TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS, INFORMATION SEARCH BEHAVIOR, AND ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG 1.5 GENERATION KOREAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

BY

JUNGEUN KIM

DISSEIERATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Monika Stodolska, Chair
Associate Professor Bruce E. Wicks
Assistant Professor Julie S. Son
Professor Nancy A. Abelmann
ABSTRACT

This research project was designed to explore (1) the ethnic identity achievement/retention of 1.5 generation Korean American college students prior to their most recent travel to Korea; (2) their travel motivations for their most recent trip to Korea; (3) their information search behavior for their most recent trip to Korea; (4) the relationship between ethnic identity retention/achievement, travel motivations, and travel information search behaviors; and (5) the impacts of their most recent trip to Korea on their ethnic identity development. In order to accomplish these goals, this study employed 18 in-depth semi-structured interviews with Korean American college students who were registered at the University of Illinois at the time of the study. The data collection was conducted between December 2010 and February 2011.

The findings of the study revealed that 1.5 generation Korean American college students exhibited different levels of ethnic identity achievement prior to their most recent trip to Korea and described themselves as either Koreans, Korean Americans, or Americans. Although all participants mentioned that visiting friends and families were important motivations for travel to the home country, in general the motivations of those who described themselves as Korean were somewhat different from motivations of those who considered themselves to be Korean American or American. Few differences in the travel information search behavior were revealed among interviewees with different types of ethnic identity achievement and motivations for travel to Korea. Interestingly, for all participants, most of the search behavior took place at the destination. Moreover, no clear relationship was found between planning behavior, language of the information sources, and the level of ethnic identity retention. Travel to Korea played important roles in (re)developing ethnic identity among 1.5 generation Korean American college students. Those who identified themselves as Korean prior to the trip either confirmed their
ethnic identity or changed their identity to Korean American. Those who considered themselves Korean American retained their ethnic identity, while those who thought of themselves as American altered their identity to Korean as a result of the travel and other environmental factors related to the college setting and their Korean peer group.

Keywords: Travel Motivation, Travel Information Search Behavior, Diaspora Tourism, Ethnic Identity, 1.5 Generation Korean American College Students
To my Father and Mother...
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Immigration is a universal phenomenon in the contemporary globalized world and migrations among Koreans have been no exception to this trend (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). The number of Korean immigrants in the United States has grown 93-fold between 1960 and 2007, from 11,171 to 1.0 million (Terrazas, 2009). This makes them the seventh largest immigrant group in the United States after people from Mexico, Philippines, India, China, Salvador, and Vietnam (Terrazas). According to 2000 Census, about 82% of Korean first generation immigrants listed their birthplace as “Korea,” 18% listed “South Korea,” and less than 1% listed “North Korea” (Terrazas).

The issues surrounding incorporation of the foreign-born residents into the political, social, economic, and cultural fabric of the host country have been a topic of scientific debate for over a century (Cozen, Gerber, Morawska, Pozzetta, & Vecoli, 1992). Gordon (1964) predicted that the adaptation process among ethnic minorities would follow a linear path from old (ethnic) to new (American) culture and eventually, minorities would lose their ethnic traits. However, it is widely accepted that ethnic self-identification is more complicated and fuzzy than what Gordon and his predecessors (e.g., Park, 1924; Warner & Srole, 1945) suggested (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). According to Nagel (1994), ethnic identity retention and development have become essential features of the immigrant adaptation process. Ethnic identity has been defined as “one’s sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one’s thinking, perception, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership (Rotheram & Phinney, 1987, p. 13).
Researchers have examined the persistence of ethnicity in America and agreed that it is socially (re)constructed, as well as fluid and contextual (Cozen et al.; Danico, 2004; Nagel; Yancey, Ericksen, & Juliani, 1976). For example, the central argument in Nagel’s study was that ethnicity is best understood as a dynamic, constantly evolving part of both personal and group level identity. Portes and Rumbaut argued that ethnic self-identification is related to two cultural worlds and that it is shaped by the interactions with native peers, schools, and the ethnic community. In other words, the adaptation process among immigrants is not as simple and linear as traditional assimilation theories (e.g., Gordon, 1964) would suggest, but a complex and dynamic process which interacts with other social, contextual and ecological factors in the society.

Since ethnic identity is a fundamental issue in the adaptation process among immigrants, a significant number of studies have examined ethnic identity development and retention (Jo, 2002; Kang & Lo, 2004; Kibria, 2000; Rodriguez, Schwartz, & Whitbourne, 2010; Stodolska, 2008). A series of foundational works (e.g., Marcia, 1966, 1980 based on Erickson, 1968) suggested that ethnic identity development is as four-stage process that begins with a “diffused” (the absence of commitment and exploration), “foreclosed” (the presence of commitment but absence of exploration) and “in moratorium” identity (the process of exploring self-identity before making a commitment), and ultimately leads to an “achieved” identity (the presence of both commitment and exploration).

Interestingly, despite in-depth research on ethnic identity formation/retention across disciplines, travel has been rarely mentioned as one of the factors affecting ethnic identity development. Similarly, ethnic identity has only been discussed by tourism scholars infrequently. It is surprising, considering the effect travel to the home countries of immigrants, or to the
ancestral lands of ethnic and racial minorities, can have on their ethnic identity retention and development.

Due to the significant growth of the tourism industry in the last few decades, tourism research has been widened and deepened in terms of its themes and research subjects. However, travel patterns among immigrants and ethnic/racial minorities have not drawn significant academic attention even though a large number of immigrants have come to the United States since the immigration legislation of 1965 (Jo, 2002; Min & Kim, 2000). Similarly, there has been little information on the travel patterns of the “overseas” Koreans despite the notion of its importance. Since the first wave of Korean immigrant laborers arrived in the Hawaiian Islands in the early twentieth century, the number of people who have an ethnic Korean background residing in the U.S. has reached over 1.0 million (US Department of Homeland Security, 2007). Among them, about 76.7% are foreign-born (US Department of Homeland Security, 2008). This implies that they are either first or 1.5 generation immigrants, who are likely to have some form of attachment to their homeland. Despite this large market of potential tourists, few studies have addressed their travel patterns, motivations for travel, or travel information search behaviors.

Motivation has been one of the well-researched areas in the field of tourism as it is considered (1) the driving force behind all actions of travelers (Iso-Ahola, 1982), (2) a foundational reason for tourist behaviors (e.g., Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; Pearce, 1982), (3) crucial to understanding the vacation decision-making process (Dann, 1977; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005; Snepenger, King, Marshall, & Uysal, 2006), and (4) essential to assessing the satisfaction of their travels (Dann, 1981; Snepenger et al.). A generally agreed definition of motivation is “an internal factor that arouses, directs, and integrates a person’s behavior” (Murray, 1964, p. 7). Past research in the area of tourist motivation has attempted to identify key elements of travel motives
(Crompton, 1979; Dann), examine theoretical and methodological issues (Fodness, 1994; Gnoth, 1997; Ryan & Glendon, 1998; Snepenger et al.), as well as cross-cultural differences in travel motivations (Kim & Predeaux, 2005; Jönsson, & Devonish, 2008). The studies on travel motivations have found that escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, enhancement of kinship relationships, ego-enhancement, facilitation of social interactions, search for novelty, and education are important factors that propel people in their travels. In general, tourist motivation research has mainly focused on pleasure tourists (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Fodness & Murray, 1997; 1998) rather than on specific sub-groups of tourists who might be motivated by factors other than escape, relaxation, pleasure, and novelty.

Due to their immigrant status, travel motivations among overseas Koreans may include additional elements beyond those identified in studies on mainstream travelers. The reasons for their trips may include visiting families or relatives, building or maintaining social networks, learning the Korean language and the Korean culture, and observing changes that happen in their home country. The motivations for travel may vary based on age, gender, socio-economic status (SES), as well as immigrants’ level of ethnic identity development. For instance, travelers who regard themselves as Korean and consider moving back to their home country at some point may be motivated to visit Korea to build social networks and to find employment. On the other hand, more acculturated Koreans who regard themselves as American or Korean American are more likely to visit Korea for purely leisure purposes. The 1.5 generation immigrants who immigrated to the U.S. as children or young teenagers, who have been socialized in both countries and are likely to be bicultural (Danico, 2004), may travel to Korea to develop or confirm their ethnic identities by visiting families and relatives, meeting friends and acquaintances, or to learn their
mother tongue and ethnic culture. In other words, 1.5 generation Korean Americans who travel to Korea are likely to be involved in what tourism scholars call “heritage tourism” (McCain & Ray, 2003) or specifically, its subset – genealogical tourism (Santos & Yan, 2010).

Among the variety of tourism types, heritage tourism has drawn significant research attention in recent years (Bergquist, 2003). According to McCain and Ray (2003), heritage tourism refers to “interest in our connections to anything related to history, art, science, lifestyles, architecture, to scenery found in a community, region, population, or institution that we regard as part of our collective lineage” (p. 713). A sub-segment of the heritage tourism, termed genealogical tourism (Santos & Yan, 2010), diaspora tourism (Bergquist; Cohen, 2004; Day-Vines, Barker, & Exum, 1998), root tourism (Basu, 2005; De Santana Pinho, 2008), ethnic tourism (Butler, 2003; Kang & Page, 2000; King & Gamage, 1994; Ostrowski, 1991), or legacy tourism (McCain & Ray), refers to travel motivated by the search for information on, or to feel connected to, ancestors and ancestral roots. As McCain and Ray found, 52% of the legacy tourists who traveled to Venezuela, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Alaska, and the Provence region of France rated “visiting places where family is from” as an important motive. De Santana Pinho showed that American Jews traveled to Israel to visit “the ancient land of their ancestors,” while the descendants of Irish, Italian, and Scottish immigrants traveled to Europe “to get in touch with their roots” (p. 71). We may expect that the “search for ancestral roots” and desire to learn about the heritage of their home country may be particularly important for 1.5 generation Korean Americans who feel connection to Korea, but whose knowledge of the culture, history, and geography of their home country is lacking in comparison with that of their parents. Even though Korean Americans are an important minority group in the U.S., their travel motivations and, in particular, the genealogical or legacy tourism among members of this population have not been
explored in detail. Such research is necessary if we want to broaden our knowledge of the travel behavior among members of this group and to ensure that the Korean tourism industry is well prepared to meet the needs of Korean immigrant travelers.

Information search is another crucial aspect of the travel decision making process. Research on information search, originating in the consumer behavior literature (Beatty & Smith, 1987), has been an important area of inquiry in the field of tourism studies. Moutinho (1987) defined information search as an expressed need to consult a variety of sources prior to making a purchase. It has been argued that due to the characteristics of travel, which often involves visiting new or unfamiliar places, search for travel information is likely to take longer and to involve the use of more information sources than the search for information about any other consumer product (Fodness, & Murray, 1998). Current research on tourism information search has focused mainly on two broad areas: (1) information sources used in the search (e.g., Fesenmaier & Johnson, 1989; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Gitelson & Perdue, 1987; Nishimura, Waryszak, & King, 2007) and (2) the information search process itself, including the strategies used in the pre-vacation decision-making (e.g., Fodness & Murray, 1999; Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). Research has also shown that the way of obtaining travel information may vary depending on people’s socio-economic status, and demographic characteristics (Capella & Greco, 1987; Gitelson & Crompton; Nishimura et al.). Moreover, tourists of diverse national backgrounds have been shown to differ in their information search behaviors (Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Sussmann, & Rashevsky, 1997).

Thus, we expect that search behaviors among immigrants are also likely to be different from those of the mainstream American travelers. Immigrants are likely to be characterized by different levels of fluency in the English language and in their mother tongue, different social
norms, and may have different access to the technology than Anglo Americans. It is possible that Korean immigrants with lower English proficiency will be more likely to seek travel information in the Korean language, while those who feel more comfortable communicating in English may be more likely to use information sources similar to those popular among Anglo travelers. Level of ethnic enclosure vs. comfort with mainstream American culture may also play a role in travel search behaviors. Less acculturated, recently arrived immigrants who are unfamiliar with information sources utilized by mainstream Americans, who do not speak English fluently, and who have reservations about the use of modern technology may feel more comfortable planning their trips with the help of ethnic travel agencies or plan their trip in Korea upon arrival. On the other hand, those who feel more confident with regards to their English skills and who are proficient Internet users may rely more on American travel websites or be more likely to obtain their travel information from mainstream American print or broadcast media while still in the United States, prior to their trip. By examining variations in travel search behavior among 1.5 generation Korean Americans of different levels of ethnic identity retention and development, this study is designed to fill the gap in the existing travel information search behavior literature that so far has mainly focused on search behaviors among Western vacation travelers (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Kim & Prideaux, 2005; Li, 2003; Schule & Crompton, 1983).

1.2 Problem Statement

Contemporary American society is enriched by significant numbers of immigrants who arrive each year from various countries of the world. Korean Americans are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States (Terrazas, 2009). Travel to their home countries may help immigrants to bridge their old and new homes and, thus, help in their transition to the host
society. Such travels may be particularly important for young 1.5 generation ethnics, including Korean Americans, who struggle with their sense of belonging and are likely to be actively trying to establish their ethnic identity.

The overall goal of this study is to examine the relationship between ethnic identity development, travel motivations, and travel information search behaviors among 1.5 generation Korean American college students who travel to Korea. One and a half generation Korean Americans have been chosen as the subject of this study due to their unique position with regards to ethnic identity development. During their upbringing in the United States they are actively engaged in the process of discovery, change, adoption, or possibly rejection of their ethnic culture. The college years are likely to be an important time in the process of their personal self-discovery and ethnic identity development (Min & Kim, 2000; Rivera-Santiago, 1996; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Travel to the home country is likely to play a particularly crucial role in this process.

This study is designed to contribute to the knowledge base of the travel behavior among a specific immigrant population and of the role of travel in the process of ethnic identity formation. The findings of this study can play an important role in the marketing goals of the Korean National Tourism Organization (KNTO), as well as travel-related corporations such as airlines companies, hotels, and travel agencies who can better position themselves to serve the needs of this segment of Korean travelers. Moreover, they may provide important information for parents, counselors, tourism practitioners, and policy-makers who want to better understand the process of ethnic identity development among young 1.5 generation Korean immigrants.
1.3 **Purpose of the Study and the Conceptual Model**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship among ethnic identity, travel motivations and travel information search behaviors among 1.5 generation Korean American college students who travel to Korea, and to examine the effects of their travel on their ethnic identity changes.

The specific objectives of this study include:

a. To examine the level of ethnic identity retention/achievement among 1.5 generation Korean American college students prior to their most recent trip to Korea;

b. To examine motivations for travel among 1.5 generation Korean American college students who travel to Korea;

c. To examine travel information search behaviors among 1.5 generation Korean American college students who travel to Korea;

d. To examine the relationship between ethnic identity retention/achievement, travel motivations, and travel information search behaviors among 1.5 generation Korean American college students who travel to Korea;

e. To examine the effects of travel experiences in Korea on ethnic identity development among 1.5 generation Korean American college students.

