previous trips, it was the one trip after high school that allowed him to get in touch with his Indian heritage and embrace the Indian aspect of his identity.

The twofold experience of alienation and belonging could also occur in the same trip simultaneously. Several second-generation Asian Americans pointed out that physically they belonged with the majority during their trips in Asia. But “as soon as I opened my mouth, . . . I fell back into the minority. When native speakers heard my slow speech and erroneous tones, they assumed that I was . . . a Japanese person. . . . What was certain was that I was not one of them. I did not truly belong in China any more than I did in the streets of Needham.” The twofold homecoming experience became even more complex when these immigrant travelers would either pretend to be local or act out their American-ness during the trips. For example, a Korean American girl explained that she would sometimes act Korean by pretending to read Korean books on the buses and subways, but other times she would speak to her sister in English deliberately to show that she was American to the passersby. Therefore, instead of passively feeling alienated or at “home” in their country of origin, it is possible for the second generation to create scenarios and exercise a level of control over their homecoming experience.

Collective and relative identity. Another reason why the second generation felt alone or comfortable in their country of origin was related to their travel companions. When they were young and traveling with their immediate family, the main purpose of the trips was to visit relatives, so they had less opportunity to interact with other homecoming immigrants. But in the college setting, second-generation immigrants often took part in study abroad programs and summer language programs, where they could have a collective travel experience with students of similar ages and ethnic backgrounds. For example, a Korean American student indicated that he had been to Korea several times as a child yet still felt unfamiliar with the country. It wasn’t

until he participated in an intensive language program in a Korean University designed specifically for Korean Americans that he “learned a great deal about what being Korean meant.”

Apart from participating in group tours or programs, a sense of belonging could also emerge from one’s relative status as the majority or minority. A Chinese American girl who went to China with her college’s foreign study program pointed out that she felt more confident and comfortable about the trip because “I would not experience the culture shock anticipated by many of my white classmates.” By comparing herself to her classmates, she was able to take pride in her heritage and cultural connections to China. Another interesting example was when a Japanese American student joined a research team to collect data in India for three weeks. Although she was Japanese, not Indian, she felt a sense of belonging in India in respect to the other members of her research team. While the local people stared at her white companions, she felt comfortable in her collective identity as an Asian and the majority under the circumstances. In this case, even though a trip to India could not increase her Japanese-ness, it still gave her a sense of belonging and, more importantly, a chance to see from the majority’s perspective.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between immigrants’ attachment to their ancestral homeland and their journey back to “home.” Findings showed that there is an association between the number of trips that second-generation immigrants take and their feeling at “home” in their country of origin. Interestingly, it is the people who consider both America and their country of origin as “home” that take the highest number of homeland trips, even more than those who only identify their country of origin as “home.” Such attachment to both places reflects the transnational loyalty and identity of people in diaspora, and gives them the ability to engage in transnational activities, such as international travel. In addition, the length of the homeland journey also matters, as those who have experienced extended stays are more likely to feel at “home”. Both length and frequency are characteristics of the homecoming trip that may affect immigrants’ connection to the land of their ancestors.

This exploratory analysis also revealed the relationship between immigrants’ homeland trips and their sense of alienation and belonging in their country of origin. Trips taken in different stages of their lives and with different travel companions had different impacts. More importantly, feelings of alienation and belonging were not binary opposites. Most homecoming travelers encountered both during various trips or even within the same trip. It is important to identify the different aspects of the trip and how they relate to a meaningful travel experience and increase immigrants’ attachment to their country of origin. The homecoming journey also provided them with the opportunity to learn about their traditional culture. Although the second generation often grew up rejecting their Asian-ness, they became amazed by the cultural richness and beautiful scenery of their homeland during the trip.

However, the findings of this study were limited because of the use of secondary data. The variables in the quantitative analysis came from two different data sets. Although the two surveys asked similar questions concerning homeland travel, such as “Which feels most like home to you,” the responses were coded differently. Therefore, it was difficult to compare and combine the findings from the two data sets. The qualitative data was also limited in that the

autobiographies were about the entire life experience of Asian Americans, with a relatively small proportion on their homeland travel. For future studies on the homeland trips of immigrants, a more detailed survey on the different characteristics of the trips is needed. In addition to the frequency and duration of the trips, other factors, such as group size, package tour vs. independent travel, and number and types of attractions visited, may all have some influence on their trip experience and growing attachment to their homeland. It is also necessary to develop some measurement for the level of attachment that immigrants have towards their homeland. The theory of place attachment from environmental psychology provides a useful framework to not only measure the strength of attachment but also to examine the different dimensions within people's relationship to a place (Williams & Vaske, 2003).

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). It is necessary for the travel industry to explore the demand, preference, and experience of homecoming travelers in order to cater to the need of this unique market. Moreover, tourists who are going "home" to visit their land of origin care more about the destination than other international tourists. Many immigrants maintain strong economic, political, and religious ties to their ancestral homeland, so when they travel back "home," they will be more interested in sustaining and improving the well-being of the local people, culture and environment (Levitt & Waters, 2002). Therefore, studying the phenomenon of homeland travel can not only increase the travel industry's understanding of this unique niche market but also help establish an in-depth connection between tourists and destinations.

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