This study will be guided by the following conceptual model (see Figure 1).
In this study, the ethnic identity achievement/retention among 1.5 generation Korean American college students prior to their most recent trip to Korea will be explored first. Based on the understanding of the degree of their ethnic identity achievement/retention, students’ travel motivations and information search behaviors for the trip to Korea will be investigated. As travel
motivations might affect the information search behavior, this relationship will also be examined. Lastly, the study will explore the ethnic identity development among Korean students that might have occurred as a result of their travel experiences in Korea.

1.4 Definitional Issues and Delimitations of the Study

To conduct this research project, it is necessary to identify the population under study and to define significant concepts such as 1.5 generation Korean Americans. The focus of the current project is on tourism behaviors among college-age 1.5 Korean Americans. A clear definition of the 1.5 generation immigrants has not been agreed upon (Danico, 2004). Min and Kim (2000) and Rumbaut and Portes (2001) defined 1.5 generation as immigrants who were born in their home countries and immigrated to the United States between the ages of 2 and 12. Zhou (1997) considered children who immigrated between 6 and 13 years of age to be 1.5 generation immigrants, and those who were adolescents ages 14 to 17 to be first generation immigrants. Danico considered the “1.5 generation” as an informal demographic marker and included in this group “those who are bicultural and bilingual and who immigrated to the United States during their formative years” (p. 2). Chan (2006) added to the definition intangible characteristics based on one’s own heritage and specified that immigrants who belong to the 1.5 generation are those who come at a young age and who retain their ability to speak, if not always to read and write, the ethnic language as well as their own (Vietnamese) values and norms. Chong (1998) believed that the distinction between the 1.5 and the second generation was unnecessary since, according to her findings, there were no noticeable differences between the two groups regarding their sense of ethnic identity. In Chong’s study, the second generation was considered as “all those who were born in the U.S. or arrived in the U.S. before the age of five” (p. 260). This study will
adopt Zhou’s definition of 1.5 generation immigrants as those who were: (1) born in their home country, in this case Korea, and who (2) immigrated to the U.S. between the ages of 6 and 17 with their parents.

The data for this study will be collected from Korean Americans of college age. More specifically, the participants in this research will be college students between the ages of 18 and 24 who are enrolled in classes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign at the time of the study. Only students who have traveled to Korea after the age of 16 will be included in the study. The participants’ age will be limited to 18-24 and the age at which they took the most recent trip to Korea to 16 for three main reasons. First, we want to make sure that the interviewees will be in the age group when they are likely to experience significant changes to their ethnic identity. Second, we want to ensure that they have undertaken the trip at the age at which they could have been, at least to a significant degree, involved in the trip planning and decision making. Lastly, we want to make sure that the trip took place relatively recently so they will have significant memories of their travel experiences and identity changes as a result of the travel.

The University of Illinois has been chosen as the site of the study since it is one of the Midwestern universities with large number of 1.5 generation Korean American students due to the large number of Korean students on the campus. According to the University of Illinois report (2011), as of fall semester of 2010, the number of international Korean students enrolled at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has reached 1,556, including 999 undergraduate students, 551 graduate students, and 6 professional students.
1.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of this research project. The introduction addressed the importance of this research in light of recent demographic trends and the existing knowledge on the subject of ethnic identity development and travel patterns, proposed a conceptual model, introduced a problem statement, as well as specific objectives of the study. Key concepts were defined and the scope and delimitation of the study were noted. The following chapter will provide an overview of the theoretical background that will frame this study.
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

One of the essential ways to become a member of a new society is to develop a new identity (Isajiw, 1990). However, many minority members retain their own ethnic identities while becoming “American” since ethnic identity is a dynamic, constantly evolving, situational, and volitional property, and not a zero-sum game (Isajiw). Research on ethnic identity has been actively conducted by scholars from many disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, geography, and leisure studies (e.g., Jo, 2002; Kibria, 2000; Stodolska, 2008). Since the purpose of this study is to examine ethnic identity development as a result of travel as well as travel motivations and travel information search behaviors among 1.5 generation Korean American young adults with different levels of ethnic identity, it is critical to examine the literature that describes the formation and retention of ethnic identity.

In this section, the ethnic identity formation/retention is discussed in the following categories: (1) concepts of ethnic identity formation/retention, (2) conceptual frameworks and models of ethnic identity formation/retention, (3) contextual factors in ethnic identity formation/retention, (4) ethnic identity retention/formation among young adults, (5) ethnic identity retention/formation among Korean Americans.

2.1 Concepts of Ethnic Identity Formation/Retention

Due to the growing numbers of ethnic minorities in the United States, Canada, and many European countries, ethnic group membership and identification have drawn academic attention (Phinney, 1990). The issue of ethnic identity is significant in that it has critical implications for
policy matters, political decisions, and social stability (Phinney). Despite significant scholarly attention to the concept, however, the definition of ethnic identity has not been agreed upon. For example, Rotheram and Phinney (1987) defined ethnic identity as “one’s sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one’s thinking, perception, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership” (p. 13). Mithun (1983) explained that members of ethnic groups share a sense of tradition that may stem from common religious, physical, linguistic, aesthetic, or historical origins, and that the term “belonging” (DeVos & Romanucci-Ross, 1975) is closely related to sex, biological features, time and place of birth, and descent. Interestingly, Isajiw (1990) defined ethnic identity as “one aspect of the way in which individuals conceive of their location within and their relationship to the social system at large and to others” (p. 11). Thus, from their point of view, ethnic identity is just one of the ways individuals position themselves in society. In a more recent work, Portes and Rumbout (2001) argued that “ethnic identification begins with the application of a label to oneself in a cognitive process of self-categorization, involving not only a claim to membership in a group or category but also a contrast of one’s group or category with other groups or categories” (p. 151).

Many scholars considered ethnic identity to be a socio-psychological phenomenon that derives from membership in an ethnic group (Isajiw, 1990). According to Isajiw, since ethnic identity involves positioning oneself in the societal and community context, it is not only a psychological phenomenon, but also a social phenomenon. Therefore, ethnic identity can consist of external and internal factors. Isajiw considered the external aspects of ethnic identity to encompass observable behavior, both cultural and social, such as (1) speaking one’s mother tongue and practicing ethnic traditions; (2) participation in ethnic social networks such as family and peer groups; (3) participation in ethnic institutional organizations, including churches,
schools, and media; (4) participation in ethnic voluntary associations such as clubs and youth organizations; and (5) participation in functions supported by ethnic organizations (e.g., picnics, concerts and public lectures). The internal aspects of ethnic identity included images, values, attitudes, feelings, and ideas. Nagel (1994) and Rassool (1999) claimed that these internal aspects are strongly interwoven with external conditions and dependent on each other. According to Isajiw, internal aspects of ethnic identity are composed of cognitive, moral, and affective dimensions. The cognitive dimension of identity refers to the self-images and images of one’s group. It includes stereotypes of self or of a group, knowledge of group’s heritage, historical pasts and values. The moral dimension of identity includes feelings of group obligations such as teaching the ethnic language to one’s children and marrying within the group. The affective, or cathectic, dimension refers to feelings of attachment to one’s ethnic group. These feelings include (1) feelings of security with and sympathy and associative preference for members of one’s group, and (2) feelings of security and comfort with the cultural patterns of one’s group.

Ethnic identity retention was defined by Isajiw (1990) as “the extent to which attributes that can be identified as characteristic of the specific ethnic group are present among second or subsequent generations” (p. 34). According to Isajiw, knowledge of ethnic language, ethnic-group friendship, use of ethnic media, and ethnic traditions such as food, customary celebration of holidays or events, and presence of and retention of certain artistic objects (i.e., items of home decoration and costume dress) are considered as important means of ethnic-identity retention. Isajiw further argued that there is a general decline in the retention of these ethnic traits from generation to generation, regardless of nationalities of immigrants. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) emphasized the role of mother tongue in ethnic self-identification among minorities and argued that losing ability to speak in an ethnic language is equivalent to losing part of one’s ethnic
identity. They claimed that the decisive turning point in ethnic or national self-identification occurs in the second generation since by the third generation any residual proficiency in the foreign languages is lost. Gans (1979) also argued that in the third generation, the secular ethnic cultures which immigrants brought with them are only an ancestral memory, or an exotic tradition to be savored once in a while in a museum or at an ethnic event. Thus, the later generations may have a sense of belonging and connection to ancestral home that can be described as “symbolic ethnicity” (Gans). Gans explained symbolic ethnicity as being “characterized by nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior.” (p. 9).

2.2 Conceptual Frameworks and Models of Ethnic Identity Formation

As ethnic identity is a fundamental issue in research on ethnicity, it has been of interest to social scientists from across disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, and social work (Phinney, 1992). There have been also many efforts to theorize and model ethnic identity formation (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Cross, 1980, 1987; Erickson, 1968; Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1989; Verkuyten & Kwa, 1994; Wilkinson, 1985). Many theories or models of ethnic identity formation approach the process from the socio-cognitive and developmental perspective. For instance, according to Erickson’s theory of ego identity formation, achieved identity is the result of a period of exploration and experimentation that usually takes place during adolescence and leads to a decision and a commitment in diverse areas including occupation, religion, and political orientation. On the basis of Erikson’s theory of ego identity
formation and using the dimensions of commitment and exploration, Marcia (1966, 1980) proposed four identity statuses to describe the process of identity formation among adolescents. Commitment represents a foreclosed status, usually on the basis of parental values, and exploration is explained by a status of self-examination and reflection on one’s ethnic identity. Based on the presence or absence of commitment and exploration, the four identity statuses include: “diffused” (characterized by the absence of commitment and exploration); “foreclosed” (characterized by the presence of commitment but absence of exploration, usually as a result of accepting parental teachings); “in moratorium” (that involves exploring self-identity before making a commitment); and “achieved” (characterized by the presence of both commitment and exploration).

Cross (1980, 1987) identified four steps in the process of forming an ethnic identity. He claimed that in the ‘pre-encounter stage,’ individuals can distinguish themselves from the mainstream culture by denying their own culture and appreciating the dominant culture. When children experience discrimination, they face the ‘encounter stage’ and become aware of their membership in their own ethnic group. In the next ‘immersion stage,’ children involve themselves in the ways of their ethnic group. They are likely to develop a high degree of awareness of their cultures of origin and may begin to devalue the ways of their ethnic group. Eventually, in the ‘internalization stage,’ children begin to have clear, confident internalized ethnic identity. In a similar vein, Wilkinson (1985) viewed ethnic identity formation as a lifelong process. Wilkinson’s model of ethnic identity formation begins in the ‘denial stage’ and progresses to the stages of ‘inner awakening’ (noticing others from the same culture of origin), ‘verbal acknowledgement’, ‘identification’, ‘acceptance,’ and finally to the ‘integration’ of ethnicity into identity.
Helms (1990) developed a six-stage racial identity model for whites that could be used to examine racial attitudes toward blacks and other ethnic groups. The stages of the model include: (1) contact, conceptualized as lacking awareness of racial differences; (2) disintegration, defined as a state of confusion resulting from knowing that one belongs to a white racial group that perhaps has a history of discrimination against other ethnic groups; (3) reintegration, considered a stage in which there is a sense of superiority over other racial groups; (4) pseudo-independence, characterized by a superficial acceptance of members of other racial groups; (5) immersion/emersion, viewed as involving a deeper understanding of what it means to be white; and (6) autonomy, a stage of complete acceptance of both the strengths and weaknesses of white society, including culture and group membership.

These models have broadened our understanding of the dynamics of ethnic identity formation as it relates to contact with whites (Cross’ model) and blacks (Helms’ model). However, various stages of identity development, as proposed in these studies, cannot be generalized across all ethnic groups. In response to this issue, Atkinson et al. (1989) integrated the various perspectives of earlier models and proposed a five-stage racial/cultural identity development model (R/CID). The model can be applied to different ethnic groups such as Asians, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans. This model consists of five distinct stages, including: (1) conformity, considered a preference for the values of the dominant culture and society; (2) dissonance, viewed as a gradual reexamination of the attitudes and beliefs held by the dominant culture and society; (3) resistance and immersion, defined as a rejection of the dominant culture; (4) introspection, characterized as a stage involving a deeper understanding of the racial/ethnic group to which one belongs, as well as of other minority groups; (5) integrative awareness, the last stage, viewed as achieving a balance and a sense of security.
Phinney (1989) developed one of the first ethnic identity models for adolescents and young adults, which can also be applied across ethnic groups including African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and Whites (Rivera-Santiago, 1996). Ethnic identity development was conceptualized as a three-stage process based on the theoretical framework proposed by Erikson, and operationalized by Marcia (1966, 1980). The initial stage is characterized by a ‘lack of exploration of ethnicity,’ merging Marcia’s diffusion and foreclosure statuses. The next stage, ‘in moratorium,’ is viewed as an increased awareness of the importance of one’s ethnic identity but is accompanied by confusion about the meaning of one’s own ethnicity. The last stage, described as an ‘achievement of ethnic identity,’ occurs after a person had a chance to understand oneself and the culture, and reveal a sense of the self as a member of an ethnic minority group.

Despite the difference in terminologies, these stage models in general suggest that people go through a process of reflecting on, understanding and appreciating their ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990). Table 1 shows the differences in term uses across models based on Marcia’s (1966, 1980) ego identity statuses. Ethnic identity development and retention among 1.5 Korean Americans in this study will be discussed in light of Marcia’s and Phinney’s (1989) models. Phinney’s model seems to be particularly well suited for the purpose of this study since it has been used to examine the ethnic identity formation among adolescents and young adults (Rivera-Santiago, 1996) and, moreover, it has been applied across ethnic groups including Asian Americans.
Table 1: *Marcia’s Ego Identity Statuses and Proposed Stages of Ethnic Identity*

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<td>Cross (1978)</td>
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<td>Encounter</td>
<td>Immersion/emersion</td>
<td>Internalization</td>
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<td>Kim (1981)</td>
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<td>White identified</td>
<td>Awakening to social political awareness</td>
<td>Redirection to Asian American consciousness</td>
<td>Incorporation</td>
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* Identity crisis is not one of Marcia’s original four statuses.


### 2.3 Contextual Factors in Ethnic Identity Formation/Retention

Another stream of literature examined external factors that condition ethnic identity development and retention (e.g., Danico, 2004; Huh & Reid, 2000; Kelly & Nagel, 2002; Mobasher, 2006). In this section, the important factors that affect ethnic identity development and retention will be discussed.
2.3.1 Familial context

It has been widely acknowledged that the family has a major socializing influence on children and adolescents within a cultural context (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). In this respect, many studies have examined the importance of family and social networks within the ethnic community in the formation and retention of ethnic identity (Huh & Reid, 2000; Kibria, 2000; Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin, 2006; Yancey et al., 1976).

Phinney (1992) argued that appreciation of ethnic heritage among adolescents is heavily conditioned by their families and by their involvement in the ethnic community. Similarly, Phinney et al. (2001) claimed that parental attitudes, including direct teaching within the family, can influence ethnic identity development. According to Huh and Reid (2000), not only direct teaching (e.g., telling the ethnic history, encouraging children to wear traditional dress and to eat ethnic food), but also parental encouragement and co-participation in ethnic cultural activities significantly influence the ethnic identity formation process. Studies also showed that the less the parents are involved in ethnic cultural activities, the less likely their children are to develop ethnic identities (Bankston & Zhou, 1995; Huh & Reid).

The social networks of parents and family structures were also argued to be important factors in ethnic identity development and retention among children (Waters, 1994). Umaña-Taylor et al. (2006) examined the interface of individual, familial, and school characteristics to understand adolescents’ ethnic identity development. They used an ecological model of ethnic identity that considers macro-ecological (e.g., socioeconomic status) and micro-ecological contextual factors (e.g., representation of the adolescent’s ethnic group in the neighborhood) to theorize ethnic identity development. Their study focused on adolescents from five ethnic groups, including the Indian sub-continent (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh), China,
the Philippines, Vietnam, and Salvador. The study’s findings revealed that familial ethnic socialization (FES) was strongly related to ethnic identity achievement regardless of cultural traditions, values, beliefs, and histories in the United States. In other words, it showed that the familial context is critical to ethnic identity formation across ethnic groups.

The socio-economic status (SES) of families and the outlook on race relations have been also found to play a role in ethnic identity formation. In Ontai-Grzebik and Raffaili’s (2004) study, young Latino adults who were younger, had strong Latino orientation, spent more time in the United States, and whose parents had more formal education reported higher levels of ethnic identity achievement. Conversely, no relationship was found between stages of ethnic identity and social class among 47 multiethnic college students in Phinney’s and Alipuria’s (1990) study. In Waters’ (1994) study of second generation teens and young adults, 57% of the middle class teens (defined as at least one parent with a college degree or a professional or business position) described themselves in ethnic terms, while only 17% of the working class (defined as a parent working with a low-skill job) and poor teens (operationalized as parents being unemployed) identified themselves ethnically. Waters further argued that assimilation into American culture and society among the second generation Haitian immigrants was complicated by their race and class. Those who identified themselves as American and who were assimilating into the American black subculture reported experiencing racial discrimination and blocked social mobility. However, teens who identified themselves in ethnic terms (e.g., Haitian) and whose parents were more likely to be middle class saw clearer opportunities for the future and rewards for their educational accomplishments despite the existence of racism and discrimination.

Intergenerational conflict has also been shown to affect ethnic identity development and retention among adolescents. The clash between two cultures is a widely cited problem of
intergenerational relations (Waters, 1994). Whereas immigrant children become Americanized quickly, many immigrant parents struggle to keep up with the speed of the cultural adaptation. Concerns from parents that their children may forget their ancestral roots are likely to trigger conflict (Zhou, 1997). Moreover, different language, lack of conversation topics, and lack of shared time between immigrant parents and children sometimes can lead to conflict situations (Kang, Okazaki, Abelmann, Kim-Prieto, & Lan, 2010). These, in turn, may further pressure immigrant children to become Americanized and to deny their ethnic identities in order to distinguish themselves from their parents (Waters).

2.3.2 Language

Since language is an important means of learning values, behaviors, and lifestyles, it has been one of the most frequently discussed contributors to ethnic identity development (Phinney et al., 2001). Weisskirch (2005) examined the relationship between language brokering, which refers to children of immigrant families translating and interpreting for their parents and other individuals (Morales & Hanson, 2005), and ethnic identities among Latino early adolescents. The study showed that language brokering positively contributed to ethnic identity development among the adolescents. The findings of Oh and Fuligni's (2010) study revealed that proficiency in heritage language is positively associated with ethnic identity among Latino, European, and Asian American adolescents. Many other studies also confirmed that there is a positive relationship between ethnic identity and ethnic language retention across ethnic groups (e.g., Bankston & Zhou, 1995; Kim & Chao, 2009).

Interestingly, in the Isajiw’s (1990) study, the relationship between the knowledge of the
mother tongue and ethnic identity has been interpreted differently. He investigated the relationship among ethnic origin, generational status, knowledge of ethnic language, reading and writing skills of ethnic language literature, and the frequency of use of the ethnic language among the first, second, and third generation German, Italian, Jewish and Ukrainian ethnic minority members. Isajiw’s findings clearly showed that the use of the ethnic language declines in the successive generations. However, the knowledge of the ethnic languages in successive generations also changes its function in that language becomes a symbolic means of ethnic identity reinforcement rather than an instrumental means of communication.

Several researchers claimed that the role of language in ethnic identity formation can be less than straightforward (Phinney et al., 2001). For instance, Vedder (2005) examined the relationship between the ethnic language and English proficiency among immigrant adolescents and their psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. Contrary to the researcher’s expectation, the ethnic language proficiency and ethnic identity were negatively correlated. The author explained his findings with the help of Cummins’ (1976) threshold model. This model claims that only when a person develops a high level of language competency in more than one language, the positive cognitive benefits of multilingualism can be realized and lead to positive psychological adaptation. Thus, the low level of ethnic language maintenance may be negatively related to ethnic identity.

Kim and Chao (2009) examined the relationship among ethnic language fluency, ethnic identity, and school performance among immigrant Chinese and Mexican adolescents. They argued that ethnic language fluency is an important component of ethnic identity for second generation Mexican adolescents but not for second generation Chinese adolescents. Thus, for second generation Chinese adolescents, ethnic language fluency may not be a good measure of
Ethnic identity retention. Contrary to their expectations, their findings showed that higher language competency in Spanish was significantly related to adolescents’ school performance across generations while higher ethnic identity exploration was found to be a significant predictor of school performance only among second generation Mexican youth.

Despite the divergent findings across different studies, it cannot be denied that proficiency in the ethnic language is related to the ethnic identity development among young people. Thus, the role of ethnic language must be accounted for when examining ethnic identity formation and retention (Pigott & Kalbach, 2005).

2.3.3 Ethnic community and socialization

The social interactions within the community and socialization with co-ethnic peers are also considered to be influential factors in developing ethnic identity (Phinney et al., 2001). According to Isajiw (1990), ethnic groups’ persistence dependents, to a large extent, on their members’ participation in ethnic organizations and institutions. Yancey et al. (1976) discussed the importance of connections with the ethnic community for ethnic identity preservation. According to the authors, since work opportunities for the late arrivals (those who came after the ethnic occupational structure has been established by earlier immigrants) were concentrated in “immigrant ghettos,” strong ethnic solidarity could be maintained. The formation of an ethnic enclave fostered by occupational and residential concentration strongly influenced development of ethnic identities among immigrants.

The argument that ethnic communities play important roles in ethnic identity formation and retention has been supported by several studies. For example, Garcia and Lega (1979)
showed that Cuban American adults who settled within ethnic communities showed higher levels of ethnic identity retention. Similarly, the Greek and Italian Australian adolescents felt more Greek or Italian when surrounded by their ethnic group members or while participating in traditional ethnic activities (Rosenthal & Hrynevich, 1985).

The interaction with ethnic peer groups can also play an important role in ethnic identity retention among immigrant adolescents (Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli, 2004). Phinney et al. (2001) showed that in-group peer interactions helped to develop a more consolidated ethnic identity among Mexican, Armenian, and Vietnamese adolescents and concluded that peer group interactions were one of the predictors of ethnic identity formation/retention along with ethnic language proficiency. Stodolska and Yi-Kook (2003) explored the impact of immigration on the emergence of ethnic identity and on post-immigration changes in leisure behavior among Korean, Mexican and Polish adolescent immigrants. Findings of the study confirmed the important role of peer group interactions in ethnic identity development by suggesting that Korean adolescent immigrants maintained their ethnic identity by comparing themselves with other members of their own ethnic group.

2.3.4 Religion

Researchers also focused on religion as one of the central components of ethnic identity. Religion was considered important due to the fact that it plays a significant role in the transmission of culture as well as provides the institutional framework for ethnic community formation (Thomson, 2002). Mitchell (2006) argued that religion is not only a marker of identity, but also that symbols, rituals and religious organizations are used to enhance a sense of ethnicity. The importance of religion in ethnic identity development and retention has been noted by Gans
(1979). He described ‘symbolic religiosity,’ which is similar to ‘symbolic ethnicity,’ as an attachment to a religious culture that does not necessarily require regular participation in the rituals or organizations. Such ‘symbolic’ rituals could be performed in such a way that does not conflict with people’s secular lifestyles. Gans further argued that minorities with strong religious roots tend to assimilate more slowly into mainstream society than secular groups.

Various studies examined the meaning and role of religion in supporting ethnic identity. For example, Stodolska and Livengood (2006) argued that religious beliefs strengthened the ethnic resilience among Muslim immigrants in the U.S. in the context of their leisure behavior. Kang et al. (2010) also claimed that religion has an influence on the development of ethnic identity despite differences across minority groups. The authors provided evidence that stronger ethnic identity development is associated with greater religious involvement among ethnic minority youth. Bruce (1994) pointed out that “what matters is not any individual’s religiosity, but the individual’s incorporation in an ethnic group defined by a particular religion” (p. 122).

The important role of religion in cultural preservation among immigrant groups has been noted in many studies. Demerath (2003) introduced the concept of ‘cultural religion’ defined as “an identification with a religious heritage without any religious participation or a sense of personal involvement per se” (p. 59). The quote demonstrates that even though a person might not participate in religious ceremonies or have a sense of belonging to a religion, religion can still serve as a marker of his or her ethnic identity if the ethnic group shares a religious heritage. According to Chong (1998), the ethnic church plays an important role in supporting a sense of ethnic identity among second-generation Korean Americans despite the fact that Christian identity does not define Korean ethnicity. By attending religious services in an ethnic church, ethnic minority members are likely to build or maintain their social networks with other Korean
Americans and to preserve ties to Korean culture and language.

2.3.5 **Racism and (negative) attitudes of the host society**

Experiences with racism and racial discrimination can also be salient factors in ethnic identity development and retention. Immigrants who are racially different from the mainstream are considered to be more likely to be exposed to racial discrimination and to negative stereotyping (Waters, 1994). Moreover, the effects of racism on ethnic identity development are also likely to differ among different racial and ethnic groups (Kibra, 2000). In some cases, racial and ethnic minorities may be denied a membership in the host society which ends up reinforcing their ethnic identity. For instance, Matute-Bianchi (1986) showed that as a reaction to social exclusion and subordination many Chicanos retained their ethnic identity. In other cases, experiencing racism or negative attitudes may lead to minorities renouncing their ethnic identity. For instance, according to Min and Kim (2000), even though they have little knowledge of Asian cultural traditions and language, third and fourth generation Asian ethnics experience significant stereotyping and have to struggle with the glass ceiling in the workplace. Such experiences with prejudice and discrimination strongly influence the formation of ethnic identity among Asian-Americans. Stodolska and Yi-Kook (2003) confirmed that ethnic identity among adolescent immigrants is constructed not only through self-realization of their cultural distinctiveness, but also through being labeled as different by outsiders of their ethnic groups. Additionally, ethnic identities of young immigrants were affected by institutional factors. Particularly in the context of school systems, whereas institutional settings are originally designed to ease the adaptation process for immigrant students, they often may bring about opposite outcomes and even effectively contribute to perpetuating ethnic inequalities and stereotypes.
2.3.6 Media

Due to the important roles ethnic media, including ethnic radio, television, and press play within ethnic communities, they may serve as significant means of ethnic identity development and retention (Isajiw, 1990). Isajiw argued that ethnic media function as a means of ‘keeping in touch’ with the community by announcing events and activities. They also shape public opinion regarding events and provide opportunities for contact with the ethnic language. Regular exposure to ethnic symbolism through artistic presentations may also stimulate ethnic consciousness among community members.

Research on media and ethnic identity formation found a relationship between the two to be quite complex. Media have often been found to play a positive role in maintaining ethnic identity by helping to connect with the homeland’s culture following immigration. Thomson (2000) claimed that even though immigrants live spatially dispersed, they and their children can develop and maintain social networks through keeping in touch with a virtual community of ethnic peer groups in their homeland. In her later study, Thomson (2002) argued that the new media including the Internet, satellite TV, and videos, help to negotiate new and hybrid cultures among the South Asian diaspora communities in the U.K. The South Asian immigrants create virtual communities with their ethnic peers, which allow for sharing ethnic cultures and thus, lead to retention of ethnic identity. Min and Kim (2000) also showed that the media enable contemporary immigrants to maintain their social networks so that they may retain their ethnic identity.

Mobasher (2006), however, asserted that a different relationship exists between media and ethnic identity development. In his analysis of ethnic identity preservation among Iranians in Los Angeles, the anti-Iranian narratives of American media influenced the formation of ethnic
identity among Iranian immigrants. According to the author, the constant exposure to negative images of Iran and the equation of Islam with fundamentalism, extremism, and terrorism by American mainstream media, played a central role in the construction of new ethnic identities among Iranian Americans. Participants in this study selectively linked pre-Islamic Persian culture and political ideology within their ethnic identity. The anti-Islamic and anti-Iranian images and the rise of political opposition and activism against the Islamic Republic of Iran perpetuated by the mainstream media contributed to the renewal of Persian ethnic identity among Iranians in the U.S.

2.3.7 Tradition

Ethnic traditions including food and dress are important factors which should be acknowledged in the discussions of ethnic identity development and retention. Ethnic group members as individuals or families may or may not continue to practice traditional customs, yet the traditions are an important fabric of one’s identity (Isajiw, 1990).

Isajiw (1990) asserted that the power of food as a symbol of ethnic identity should not be underestimated since it is one of the most widely spread customs within the ethnic community. He investigated the consumption of ethnic food associated with holidays and non-holidays among English, Germans, Italians, Jews and Ukrainians residing in Canada. His findings showed that despite decreases in the proportion of people consuming ethnic food across generations, ethnic food consumption remained high among the second and third generation Italians, Jews and Ukrainians. Consumption of ethnic food was the lowest among the third generation Germans, 28% of whom consumed ethnic food on holidays and 52% at other times. On the other
hand, Ukrainians tended to be more attached to ethnic food. Almost 90% of second generation Ukrainians consumed ethnic food during holidays and 92% during non-holidays.

Carrus, Nenci, and Caddeo (2009) also investigated the role of ethnic identity and perceived ethnic norms in the purchase of ethnic food products. The role of group and individual variables in the purchase of ethnic food products was tested using the theory of planned behavior (TPB). As predicted, the findings of the study showed that those with high levels of ethnic identification and stronger sense of ethnic group norms purchased ethnic foods most often, while the lowest frequency of ethnic food purchase was observed among those with low levels of ethnic identification and weaker sense of ethnic group norms.

In addition, it has been speculated that traditional clothing may also signify the degree of one’s ethnic identity retention. The relationship between traditional dress and ethnic identity retention has been examined by Chattaraman and Lennon (2008). They investigated whether consumption of cultural apparel by Asian Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians can be predicted based on the strength of their ethnic identification. The findings of the study supported the researchers’ assumption that the strength of ethnic identification was a significant predictor of cultural apparel consumption. Forney and Rabolt (1986) explored the relationship between ethnic identification and the use of ethnic dress among Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans, Mexicans, and Middle Eastern Europeans residing in the San Francisco Bay area. Researchers defined ethnic dress as traditional dress which symbolizes the ethnicity of the individual. The results were consistent with a study by Chattaraman and Lennon, in that individuals who scored high on ethnic identity also reported greater use of ethnic dress.
2.4 Ethnic Identity Retention/Formation among Young Adults

A significant amount of research on ethnic identity focused on adolescents and young adults. Erickson (1968) theorized that identity formation occurs primarily during adolescence and young adulthood, however, pursuing higher education extends the time of the identity formation into young adulthood (Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999; Waterman, 1999). While the majority of the studies concentrated on young children and adolescents from racial minority groups, far less work focused on ethnic identity development among young adults (Phinney, 1990).

The studies that examined identity development among young adults show mixed results. For instance, empirical studies based on Erickson’s theory of ego identity development suggested that the majority of White, middle-class young adults have not reached the identity achievement stage by the age of 21 (Kroger, 2000) or by their college years (Min & Kim, 2000). White and Burke (1987) examined the process of ethnic identity formation among Black and White college students. Using the framework of identity theory, this study investigated the relationship between ethnic identification, self-esteem, identity salience, identity commitment, and other structural characteristics (e.g., SES). The results confirmed the hypothesis that identity salience, commitment, and self-esteem are related to ethnic identity among White and Black students. However, it was noted that ethnic identity processes seemed to work differently between these two ethnic groups as a result of differences in the dominant and minority statuses. Whites with greater commitment to the ethnic identity showed lower levels self-esteem. In contrast, the more committed African Americans were to an African American ethnic identity, the higher was their self-esteem. Beekhoven, De Jong, and Van Hout (2004) explored changes in ethnic identity dynamics among minority university students in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The findings of the
study confirmed the initial beliefs that there could be a relationship between educational environment and changes in ethnic identity. The results showed that students who had a single ethnic identity (e.g., either Dutch or immigrant) experienced more personal problems such as depression, family conflicts, problems with friends, fatigue and stress than did students with double ethnic identities (e.g., a sense of being Dutch and ethnic member at the same time). As a result, the research hypothesis that students with a double ethnic identity would be less integrated than students with a Dutch identity or a single ethnic identity was rejected.

Other studies on ethnic identity development among young adults have linked culture/ethnic-related constructs and ethnic identity development to career-related variables, such as career development (Duffy & Klingaman, 2009). For example, Carter and Constantine (2000) investigated the relationship between racial identity and career maturity and life role salience among African American and Asian American undergraduate students. Career maturity was defined as “individuals’ degree of development in reference to six organized career tasks: degree of planning, use of resources, career decision making, career information, information about the world of work, and information about one’s preferred occupation” (p. 176). While they found no significant relationship among the levels of racial identity, career maturity, and life role salience among Black students, Asian American students who were more aware of their racial identity had significantly higher levels of career maturity.

A significant number of studies (e.g., Engberg, Meader, & Hurtado, 2003; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002) have emphasized the importance of classroom and other structured co-curricular activities in the college setting in students’ identity development. For example, Sáenz, Ngai, and Hurtado (2006) pointed out that diverse college environments facilitate opportunities for interactions that help to increase students’ knowledge of other races and ethnicities. They
further argued that diversity coursework, service learning, and participation in intergroup
dialogue in the classroom and curricular activities plays important roles in shaping attitudes and
perceptions towards students’ own ethnicity and other racial and ethnic groups.

Ethnic minority college students are exposed to the environment that demands interaction
with ethnically and racially diverse peer groups. Since an individual’s interactions with members
of other ethnic groups can significantly influence ethnic identity achievement, affirmation and
belonging, many studies put emphasis on ethnic identity and intergroup relations (Thompson,
Neville, Weathers, Poston, & Atkinson, 1990; Wright & Littleford, 2002). Wright and Littleford
examined factors affecting ethnic identity and attitudes toward other ethnic groups among
college students from five ethnic groups, including African Americans, Asian Americans,
Hispanic Americans, Caucasians, and Native Americans, who were attending a predominantly
White public university. The findings showed that ethnic group self-identification, negative and
positive interracial experiences, perceptions of racial bias, social support, just-world beliefs, and
psychological distress were associated with various components of ethnic identity among the
minority students. The findings of Thompson et al.’s study also revealed that for African
Americans, perceived experiences of racism and attitudes toward race were significant predictors
of ethnic identification.

Despite good-faith efforts at diversification of campuses, a number of colleges and
universities have been struggling to manage diversity (Levin, Van Laar, & Foote, 2006). Even
though these efforts have resulted in an increased number of students of color, campuses have
remained largely segregated along ethnic and racial lines. Such ethnic enclaving, ethnic
clustering, or ethnic enclosure -- or a tendency among ethnic minorities to associate primarily
with members of the same ethnic group -- is a growing concern on many college campuses
(Broadway & Flesch, 2000). Thus, a number of studies have examined the phenomenon of 'self-segregation' (Hoxter & Lester, 1995; McCormick, 1998). For example, McCormick (1996) explored ethnic segregation patterns in students’ friendship choices in college. His study revealed that almost 43% of college students found their interaction patterns to be segregated. Such segregation significantly restricted minority students’ opportunities to engage in campus communities and social circles. Sidel (1995) emphasized the relationship between 'self-segregation' among Asian students and their insecurity about language skills. It has also been argued that self-segregation may not be voluntary but result from a hostile racial atmosphere on campus.

Co-ethnic groups were found to significantly influence ethnic identity among college students (Jung & Lee, 2004), although the results of the studies in terms of the mechanisms behind these relationship varied. For instance, Jung and Lee explored how intercultural identity was constructed among Korean Americans in two universities in the U.S. Their findings showed that peer groups were critical in identity construction process since friendship networks helped to maintain a sense of respect for Korean customs and language patterns, which directly influenced the degree of ethnic identity retention. Moreover, participation in ethnic organizations on campus reinforced cultural homogeneity among Korean American students. Religion turned out to be another crucial factor for Korean American college students in terms of their identity development. According to the study results, most of the interviewees attended Koran church on a regular basis with their college friends. Many of them actively engaged in church activities by serving as Sunday school teachers and Korean language teachers, which reinforced ethnic self-identification. Levin et al.’s (2006) study focused on the relationships among ethnic enclosure, perceptions of ethnic discrimination, and social and academic adjustment among university
students from different racial groups. Interestingly, their findings showed that Latino students with more co-ethnic friends expressed both decreased sense of belonging to their ethnic group and lower academic performance at the time of graduation. For African American students, however, the study argued that co-ethnic group friendships had an indirect positive effect on academic motivation by increasing perceptions of discrimination, which caused African American students’ drive to perform better academically. These results spotlighted group differences between Latino and African American students in how they reacted to having in-group friends, and in how their sense of belonging to the larger campus community was related to their academic commitment, motivation, and performance.

Another stream of research has focused on the relationship between psychological well-being and ethnic identity among young adults (e.g., Hovey, Kim, & Seligman, 2006; Johnson & Arbona, 2006). For instance, St. Louis and Liem (2005) investigated the relationship among ego identity, ethnic identity, and psychosocial functioning among ethnic minority and majority college students. The results showed that minority students reported stronger ethnic identification than did White students and that a stronger sense of ethnic identity was associated with more positive psychosocial outcomes among ethnic minority students, but not among Whites. Lee, Yun, Yoo, and Nelson (2010) compared ethnic identity and well-being among Korean American adoptees and Korean immigrants, U.S.-born Korean Americans, and Korean international students. They examined the relationship between ethnic identity and well-being within each group. Immigrant and U.S.-born Korean Americans had higher ethnic identity scores than the adoptees and international students. The results also suggested that overall, ethnic identity was an important predictor of the well-being among Korean American college students. Quintana (2007) argued that adolescents and young adults with stronger ethnic identities are more likely to have
higher self-esteem, a higher sense of belonging, lower depression, a higher sense of general well-being, and a greater fulfillment of academic goals as compared to those with lower ethnic identification. Jaret and Reitzes (2009) confirmed the idea that how young adults conceive of themselves as college students and the way they formulate their own racial-ethnic identities is related to their self-esteem, efficacy, and academic performance.

2.5 Ethnic Identity Retention/Formation among Korean Americans

Studies on ethnic identity formation and retention among Korean Americans have primarily concentrated on the roles of religion, familial influences, language, and race/racism. Asian Americans, including Korean Americans in the United States are often called a “model minority” (Kibra, 2000). According to Kibra, the term “model minority” evokes images of Asian Americans having a strong work ethic and devotion to education. It seems to complement Asian Americans who successfully adapt to the American environment, situating them in a privileged position within the racial hierarchy of the U.S. society. Thus, some Koreans in the United States prefer to be bicultural, retaining their cultural heritage and ethnic identity while incorporating aspects of the dominant host culture into their identity and lifestyle (Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997). However, as Oyserman and Sakamoto claimed, at the same time, the Anglo mainstream desires to keep Asian Americans peripheralized so that they maintain their minority status. While ethnic identity is optional for European Americans as they are privileged to belong to the larger “White mainstream,” Asian Americans do not have this option. According to Yi (2005), the perception of discrimination among second generation Korean Americans is significantly higher than among first generation co-ethnics, because they are more likely to have contact with other ethnic groups and, thus, became more aware of their socially unequal position within the
Kibria (2000) explored how race affects the choice of ethnic identities among Korean and Chinese Americans using in-depth interviews with second generation ethnic minority members residing in the Los Angeles and Boston areas. She argued that due to their physical distinctiveness, Korean Americans are usually perceived as foreigners, which presents two kinds of identity dilemmas for them. The first challenge involves their identity as “American,” referring to the nature of their ties and relationship to American society. The second challenge is related to their ties to an ethnic culture and community. On the one hand, some Korean Americans attempt to downplay their ethnic background in order to establish American identity. On the other hand, however, they feel obligated to cultivate their ethnic identity to meet the expectations of others or to take advantage of the social capital afforded by membership in the ethnic community.

Studies of ethnic identity, specifically focusing on Asian Americans, frequently employ terms such as “fresh off the boat (FOB),” and “whitewashed,” which is meant to represent a degree of ethnic identity retention (Pyke & Dang, 2003). The term, FOB refers to those who display any of several ethnic identifiers such as speaking accented English, speaking Korean or Vietnamese with peers, engaging in behavior and leisure pursuits associated with newer arrivals or ethnic traditionalists, dressing in styles associated with the homeland or ethnic enclaves, or socializing with recently immigrated coethnic or ethnic traditionalists (Pyke & Dang, p. 156).

The term “whitewashed” is used to describe “those who have assimilated to the White mainstream and retain few ethnic practices” (Pyke & Dang, p. 156). It also describes “those who cannot or refuse to speak Korean or Vietnamese with peers, have many non-Asian friends, date non-Asians, behave and dress in ways associated with Whites, or are unfamiliar with ethnic customs” (Pyke & Dang, p. 156). Other terms such as “banana” (“yellow on the outside and
white on the inside”), “Twinkie,” “bleached,” and “sell-out” have also been used in reference to more assimilated Korean Americans (Pyke & Dang). These terms illustrate the ambiguity and dilemmas related to ethnic identity retention among Korean Americans. Pyke and Dang claimed that these categories mark not only symbolic boundaries but also interactional boundaries that are internally maintained. Thus, it can be argued that ethnic identification is interrelated with dynamics of race which requires constant negotiation among Korean Americans.

Family is one of the strongest contributors to ethnic identity retention among Korean Americans. Among other factors, parental value orientation is frequently cited as a factor that has a significant influence on identity among 1.5 and second generation Korean immigrants. Research on Korean families showed that immigrant parents prize family connectedness, personal sacrifice for important others, self-perfection through education, and hard work, which constitute the core values of Confucian ethics (Chao & Tseng, 2002). According to Park (2005), the pressure put on academic achievement of children affects parent-child relationship in many Korean families. As Koreans place a great emphasis on education, many parents pressure their children to excel in school and gain admission to prestigious Ivy League universities.

Patriarchal family relations shaped by Confucian philosophy are another important characteristic of Korean households (Lim, 1997). Confucian patriarchy is characterized by “the rule of three obediences,” which emphasizes women’s subordination to men. A woman should obey her father before her marriage, her husband after her marriage, and her son(s) after her husband’s death (Lim). In addition to this ideology, the fact that many Korean women are stay at home mothers gives more power to the male breadwinners. A study by Kim (1994) showed that in 1985, 80% of Korean women quit their jobs after they got married to concentrate on their families. A survey conducted in 2003 showed that 58% of Korean married women quit their jobs
once they got married (YTN, 2003). Even though the rates are decreasing, many women are still expected to give up their employment to become hyunmo yangch’o (a wise mother and a good wife) in contemporary Korea (Min, 2001).

It has been hypothesized that downward socio-economic mobility among many male immigrants leads to a status change among women in immigrant households (Chuang & Tamis-LeMonda, 2009; Foner, 1997; Lamb & Bougher, 2009). Since women have to contribute to generating household income due to their husbands’ lower earning power, they often gain more authority in the family structure after immigrating to the U.S. (Chuang & Tamis-LeMonda; Foner; Lamb & Bougher; Min, 2001; Park, 2008). Moreover, many daughters of immigrant parents or wives of the first generation immigrants from Korea often reject traditional values and norms that may be responsible for their subordination. Pike and Johnson (2003) suggested that resistance to gender oppression among Korean and Vietnamese American women often led to the rejection of ethnic culture and ethnic identity. The study showed that many of the Korean American and Vietnamese American women believed that White women were independent, self-assured, outspoken, powerful and treated as equals, whereas Asian American women were submissive, quiet, and diffident. These perceptions made them pursue an American identity rather than maintain their ethnic identity.

Intergenerational conflict is another commonly mentioned issue in the discussions of ethnic identity in the context of Korean families. Some of the research suggested that reasons for problematic relationship between many Korean immigrant parents and their children include considerable cultural differences and the language barrier (Kang et al., 2010). In Kang et al.’s study, children of Korean immigrants often claimed that their parents’ hard work and self-employment led to limited interactions within the family, which further hindered
intergenerational understanding. Zhou (2004) noted that 31% of the Korean American children experience language barrier with their family members. This language barrier among Korean families seems to be higher than among other Asian immigrant families including Japanese Americans and Filipino Americans. Since first generation Korean Americans usually have limited English language skills, their children often play roles of family interpreters. This, in turn, leads to a reversal of power relations in family settings as parents are forced to depend on their children in many important matters such as real estate purchases or doctor visits (Kang et al.; Park, 2005). Additionally, parents’ concern for their children’s choice of friends, which is related to worries about the loss of cultural traits and potential intermarriage, can also lead to intergenerational conflicts (Stodolska, 2008). This failure in mutual understanding between parents and children may motivate the immigrant children to try to assimilate into the mainstream society by giving up their own ethnic identities (Kang et al.).

Religion also influences formation of ethnic identity among Korean Americans. Chong (1998) argued that church is an important arena for the transmission and maintenance of traditional Korean values. In an ethnographic study of Korean American Christians in Chicago, she showed the ways in which the Korean Evangelical Protestant church functioned in the construction and maintenance of ethnic identity and ethnic boundaries among second generation Korean Americans. As a site of cultural reproduction for the second generation, Korean ethnic churches supported ethnic identity development in two ways. First, they helped to pass on Korean culture to the next generations and, second, core traditional Korean values were legitimized through the identification with conservative Christian morality and world views. In her study of the relationship between ethnic identity and religion among Korean Americans, Park (1997) argued that “to be Buddhist is to be Korean” (p. 202), which implied that religion and a
sense of ethnicity are intricately tied together.

The language has been also shown to be one of the most salient factors in shaping ethnic identity among Korean Americans. In Jeon’s (2010) study, some of the Korean American college students responded that they learned the Korean language to reclaim their heritage or to become a “real Korean,” while others took Korean language classes to better communicate with families, relatives and friends. You (2005) examined how Korean American children negotiate their ethnic identity as Korean Americans while learning the Korean language. The results of the study suggested that maintaining the ethnic language was significant for Korean American children in terms of helping them develop a positive ethnic identity. Jo’s (2001) study examined how second-generation Korean American students form and transform their sense of ethnicity through participation in Korean language classes. Interestingly, her results showed that among Korean American college students who attended Korean classes, higher English proficiency was not related to the loss of ethnic identity.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, ethnic identity development and retention have been explored. In particular, concepts of ethnic identity formation and retention, and development of conceptual frameworks and models have been reviewed. The factors affecting ethnic identity formation and retention such as familial context, language, ethnic community and socialization, religion, racism and attitudes of the host society were also discussed. In addition, ethnic identity retention and formation among young adults and Korean Americans were discussed.

Since ethnic identity is an important issue in today’s diverse society, it has been actively studied across disciplines. However, little is known about the roles of travel to the ancestral
homelands in ethnic identity development, even if the relationship between the two is strongly anticipated. Since the current study will examine the relationship among travel information search behavior, travel motivation, and ethnic identification among 1.5 Korean Americans, this research project will contribute to the existing literature in ethnic and tourism studies.
CHAPTER III
LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction – Travel Market and Tourist Motivations

According to Crompton (1979), the travel market can be divided into four segments: personal business travel, government or corporate business travel, visiting friends and relatives travel, and pleasure/vacation travel. The majority of tourist motivation studies have focused on pleasure/leisure vacation travelers (e.g., Crompton; Gnoth, Zins, Lengmueller, & Boshoff, 2000; Moscardo, Morrison, Pearce, Lang, & O’Leary, 1996) and investigated the motivations behind pleasure travel (Sneppenger et al., 2006). In this section of the literature review we will explore diverse tourist motivations and how they change depending on the purpose of travel. Specifically, motivations among leisure/pleasure tourists, heritage tourists, and diaspora tourists will be examined.

3.1.1 Tourist motivations

Tourist motivation has been considered one of the most important topics in the field of tourism. As Crompton (1979) noted, it is possible to describe the who, when, where, and how of tourism, but it is not easy to answer the question “why,” a crucial factor in understanding tourist behavior (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Since motivation is often argued to be the driving force behind all actions, it becomes the starting point for studying tourist behavior and for understanding the tourism systems (Pearce & Lee). From a practitioner’s perspective, motivation research is also
important because of its significance for marketing, designing, and planning tourism, as well as evaluating service delivery (Snepenger et al., 2006).

Although the importance of tourist motivation has been acknowledged, the researchers still struggle with how to define the concept. A frequently used definition of motivation is based on Murray’s (1964) study, which claimed that “motive is an internal factor that arouses, directs, and integrates a person’s behavior” (p. 7). More specifically, Crompton and McKay (1997) defined tourist motivation as “a dynamic process of internal psychological factors (needs and wants) that generate a state of tension or disequilibrium within individuals” (p. 427). Snepenger et al. (2006) claimed that motivation has been studied by many researchers as it is (1) foundational to tourist behaviors (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; Pearce, 1982; Snepenger et al.); (2) crucial to understanding the vacation decision-making process (Dann, 1977; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005; Snepenger et al.); and (3) essential to assessing the satisfaction from their travel (Dann, 1981; Snepenger et al.). Over the last 40 years, research on tourist motivation has focused mainly on defining the key elements of travel motives (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Iso-Ahola, 1982), exploring methodological issues (Fodness, 1994; Ryan & Glendon, 1998), and examining cross-cultural differences in motivations (Kim & Predeaux, 2005; Jönsson & Devonish, 2008).

One of the goals of early research in the field was to identify the key elements of tourist motivation (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977). The two early foundational studies isolated the dominant “push” and “pull” factors. This theory is based on the idea that an individual is pushed to engage in travel by internal imbalances and the need to seek an optimal level of arousal, and pulled by the unique characteristics of a destination (Snepenger et al., 2006). “Push” factors are considered to be socio-psychological motives of an individual to travel, while the “pull” factors are generally thought of as motives aroused by the attractiveness of a specific destination.
Dann’s (1977) study was one of the first attempts to answer the question, “what makes tourists travel?” He argued that tourists’ motives lie in socio-psychological concepts such as “anomie” and “ego-enhancement,” both being the “push” factors. According to Dann, people have a need for love and affection and a desire to communicate with others. On the other hand, they also have a desire to be removed from their everyday lives and it is this feeling that stimulates travel. Dann further argued that people need to be recognized and travel provides an opportunity for ego-enhancement. Crompton (1979) explored tourist motivations and identified seven socio-psychological and two cultural motives. According to him, the seven socio-psychological motives include: escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, and facilitation of social interaction (all classified as push factors). The two cultural motives are novelty and education. They were both categorized as the pull factors partially related to the destination attributes.

It has been commonly suggested that push and pull factors are not mutually exclusive or entirely independent of each other (Klenosky, 2002). Dann (1981) argued that they both respond to and reinforce each other. Crompton (1979) also noted that “socio-psychological motives may be useful not only in explaining the initial arousal, energizing, or “push” to take a vacation, but may also have the potential to direct the tourist toward a particular destination” (p. 412).

Based on the foundational research on tourist motivation, a significant number of studies were conducted to identify the reasons why tourists travel (Gnoth et al., 2000; Jamal & Lee, 2003; Pearce & Lee, 2005; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). Gnoth et al. studied how mood and emotions impact motivations to travel, and examined the meaning of static versus dynamic
orientations as emotions and expectations from travel. They found that there are significant correlations between mood and emotions. For example, less active people are more likely to want to escape while more dynamic people tend to seek new challenges and experiences. Jamal and Lee explored the factors influencing tourist motivation at both the macro and micro levels. Macro level investigation focused on the broad social forces such as a search for authenticity, which can motivate travel. On the other hand, micro level examination was centered on internal psychological forces of individuals such as the needs and intrinsic motivation to travel. Pearce and Lee’s study explored the relationship between patterns of travel motivation and travel experience. They concluded that while the need to escape/relax, search for novelty, relationship, and self-development were significant for all tourists, there were differences in the motivations between tourists having high (defined as “experienced” or “very experienced”) and low (defined as “inexperienced” or “somewhat experienced”) levels of travel experience. The findings of this study showed that tourists who had high levels of travel experience were more likely to be motivated by self-development through host-site involvement and nature seeking, whereas those who had low levels of travel experience were more likely to be motivated by stimulation, personal development, self-actualization, security, nostalgia, romance, and recognition.

A number of studies focused on the empirical examination of push and pull factors in the tourism arena (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Oh, Uysal, & Weaver, 1995; Turnbull & Uysal, 1995; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). Even though each of these studies sought to reveal motivational influences, they differed in terms of the emphasis of investigation (Klenosky, 2002). Some of the studies focused on push factors only (e.g., Cha, McCleary, & Uysal, 1995; Fodness, 1994), or pull factors only (e.g. Fakeye & Crompton, 1991), or examined both push and pull factors (e.g. Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003; Wang, 2004). The common push factors
identified in the studies were escape from everyday environment, novelty, social interaction, and prestige (Kim et al., 2003). Research examining pull factors showed more varied results. For instance, in his study of visitors to a famous winter destination in Texas, Fakeye and Crompton identified six pull factors from a list of 32 attribute items. They included social opportunities and attractions, natural and cultural amenities, accommodations and transportation, infrastructure, foods, friendly people, physical amenities and recreation activities, as well as bars and evening entertainment. Turner and Uysal revealed different pull factors including heritage/culture, city enclave, comfort-relaxation, beach resort, outdoor resources, rural surroundings, and low cost of travel. Kim et al. examined the influence of push and pull factors on visitors to Korean national parks. In this study, four push factors were revealed: family togetherness, appreciating natural resources and health, escaping from everyday routine, and adventure/building friendship. The three pull factors were key tourist resources (i.e., beautiful and well-preserved natural environment), information and convenience of facilities, and accessibility and transportation. Wang found five push factors and four pull factors among visitors to Husangshan Mountain in China. From among the list of 17 push factors and 17 pull factors provided to the respondents, five push factors and four pull factors were identified. The push factors included relaxation and health, appreciating natural beauty and acquiring knowledge, enhancing human relationships, prestige (i.e., visiting places friends have not been to and/or fulfilling dream of visiting a place), and adventure and novelty. The pull factors included high quality of tourist resources, comfortable tourist environment, availability of information and convenient facilities, and management and service.

As Crompton (1979) argued, motivation is a crucial variable; it is the impelling and compelling force behind all (tourist) behaviors and it is very significant from a marketing
perspective in terms of planning tourism attractions, marketing tourist experiences (Snepenger et al., 2006), educating service personnel, and designing and operating destination infrastructure (Kim & Prideaux, 2005). In this vein, a practical approach to tourist motivation studies has emerged (Kim et al., 1996; Kim & Prideaux). For example, Kim et al. proposed and examined a model specifying the relationship between travel motivations and the use of information sources by senior travelers. The findings of the study suggested that the knowledge seekers who were identified as active travelers were more likely to search for travel information, whereas senior travelers who traveled to escape from routine and to relax were less likely to seek travel sources. Kim and Prideaux also conducted a study to explore the differences in motivations among tourists who visit Korea to better market it as a tourist destination. Tourists from Mainland China and Hong Kong were most likely to be motivated by “enjoying various tourist resources,” while Japanese and European tourists were less likely to be motivated by this dimension. Japanese tourists were the least likely to be motivated by “culture and history,” while Australians were more likely to be motivated by this dimension. The “escaping from everyday routine” dimension was most important for Chinese (Mainland) and Hong Kong tourists and the dimension of “socialization” was the most significant for American and Australian tourists. Moscardo et al. (1996) suggested that there exists a critical link among motives, destinations, and activities. Their findings confirmed the idea that travel motives could be interrelated with the destination choice and activities in the destination.

Another branch of literature has focused on cross-cultural differences in tourist motivations among international travelers (Jönsson & Devonish, 2008; Kim & Prideaux, 2005; Kozak, 2002; Pizam & Sussman, 1995). Kozak examined the differences in tourist motivations using four dimensions of motives: cultural motives, pleasure-seeking/fantasy-based motives,
relaxation-based motives, and physical motives. The results showed that there were motivational differences between British and German tourists. The former were interested in mixing with other tourists and having fun, whereas the latter had more nature- and culture-oriented motivations. The dimensions of relaxation and pleasure were equally important for tourists from both countries. Jönsson and Devonish’s recent study examined the effects of nationality, gender, and age on motivations of visitors to Barbados. The results of the study were consistent with previous research on the subject and found that there are significant differences between motivations of tourists from different countries. For example, when examining visitors to Barbados, compared with American, British, and tourists from other Caribbean countries, Canadian tourists seemed to be more motivated by the desire to be closer to nature and by engaging in sports. Their cultural motivations included visiting historical/cultural sites, increasing knowledge of new places, and meeting local people. British tourists tended to travel to Barbados to seek relaxation more than any other tourists. Compared with Caribbean tourists, British, Americans, and Canadians were more likely to be motivated by the desire to enjoy good weather and by relaxation-related motivations such as spending time with people they care about and being emotionally and physically refreshed. British and Canadian tourists tended to have stronger pleasure-seeking motivations than did tourists from Caribbean countries.

However, the use of nationality and country of residence as a variable to examine the tourist behavior was criticized by Dann (1993). Dann believed that: (1) many tourists can hold multiple nationalities and their country of origin may differ from their nationality; (2) there are cultural differences between people of the same nationality; (3) national identification can be unclear in case of countries that have gone through recent political changes (i.e., Russia and former Yugoslavia); (4) tourists from immigrant-receiving countries such as the United States
and Canada can have multiple national identities; and (5) many countries receiving tourists are considered multi-cultural (i.e., India and Brazil).

Tourist motivation studies have been conducted by employing different research methods. Some of the studies approached the research qualitatively, using predominantly personal interviews (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Yuan & McDonald, 1990). However, most research in this sub-field of tourism has employed quantitative methods (Gnoth et al., 2000; Kim & Predeaux, 2005; Turnbull & Uysal, 1995; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). Efforts have been made to develop scales to measure tourist motivations (Fodness, 1994; Ryan & Glendon, 1998). For example, Fodness (1994) developed a scale which included push factor items only: ego-defense, knowledge, reward maximization, punishment avoidance, value expression, and social adjustiveness. Ryan and Glendon applied the leisure motivation scale developed by Beard and Ragheb (1983) that included an intellectual motive, a social component, a competence-mastery component, and a stimulus-avoidance motive to British vacation travelers. The researchers concluded that the leisure motivation scale of Beard and Ragheb could be applied to holidaymakers.

Research that would explore the motivations of tourists other than those who travel for pleasure/leisure is very scarce. In this respect, examining the relationship between the degree of ethnic identity development / retention and motivation of Korean Americans to travel back to their home country is meaningful in a number of ways. First, there are few studies that would explore the motivations of people with multi-cultural backgrounds, multiple nationalities, or multiple ethnic identities. As mentioned above, the simple approach that predicts cultural differences based on nationality could be considered as inappropriate in the globalized society. Second, most of the existing studies have focused on pleasure/leisure travelers and their results
could not necessarily be generalized to tourists who travel for different reasons such as visiting friends and relatives, discovering one’s ethnic roots, or exploring heritage of the country from which the traveler’s family originates. Therefore, this study can widen the scope of tourist motivation research by examining motivations among different types of tourists. Finally, research on tourist motivations that would employ qualitative methodologies and in-depth interviews in particular is very scarce, which could be another contribution of the existing study.

### 3.1.2 Heritage tourism and motivations

Heritage, the ‘buzz word’ of the 1990s (Palmer, 1999), is regarded as one of the most significant and fastest growing areas of tourism research (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2003) and segments of the tourism industry (McCain & Ray, 2003; Poria et al.; Santos & Yan, 2010). The “Grand Tour,” considered to be the origin of heritage tourism, was an essential part of the educational experience of young European aristocrats between the 17th and early 19th century (Boyd & Timothy, 2003). As people’s interests widened due to economic advancements, the market share of heritage tourism industry has grown (Boyd & Timothy). According to the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA, 2003), it is estimated that 81% of U.S. adults who traveled in 2002 classified their trip as heritage or cultural tourism. This represented a 13% increase since 1996 (Ray & McCain, 2009a).

Even though heritage tourism is one of the most actively researched areas in the tourism literature, researchers fail to agree on its definition (McCain & Ray, 2003). However, as McCay and Ray claimed,

although the boundaries of what constitute heritage tourism are somewhat fuzzy, most researchers generally agree that it includes tourism related to what we have inherited.
This may mean interest in our connections to anything from history, art, science, lifestyles, architecture, to scenery found in a community, region, population, or institution that we regard as part of our collective lineage (p. 713).

In this sense, it is clear that the travel motives of heritage tourists are significantly different from those of other tourists (Ashworth, 2001). Poria, Reichel, and Biran (2006) classified the main motives among heritage tourists into two categories. The first category is associated with the individual and includes an opportunity to learn, to be involved in a recreational activity, and to be with family. The second category is related to the attributes of the site (e.g., location and proximity to other sites). Moscardo (1996) identified three main motives among heritage travelers: education, entertainment, and building social connections. Her findings were partly confirmed by Jansen-Verbeke and Van Rekom (1996), who argued that learning is the primary motivation for heritage visits, although other motives such as relaxation, being active, and being creative may also play a role.

Tourist motivations for visits to a variety of heritage sites have been studied (Poria et al., 2006). The research has found that heritage tourists may have different motivations for visiting different places: restaurants (Josiam, Mattson, & Sullivan, 2004), religious sites (Murray & Graham, 1997), mines (Prentice, Witt, & Hamer, 1998), waterfronts (Tunbridge, 2002), and different types of museums (Jansen-Verbeke & Van Rekom, 1996; Prentice, Davies, & Beeho, 1997). In addition, some of the crucial dimensions of heritage tourism are personal meanings associated with destination sites (Poria et al.). With reference to a battlefield, Uzzell (1998) suggested that residents of local communities might have different motivations for visiting the site than outside visitors. Lowenthal (1985) also argued that the same space can have different meanings for different generations. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that a heritage tourist can have a multitude of motivations to visit a certain place and that heritage sites can have
different meanings to different visitors.

3.1.3 Diaspora tourism and motivations

Some of the most popular and most often researched types of heritage tourism are genealogy or family history research travel and travel to ancestral homes, genealogical centers, churches, and cemeteries (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). For instance, Evans (1998) noted that “genealogy is a significant part of Northern Ireland’s tourism industry” (p. 14) and Dickerson (2006) cited the Wall Street Journal’s statement that “widespread interest in genealogy is sweeping America” (p. W15). According to Ray and McCain (2009b), Utah’s Family History Library in Salt Lake City is visited by more than 1,900 people a day, many of whom come from abroad. Studies also focused on the growing share of the emerging genealogical tourism market. Thanopoulos and Walle (1998) found that about 30% of the Greek Americans living in Northeastern Ohio who participated in their study considered traveling to Greece. King and Gamage (1994) revealed that 62% of the Sri Lankan immigrants to Australia have traveled back to Sri Lanka at some point, 26% showed an intention to visit, and only 9% expressed no plan to travel.

As traveling to a home country has become one of the fast growing areas of heritage tourism, it has also drawn scholarly attention. The phenomenon has been termed legacy tourism (McCain & Ray, 2003), diaspora (diasporic) travel (Bergqist, 2003; Cohen, 2004; Day-Vines et al., 1998), (diasporic) roots- tourism (Basu, 2005; De Santana Pinho, 2008), ethnic tourism (Butler, 2003; Kang & Page, 2000; King & Gamage, 1994; Ostrowski, 1991), visiting friends and relatives (FVR) (Gamage & King, 1999), and genealogical tourism (Santos & Yan, 2010),
with the terms being used almost interchangeably. McCain and Ray defined diaspora tourism as “travel to engage in genealogical endeavors, to search for information on or to simply feel connected to ancestors and ancestral roots” (p. 713), while Day-Vines et al. defined it more generally as “returning to ancestral culture of origin for a finite period of time” (p. 464).

Ostrowski (1991) who studied diaspora travel among Polish expatriates narrowed down the focus of his research to tourists who go to Poland because they were born in this country, had contacts with family and/or friends in Poland, and had knowledge of the Polish language.

Regardless of the discrepancies in terminology, it is widely acknowledged that diaspora tourism is a significant part of the tourism industry. Thus, it is important to examine the motivations among diaspora tourists to better understand their needs and to be able to provide them with the services they desire. Butler (2003) argued that diaspora tourists may look for structures far away from modernity and thus, seek the “other” in their imagination of the past. Moreover, he claimed that diaspora tourism may be particularly important for immigrants who live in isolation from their motherlands, and who want to re-establish their connection with communities, towns and families back home. The desire to return, even temporarily, to their homelands stimulates travel. McCain and Ray (2003) explored the similarities and differences in motivations between diaspora tourists and other special interest tourists, and ecotourists, in particular. The results of this study revealed that 52% of travelers who were nominally classified as heritage tourists rated “visiting places where family is from” as an important motive to travel. The important motivations of diaspora tourists also included exploring historic sites, wilderness and undisturbed nature, mountains, and visiting friends and relatives. The authors argued that it is important to examine motives such as “researching family history” or “visiting places where family is from” independently rather than grouped under the umbrella of “heritage tourism.” In
the following study, Ray and McCain (2009a) introduced measures of the motivations of diaspora tourists. The scale was developed on the basis of Basu’s (2004) foundational work which explored the genealogical identities associated with particular regions among the Scottish diaspora. The scale included 17 possible motives of diaspora tourists: developing personal identity, connection with place, obligation to ancestors, intellectual challenge, discovering continuities, completing the circle (seeing where they ‘began’), finding oneself, quest, recovery of social identity, search for the sacred, closing the gap, community, true home, magical feeling, inward journey, homecoming and pilgrimage. Using the scale, the authors compared the British and American travelers (about 30% of whom were of Scottish descent) who traveled to their ancestral homes for genealogical reasons. The results showed that 9 out of 17 motives -- connection with place, obligation to ancestors, intellectual challenge, completing the circle, recovery of social identity, visiting the community of origin, true home and homecoming, differed significantly between these two groups.

In the following study, Ray and McCain (2009b) investigated motivations for travel to the ancestral homes among Americans of Norwegian descent and among Scotts whose ancestral homelands were located on the Shetland and Orkney Islands. The study found that the key motives for all travelers, regardless of their ancestral origin, were personal connection, connection with place, intellectual challenge, obligation to ancestors, feelings of connection to their homeland, and a sense of returning to their place of origin or “completing their circle.” A search for personal identity was ranked as the most significant motive for all groups.

In another study of motivations among diaspora tourists, Kraskiewicz (1990) focused on Polish immigrants traveling back to Poland. The study showed that social and cultural kinship, visiting family and friends, and emotional ties were keys to making trips to the home country.
Meaney and Robb (2006) also showed that Irish American travelers go back to their home country to visit friends and relatives. Similarly, other European immigrants of Italian and Jewish descent travel to their ancestral homes to get in touch with their roots (De Santana Pinho, 2008). Butler (2003) investigated trips to ancestral homeland and travel patterns among Lebanese immigrants in the U.K. and South America. According to the study, the primary motive among the Lebanese travelers was visiting relatives (58%), followed by pleasure seeking (16%), visiting homeland (14%), business (10%), and visiting friends (2%). A quarter of those who had not returned to Lebanon after their immigration replied that they were planning to visit Lebanon within the next three years. De Santana Pinho also examined travel motivations among African-American tourists. According to the study, the most important motive among African-Americans traveling to Brazil was to connect to a fragmented transnational African diaspora. Interestingly, female visitors expressed more altruistic and unique motives than male travelers. Female interviewees explained that women play the roles of “bearers of the nation” and feel responsible for nourishing the cultural traits of their ethnic group. In addition to the personal reasons, female African-Americans considered travel to Brazil in search of cultural roots as a means of fostering a sense of Africanness that they deemed essential for the preservation of Black identities in the U.S. Another motive that varied across the individuals was religious affiliation. For those who practiced religions of African origin, religion was a well-defined motive to visit Bahia.

Diaspora tourism is strongly related to the establishment of identities and developing personal attachments to ancestral homelands among ethnic and racial minority members (e.g., Bergqist, 2003; Day-Vines et al., 1998; Palmer, 1999). Day-Vines et al. believed that traveling back to the ancestral home may serve as a catalyst for formulating ethnic identity regardless of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, they investigated the impact of diaspora
travel to Ghana on ethnic identity development among African American college students. The study employed Phinney’s (1993) three-stage model of identity formation. Day-Vines et al.’s findings suggested that diaspora travel impacted the establishment of ethnic identity among African American college students in a number of ways. First, the travel experiences provided opportunities to dispel stereotypes, distortions, and omissions related to Africa and to form a more accurate representation of the continent. Second, a visit to Elmina Castle, one of the slave castles in the West Coast of Africa, played significant roles in connecting students to their past. Third, participants could compare and contrast differences between Americans and Ghanaians, which made them critically re-examine American cultural values. Finally, the travel served as a catalyst for enhancing academic achievement and motivation among the students.

The travel to Israel among young Americans, French, and British of Jewish descent had a significant effect on their construction of ethnic identity and individual perceptions of Israel (Cohen, Ifergan, & Cohen, 2002). According to Cohen (2004), every year, thousands of young Jews from all over the world visit Israel on educational tours. In particular, Cohen examined the Exodus Program which is “a quasi-simulation of the famous Exodus voyage half a century ago, during which boatloads of Holocaust survivors ran the English blockade and reached British Palestine” (p. 124). He argued that it is the most consciously organized, well-reported, and carefully evaluated example of diaspora tourism. It is a kind of spiritual pilgrimage for the 14-18 year old youth, with two primary stated goals: to instill a sense of connection to Israel and to help participants develop and strengthen their Jewish identity. In a somewhat similar vein, Palmer (1999) examined the relationship between heritage tourism and national identity among English travelers and concluded that heritage tourism is a powerful force in constructing and maintaining national identity.
Some of the studies have also examined the impact of diaspora tourism on establishing ethnic identity among Korean immigrants, and Korean adoptees in particular (Bergquist, 1999; Meier, 1999). Bergquist examined the impact of birth country travel among young (12-25 year old) Korean adoptees raised in Caucasian American families. The findings of the study suggested a positive relationship between diaspora tourism and ethnic identity development. In particular, the study revealed that: (1) the initial travel expectations of Korean adoptees were focused on cultural differences; (2) participants showed a desire to understand Korean culture and history based on a perceived personal connection they had developed as a result of the travel; (3) they felt acceptance and belonging while staying in Korea; (4) it was important that they traveled and experienced Korea with family and other adoptive peers; and (5) even though they did not report any notable behavioral changes, they felt their Korean identity was more tangible and integrated into their definition of self after returning home. However, Meier’s study on Korean adoptees showed somewhat different results. The 23 Korean adoptees who traveled to Korea had mixed experiences. They were ambivalent about returning to their birth country and reconnecting with their Korean heritage because they expressed not having a sense of home in either their birth or adoptive countries.

It is widely acknowledged that diaspora tourism is an important part of the heritage tourism. While many scholars put efforts into revealing the motivations among diaspora tourists of different ethnic backgrounds, little research has been conducted on the Korean immigrant population. Moreover, the relationship between travel motivations and ethnic identity development or retention among Koreans immigrants has not been investigated. In this regard, this research may contribute to both the tourism motivation literature and to the immigration literature by examining the interrelationship between these two important factors among 1.5
generation Korean American young adults.

3.1.4 Conclusions

In this section of the literature review, tourist motivation among different types of travelers was explored. In the following sections of the literature review, studies on the information search behavior, Korean diaspora in the U.S., and Korean tourism industry will be addressed.
3.2 Information Search Behavior

In the contemporary dynamic tourist market understanding how tourists acquire information and how they make decisions regarding their travel is crucial for both tourism scholars and practitioners (Fodness & Murray, 1997). Compared to other consumer products, tourist products are more risky as they involve people travelling to unfamiliar places and thus taking financial, physical, psychological, and social risks (Bieger & Laesser, 2004). Moreover, as the travel product is consumed by an individual, tourism creates a high level of personal involvement (Bieger & Lassier). Therefore, a significant portion of the past research has focused on the types of needs with respect to tourist information that could contribute to reducing uncertainty and enhancing satisfaction from a trip (Bieger & Lasser; Fodness & Murray).

Tourism information search, part of the travel decision making and planning process, have had a long tradition in the tourism literature and has been one of the most comprehensively examined areas in the tourism field (Bieger & Lasser; Jun, Vogt, & MacKay, 2007; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). In this section, an overview of the literature on the information search behavior in the field of tourism will be provided.

3.2.1 Travel decision-making and information search process

In order to acquire travel-related information helpful in choosing between different options and making pre-trip decisions, travelers engage in a search process. Scholars have suggested that travel planning process includes multiple decisions and interactions among decisions (Stewart & Vogt, 1999). The travel plan can be explained as “a traveler’s reasoned attempt to recognize and define goals, consider alternative actions that might achieve the goals,
judge which actions are most likely to succeed, and act on the basis of those decisions” (Jun, et al., 2007, p. 266). This definition suggests that planning includes all information search behaviors, information uses or applications, purchase behaviors, actual trip behaviors, and the lessons from all these experiences (Jun et al.). Thus, in order to fully understand the information search behavior and its process among tourists, it is important to grasp the complex travel planning process.

Woodside and Dubelaar (2002) developed a framework of tourism consumption systems (TCSs). TCSs are composed of three phases of the trip, including the pre-trip or planning stage, the travel consumption stage, and the after-trip stage. The model suggests that the use of information is related to the prime motives for the trip to the destination (pre-trip stage), visit behaviors in the destination (during the trip stage), and evaluations of destination places and event (post-trip stage). While Woodside and Dubelaar developed a general framework of travel planning and consumption, Stewart and Vogt (1999) proposed a case-based vacation planning theory. They claimed that tourists practice case-based planning by storing cases in memory, which serves as the initial information base for tackling a new planning situation. This model was also divided into three sequential and interrelated stages: pre-trip, during trip, and post-trip. In this model, the travel information search takes place throughout the stages from the pre-trip stage to the post-trip stage.

Significant attention has been put into examining the specific phases of the information search process. For instance, based on Assael’s (1984) study, Vogt and Fesenmeier (1998) proposed a five-stage model, focusing on the heuristics of information search and decision making. The authors suggested that the first stage involves the consideration of input and background factors that they bring to the purchase situation. The second and third stages focus
on the information acquisition and processing efforts, including recognizing what information had been retained over time for the future use. The fourth stage involves brand evaluation where they prioritize necessary features or acknowledge brand loyalty. The last stage indicates the actual purchase and the use of the product.

More recently, Correia (2002) expanded the travelers’ decision-making process and classified the act of purchasing a trip into three distinct stages -- the pre-decision stage, the decision stage, and the post-decision stage. According to this study, the information search process occurs in the following stages: 1) decision-making before making any constraining decision on a key characteristic of a trip, 2) the actual decision process, and 3) travel preparation after the first constraining decision has been made, all of which fall into the pre-trip phase in the planning theory. Based on Correia’s decision-making process model, Bieger and Lasser (2004) introduced a process framework of tourist’s information source. In this model, they distinguished between 1) information processed for decision making before making any constraining decision on a key characteristic of a trip, 2) the actual decision process, and 3) the information processed for travel preparation after the first constraining decision (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Process Framework of Information Sourcing (Bieger & Lasser, 2004)
Beyond investigating the information search process and dealing with the timing of the information search, researchers have also explored the strategies of information search (Fodness & Murray, 1998, 1999; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995). Fodness and Murray proposed three distinct strategies for information search behavior: spatial, temporal, and operational. The spatial dimension of the search strategy reflects the locus of search activity, either internal (decision-relevant knowledge stored in the long-term memory) or external (seeking information outside of personal experience). The temporal dimension denotes the timing of the search activity, either pre-purchase (in response to a specific current purchase problem) or ongoing (establishing knowledge for unspecified future purchase decisions). The operational search strategy reflects the conduct of the search and focuses on the particular sources used, and their relative effectiveness for problem solving, as well as decision making. From an operational perspective, information sources can be perceived as necessary or useful (contributory), or as both necessary and sufficient (decisive) for decision-making. This approach facilitated the understanding of information search behavior by explaining where the search occurs (internally/externally), when the search takes place (on an ongoing basis/pre-purchase), and how the search really functions (contributory/decisive sources).

By concentrating on a micro-level information search, Engel et al. (1995) provided another three dimensions of information search. They suggested that information search strategy includes the degree of search, the direction of search, and the sequence of search. The degree of search represents the total number of searches including the number of brands, stores, attributes, consumed time, and information sources considered during the search. The direction of the search depicts the specific content of the search, such as specific brands and stores during the search. The sequence of search refers to the order in which search activities take place.
Past research has shown that the greater the need for variety of information, the greater the external search is likely to be (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1973). Thus, travelers tend to search more external sources of information to learn about a number of alternative destinations in planning travels that may fulfill their expectations, the characteristics and attributes of these destinations, and their relative desirability (Li, 2003). In this light, external travel information sources will be reviewed.

3.2.2 Travel information sources

The source-based approach to understanding a consumer’s choice of travel information has consistently drawn academic attention for a few decades. As technology and communication have developed and diversified, travelers are exposed to a great variety of information. Moreover, because of the intangible and complex nature of travel products, tourists tend to consult many information sources before making decisions regarding their travel. Thus, studies on travel information sources became one of the well-established areas in the tourism field. In this sub-section, the diverse approaches to external travel information sources will be reviewed.

3.2.2.1 Categories of information sources

A number of researchers attempted to categorize travel information sources (Li, 2003). The traditional consumer behavior research divided information sources into three distinct categories -- buyers’ sources, commercial sources, and neutral sources (Thorelli, Becker, & Engledow, 1975). Buyers’ sources refer to interpersonal sources including word of mouth, advice from friends, observation of other people from one’s reference group, or seeking knowledge
from opinion leaders. Commercial sources are all the available information sources controlled by
sellers such as advertising, personal selling, displays, and other forms of sales promotion media.
Neutral sources include information sources provided by neither buyers nor sellers such as
consumer reports or reports about products in newspapers and magazines.

Mansfield (1992) broadly classified information sources into two types: formal sources
such as travel agents, brochures, guidebooks and maps, and informal sources including
information from friends and relatives. Gitelson and Crompton (1983) identified a number of
possible information sources, including friends and relatives, destination specific literature (i.e.,
commercial guidebooks or government-prepared information and brochures), consultants such as
travel agents or travel clubs, broadcast media, and print media such as newspapers. Similarly,
Snepenger and Snepenger (1993) divided the information sources into family and friends,
destination specific literature, media, and travel consultants. According to Li (2003), generally
five basic types of information sources can be identified, including friends and relatives, prior
travel experiences to a specific destination, destination specific literature, travel agents, as well
as broadcast and print media.

3.2.2.2 Specific types of information sources

A number of studies focused on a particular information source such as guidebooks, word
of mouth, TV commercials, movies, or the Internet (Lew, 1991; Nishimura et al., 2007). For
instance, Nishimura et al. explored the use of guidebooks among Japanese overseas tourists. The
results of the study showed that Japanese tourists used travel guidebooks for a variety of
purposes. They included forward-looking needs (i.e., to estimate travel expenses, to reduce the
likelihood of accident and disaster during travel, and to reduce the likelihood of being
disappointed at the destination), learning needs (i.e., to understand the characteristics of the community and to experience the culture of the area), enjoyment needs (i.e., to excite themselves about travel and to enjoy reading guidebooks), guidebook enthusiast needs (i.e., to confirm the places they visit during the trip, and to feel at ease by carrying one during the trip), and functional needs (i.e., to obtain background information about the destination and to travel efficiently). The differences were found between users and nonusers of guidebooks in terms of tourist’s types, purpose of the travel, travel experience to the destination, and gender. Those most likely to use guidebooks were female, flexible package tour participants, or independent travelers visiting the destination for holiday purposes for the first time. Lew also conducted a study on the roles and the use of guidebooks. The study suggested that guidebooks could influence an individual traveler’s decisions positively or negatively. Lew further argued that guidebooks might be more significant for providing readers with a framework to guide the way they could experience a new place than for providing them with factual information.

As an informal information source, word of mouth is significant in terms of its role and power in the travel decision making (Gitelson & Crompton, 1984). Murphy (2001) noted that “word-of-mouth promotion is consistently identified in tourism research as an important source of information used in decision making” (p. 51). As many other researchers suggested, word of mouth communication is even more credible than marketer-sourced promotions (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991; Simpson & Siguaw, 2008) and it is likely to significantly influence destination choices among tourists (e.g., Gitelson & Crompton; Murphy). For instance, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) showed that among their study participants, word of mouth recommendations from friends and relatives were the most significant information sources in forming an image of the destination.
Audio-visual mediums such as movies can be another option for obtaining information about a destination (Riley, Carltton, & Doren, 1992). According to Butler (1990), audio-visual information sources are becoming more important as fewer people tend to rely on written and paper-based information. In the tourism context, identification of destinations can be greatly enhanced through audio-visual mediums (Riley et al.). For example, Riley et al. showed that visits to the Devils Tower National Monument have increased on average by 6.4% in the 10 years following the release of the Close Encounters of the Third Kind. They further argued that movies are both good as potential sources of information and as promoters of the destination by increasing tourists’ motivation to visit the site.

As information technology has greatly influenced daily lives in general, tourism is not an exception. Durfee, Medlin, and Cazier (2007) cited the 2005 Travel Industry Association of America’s (TIA) survey that “with the increase in online travel planning, other planning sources have declined such as traditional travel agents – down to 31% that consulted a travel agent for travel plans in 2005 versus 39% in 2004.” In connection to this trend, a significant amount of literature has examined topics related to the Internet use in the tourism arena. In particular, the roles or unique features of the Internet as a tourist information source have been studied. For instance, Ratchford, Talukdar, and Lee (2001) found that access to the Internet and the skill level of the user can lower the cost of information acquisition and increase the total amount of information obtained. According to Castañeda, Ma Frías, Muñoz-Leiva, and Rodríguez (2007), the Internet as an information source is significantly different than other sources in terms of accessibility, convenience in updating, real-time information, and interactive communication.

Studies have also focused on the use of the Internet in relation to the profiles of individual tourists. For example, Bonn, Furr, and Susskind (1998) suggested that tourists who
used the Internet to gather information about their travel were more likely to be younger than 45 years old, college graduates, computer owners, commercial accommodation users, and spend more money each day during their trips than other travelers. Beritelli, Bieger, and Laesser (2007) also found a similar relationship between the use of the Internet and socio-demographic backgrounds of tourists. They found that tourists who assigned high importance to the Internet as an information source were more likely to be younger, better educated, and had relatively good professional positions. The study of Pitkow and Kehoe (1996) confirmed the findings of past research by showing that people who were more likely to use the Internet were male, White, and hold high socioeconomic status.

Scholars also have examined the relationship between the use of the Internet as an information source and other travel-related characteristics. The results of the Beritelli et al.’s (2007) study showed that the Internet was a more important information source for those who stayed longer and spent more at the destination as well as those who preferred hotel-type accommodation. Moreover, the Internet was more popular among tourists who were in the less organized package trip traveling group, often called fly-and-drive, than with group package tours that provide little choice for individual travelers. Beritelli et al. attributed it to the fact that the Internet enables travelers to reduce the risks of a self-organized travel. Similarly, Luo, Feng and Cai (2004) revealed that tourists who searched the Internet tended to spend more at their destinations as compared to those who consulted with other types of information sources. So and Morrison (2003) found significant differences between first-time and repeat visitors in their use of Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) websites. They argued that first-time visitors were more likely to visit DMO websites and that a significantly higher proportion of those who visited the sites actually travelled to the destination. Hwang, Xiang, Gretzel, and Fesenmaier
(2009) also found that attraction, accommodation, and event information were the most frequently searched information both in single and multi-interest online searches.

Thanks to the recent dramatic developments in the sphere of information technology, access to the information from all over the world is easy, interactive and flexible (Yoo & Gretzel, 2008). In particular Web 2.0 has contributed to the enhanced access to information among travelers. Web 2.0, a term stemming from a 2004 conference, is commonly defined as “second generation of Web-based services – for example social networking sites, communication tools, wikis, and folksonomies – that emphasizes user-generated content” (Schegg, Liebrich, Scaglione, & Ahmad, 2008, p. 152). Overall, two major features of Web 2.0 – user-generated content (UGC) and online social networks have revolutionized the way Internet users read, find, distribute, share and produce information (Sigala, 2010). According to Schegg et al., 60% of European online searchers benefited from user-generated contents such as reading or writing blogs, reading and writing online customer reviews, or taking part in social networking sites. In 2007, the top five global Web 2.0 sites included YouTube, MySpace, Orkut, Wikipedia, and Facebook (Schegg et al.).

In view of the paramount importance of information technology applications in the tourism decision-making, a significant number of studies have focused on the social aspects of on-line travel communities, including motivations and incentives for participation. On-line travel communities involve sites where travelers evaluate their trip satisfaction, share the information and pictures, and review the comments posted by previous travelers who visited a certain place. Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) conducted a study to examine participation and contribution of members of an on-line travel community. They found that community members sought social and hedonic benefits, rather than functional and psychological benefits. Moreover, the study
identified three main types of incentives for participation. They included instrumental incentives (social capital creation and appropriation where member expectations reflect the reward they may obtain from the pool of social capital), efficacy incentives (personal attributes including passion, a desire for recognition, and a sense of obligation that comes from past experience as a “taker” that makes some people want to give back to the community), and expectancy incentives (an anticipated reciprocity). More recently, Yoo and Gretzel (2008) examined consumer’s motivations to write on-line travel reviews. The findings of the study suggested that travel review writers were motivated by a desire for self-enhancement, to exercise collective power over companies, and to help travel service providers.

In recent years, mobile phones have become one of the most frequently used tools to access travel information. In 2008, 67% of U.S. households had at least one mobile phone (Kim, Park, & Morrison, 2008). Thanks to the wireless networks and access to the Internet afforded by mobile phones, checking news and e-mails, shopping, banking, as well as searching for tourist information have become possible at any time and at almost any place (Kim et al.). These characteristics are particularly important when tourists are at the destination and need to access the necessary information (Law, Leung, & Buhalis, 2009). Mobile technologies support location-based services, help with the interpretation of local tourist attractions, and allow for active interaction with tourism suppliers (Law et al.). According to Grün, Werthner, Proll, Retschitzegger and Schwinger (2008), mobile phones have been used to access information about tourist attractions, accommodations, events, entertainment, safety and security, restaurants, car rentals, currency exchange, shopping and sports. Rasinger, Fuchs, and Höpken (2007) analyzed tourists’ intentions to use mobile guides and found that people were most likely to search for information on weather, news, transportation, and security, while sightseeing,
gastronomy, nightlife, and events were less important to travelers who used mobile technologies.

### 3.2.2.3 Factors influencing choice of information sources

A large number of studies have delved deeper into the factors that influence the choice of tourist information sources. For instance, one of the well-established areas of literature examined the relationship between searched travel information sources and socio-demographic characteristics of travelers (i.e., Beritelli et al., 2007; Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Schul & Crompton, 1983). First, age was found to be a salient factor in the choice of travel information sources. Capella and Greco (1987) revealed that friends and family were the most important information source for people over 60. The study also suggested that some print media, especially magazines and newspapers, were important information sources, while travel agents did not have much impact on the actual decisions made by older adults. Kim, Weaver, and McCleary (1996) confirmed previous studies that found print media to be a significant information source for American senior domestic travelers (over the age of 55). The findings of Gitelson and Crompton’s study revealed that print media were used more by those over 59 and those under 30. On the contrary, as discussed above, the young travelers tended to use more electronic media sources, such as the Internet (Beritelli et al.; Luo et al., 2004), while they were underrepresented in the use of travel agents (Gitelson & Crompton).

Many studies have argued that gender is also significantly related to the use of travel information sources (i.e., Gitelson & Crompton, 1983; Snepenger, Meged, Snelling, & Worrall, 1990). Snepenger et al. showed that women who visited the destination for the first time were more likely to use travel agents as their only information source. Additionally, Gitelson and
Crompton found that the use of broadcast media was significantly associated with gender as females were more likely to rely on traditional media such as TV and radio, whereas male tourists used new information technology such as the Internet as their information source more often (Luo et al., 2004). Surprisingly, male tourists of higher social status also valued family more as an information provider (Capella & Greco, 1986).

It has been widely suggested that the economic status of a household is significantly related to information source preference (Beritelli et al., 2007; Luo et al., 2005). For instance, Beritelli et al. and Luo et al. found that tourists with higher incomes were more likely to use information technology. Another study conducted by Gitelson and Crompton (1983) showed that tourists of higher socio-economic status were more likely to use travel consultant’s help in planning their trips (Gitelson & Crompton).

According to Chen and Gursoy (2000), as culture is an important factor affecting traveler’s choice behavior, it also greatly influences the use of information sources. In this vein, a stream of literature developed that focused on the use of information sources among tourists with different cultural or national backgrounds (e.g., Gursoy & Chen; Gursoy & Umbreit, 2004; Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2008). Uysal, McDonald, and Reid (1990) suggested that tourists from different countries used different types of information sources. Family and friends, followed by travel agents, were found to be the most important external sources used by French and German travelers. British tourists tended to use travel agents as their main source of information, followed by family and friends, brochures and pamphlets, magazines, and newspaper articles. Similarly, Ramkissoon and Nunkoo examined choices of travel information among European tourists who visited Mauritius. The study found that French, German, Swiss, and British tourists were more likely to use travel agencies as their main source of information while Italian tourists
were more likely to rely on the Internet. Gursoy and Chen conducted similar research on the information search behavior among British, French, and German tourists. They found that German tourists tended to use the Internet and city or state/city travel offices more for gathering information than British and French travelers. Gursoy and Umbreit confirmed the previous research that one’s national origin has an effect on the use of external travel information sources. Using information search patterns as a basis for categorization, their study identified five distinct market segments from among 15 member countries of the European Union (EU). The identified clusters included: 1) France, Greece, Netherlands, and Spain; 2) Denmark and Finland; 3) Belgium and Italy; 4) Austria, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, and United Kingdom; and 5) Portugal. Findings of this study revealed that tourists from France, Greece, Netherlands, and Spain showed a preference for travel guides and free tourist information leaflets. Travelers from Denmark and Finland were more likely to use the Internet and other written information sources than tourists from other countries. Tourists from Austria, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, and United Kingdom on the other hand were overrepresented in the use of TV/radio and travel agents as compared to other nations. Kim and Prideaux (2005) identified a range of cross-national differences in pre-trip planning, utilized information sources, and the length of stay among five groups of tourists: American, Australian, Japanese, Mainland Chinese, and Hong Kong Chinese. The findings of the study confirmed the existence of national differences in the information sources used in planning trips. Japanese tourists were more likely to use friends or relatives as information sources, while Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong (Chinese) tourists tended to rely more on travel agencies, TV, and radio ads. American tourists used brochures, newspapers, or magazines more than people from other countries, while Australian tourists preferred to obtain travel information from the Internet.
Differences in the motivation or purpose of a trip are also important factors that determine the choice of a traveler’s information sources. Gursoy and Chen (2000) suggested that friends and relatives were important external information sources for French and British leisure travelers and tourists visiting families and relatives (VFR), while British and French business and convention travelers used airlines and travel agencies more often. Findings of McCain and Ray’s (2003) study showed that travel guides, chambers of commerce, and word of mouth were the most important travel information sources for diaspora travelers. According to Chen and Gursoy’s (2000) study, business and convention travelers were more likely to use corporate travel departments as an external information source, while travelers for leisure and VFR were more likely to use travel guides.

### 3.2.2.4 Evaluation of information sources

Another branch of literature focused on evaluating the information sources used in travel decision making (e.g., Jarvis, 1998; Nolan Jr., 1976). In order to market tourism products and destinations, it is important to identify important evaluation criteria that tourists use to select and search information sources. According to Jarvis, and Thorelli and Engledow (1980), the evaluative criteria used by the tourists most often include (1) trustworthiness and credibility of the information source; (2) information value of the source; (3) cost of information relative to its worth to the consumer; (4) timeliness of the information source and content; (5) degree of difficulty in understanding information content; (6) accessibility of information source; (7) accuracy of information content; (8) usefulness to decision-making; (9) degree of entertaining; (10) completeness of information content; and (11) the way information is presented. Nolan’s study on the evaluation of tourist information sources employed only “credibility” measures,
which included four dimensions: authenticity (accurate vs. inaccurate), effectiveness (informative vs. uninformative), personalism (exciting vs. unexciting), and objectivity (unbiased vs. biased). The findings of the study suggested that the authenticity dimension was the most important and the personalism dimension was the least important measure of the credibility of the information source.

Information search behavior has been widely and actively researched in the tourism arena. However, even though studies show that the personal background of the traveler is a crucial factor in the choice of external information sources, information search behavior among immigrants is still relatively unexplored. It can be expected that immigrants who travel to their ancestral homes will show significant differences in their information search patterns from other tourists. More specifically, 1.5 generation Korean American young adults who travel to Korea are likely to be characterized by unique choices of information sources (e.g., family and relatives, the Internet), language of the sources they use (e.g., English, Korean), and types of information they search for (e.g., attractions, transportation). In this light, the current project will contribute to our knowledge of the relatively unexplored research area -- information search behavior among immigrant travelers, which may have important implications for both scholars and practitioners.

3.2.3 Conclusion

This sub-section discussed the literature on the information search behavior in the field of tourism. Specifically, the literature on the travel decision-making and information search process, categories of information sources, specific types of information sources, factors influencing
choice of information sources, and evaluation of information sources was examined. In the following sections, literature on Korean immigrants in the United States and Korean tourism industry and its resources will be reviewed.
3.3 Korean Diaspora in the U.S.

To better understand tourism behavior of 1.5 generation Korean Americans, it is important to examine their historical, social, economic, and familial backgrounds. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the history of Korean immigration to the United States, immigrants’ social and economic characteristics, changes to family dynamics following immigration, and features specific to 1.5 generation Korean Americans.

3.3.1 History of Korean immigration to the U.S.

As Bobo (1999) and Oliver and Wong (2003) argued, the United States is transforming from the monochromatic Black and White division into a multiracial conglomerate. According to the American Community Survey, in 2007, there were an estimated 38.1 million immigrants living in the United States (Papademetriou & Terrazas, 2009). Asian immigrants, comprising 25% of the total immigrant population (Chuang & Tamis-LeMonda, 2009), are some of the fastest growing groups. Since the enactment of the Hart-Celler Immigration Act in 1965, the Republic of Korea (Korea) has become one of the fastest growing immigrant-sending countries (Park, 2008).

According to Choy (1979), the history of Korean immigration to the U.S. can be divided into four periods: (1) the pre-immigration period between 1883 and 1900, when political exiles, students, and a small number of merchants settled in America; (2) the official immigration period from 1902 to 1905 during which 7,000 Koreans arrived to the Hawaiian Islands as plantation laborers; (3) the emigration period from 1905 to 1940, when a few hundred political refugees from Japan-occupied Korea, “picture brides” (see the discussion later in this chapter), and
approximately 300 students were accepted in the U.S.; and (4) the postwar immigration period after the 1950s when Korean immigration to the U.S. increased dramatically. Others divide Korean immigration to the U.S. into three broad time periods: 1903-1924, 1945-1964, and 1965-present (Min, 2000; Park, 1997).

The sustained Korean immigration to the United States is considered to have begun in 1902 when an immigration office was established in Seoul (Mangiafico, 1988). During the first wave of Korean immigration, the push factors that motivated Koreans to emigrate to the U.S. were primarily related to the political and economic turmoil, as well as upheavals at the end of the Joseon Dynasty and Japanese colonization (Yi, 2005; Yoon, 1997). On the other hand, the pull factors were primarily related to the needs of sugar plantation owners in Hawaii who had to replace Chinese workers following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Choy, 1979; Yi). The landing of *S.S. Gaelic* in Honolulu Harbor on January 13, 1903 marked the first significant wave of Korean immigration. The first immigrant group was comprised of 56 men, 21 women, and 25 children (Mangiafico). The majority of them would become low-wage laborers on Hawaii’s growing sugar plantations (Choy). Over the next few years, more than 7,000 Korean immigrants, mostly men, arrived in Hawaii to meet growing labor needs (Choi; Mangiafico). In November 1905, the Korean government stopped immigration because of the complaints regarding the treatment of its nationals in the U.S. As a consequence, the number of new immigrants dwindled from more than 2,500 arrivals in 1905 to 8 in 1906 (Mangiafico).

The emigration period from 1905 to 1940 marked a decline in the number of Korean laborers, but an increase in the number of college students and orphans who arrived in the United States (Danico, 2004; Mangiafico, 1988). In addition, since approximately 80% of the nearly 7,000 earlier immigrants who had settled in Hawaii were bachelors, a social problem developed
in the Korean community (Choy, 1979). To help ease the tension among the immigrants, over 1,000 Korean “picture brides” were admitted between 1910 and 1924, when the Oriental Exclusion Act was passed. Choy referred to Korean immigrant women who were admitted during that time as “picture brides” since the mate selection was done by “sending the bachelor’s picture to prospect brides in their homes and letting the girls choose their mates” (p. 88). Finally, young Korean political activists started to emigrate to the U.S., and by 1924, after Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910, 541 Koreans political refugees settled in this country (Mangiafico).

In the 1945-1948 immigration period, South Korea was ruled by the U.S. military government (Yi, 2005). Until 1990, more than 40,000 American troops were stationed in the Republic of Korea when the size of the military contingent was finally reduced (Yi). The presence of American troops lead to frequent interracial marriages between Korean women and U.S. military servicemen, which influenced the composition of Korean immigrants during the second wave of immigration (Mangiafico, 1988). According to Abelmann and Lie (1995) and Yi, from 1945 to 1964, approximately 5,000 children, including war orphans and children of mixed couples, and 6,000 internationally married Korean wives settled in the U.S. In addition, due to the development of military, political, and cultural ties between Korea and the U.S in the 1946-1965 time period, over 6,000 Korean students emigrated to the U.S. (Yi). Whereas interculturally married women and children settled in various areas of the U.S., Korean students tended to concentrate in Los Angeles and Chicago (Yoon, 1997).

The large scale migration of Koreans to the United States began, however, only after the passage of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (the so-called Hart-Celler Immigration Act) in 1965 (Mangiafico, 1988). Whereas in the 1950s the total number of immigrants was 6,231, or
about 600 per year, in the following decade the immigration flow has increased fivefold to 34,526, and reached 267,638 in the 1970s (Mangiafico). A number of factors lead to this dramatic increase in immigration and determined the composition of immigrants arriving from Korea. They included changes in the U.S. and Korean immigration policies, pursuance of global modernity in terms of political, religious, and familial systems, and barriers for social mobility in Korea (Ablemann & Lie, 1995).

One of the significant characteristics of the post-World War II Korean immigration wave was the fact that it included a disproportionate number of women. Many of them were nurses or were married to American citizens (Mangiafico, 1988). Between 1950 and 1975, 28,205 Koreans migrated to the U.S. as spouses of U.S. citizens, and another 7,000 came on the basis of their professional qualifications. More than 75% of immigrants were under the age of 40, and a majority of them were members of the highly educated and professional urban middle class (Danico, 2004; Mangiafico). Christian background was another important demographic characteristic of this immigration wave. In sum, the typical third wave Korean immigrants can be described as “young, married, and relatively well educated with a preference for living in urban areas on either the West Coast or in the Northeast” (Jo, 1999, p. 14).

3.3.2 The socio-demographic background of Korean immigrants in the U.S.

In 2007, there were 1 million Korean-born residents in the United States, comprising 2.7% of all immigrants (Terrazas, 2009). Of all Korean immigrants, women outnumbered men 56.8% to 43.2% (Terrazas). The great majority of them (67.2%) were adults of working age (between 18 and 54 years of age), 10.2% were minors (under the age of 18), and 22.6% were seniors (age 55 or older) (Terrazas). Over half of the Korean immigrants resided in four states:
California, New York, New Jersey, and Virginia. California had the largest number of Korean immigrants (322,628, 30.9%), followed by New York (95,265, 9.1%), New Jersey (73,033, 7%), and Virginia (51,685, 5%) (Terrazas). This shows a shift from the early Korean immigration wave that tended to settled primarily in Hawaii (Mangiafico, 1988).

Even though many of the post-1965 immigrants had a college degree and held white-collar jobs in Korea, they lacked English language skills, social networks, and job information following their arrival to the U.S. (Min, 2000). Moreover, they were less likely to participate in the civilian labor force than other foreign-born men and women (Terrazas, 2009). Among the 273,316 Korean male workers age 16 and older employed in the civilian labor force, 20.6% reported working in management, business, and finance; 19.6% reported working in sales; and 9.6% in service occupations (Terrazas). A unique feature of Korean immigrants is that a significant number of them are employed in small business enterprises (Ablemann & Lie, 1995) in mostly retail and service sectors (Mangiafico, 1988). Many of these small businesses are located in primarily minority communities of large metropolitan centers (Mangiafico) and often connect White wholesalers and manufacturers and lower-income African American or Hispanic customers (Yi, 2005). Due to this intermediary role (“middlemen minority”) (Min), Korean business owners are often met with rejection and hostility in the forms of boycotts, arson, and riots from their minority customers (Ablemann & Lie).

As mentioned earlier, in terms of academic achievement, Korean immigrants are better educated than many other immigrant groups (Terrazas, 2009). In 2008, 51% of Korean-born adults 25 years of age and older had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 27.1% of all other foreign-born adults and 27.8% of all native-born Americans (Terrazas). This tendency to highly value education is translated to the high enrollment rates of Korean students in top-ranked
American universities (Kim, 2004). According to Kim, while Asian Americans account for roughly 4% of the U.S. population, they make up more than 15% of the student enrollment at Ivy League universities such as Yale, Harvard, and Columbia; over 20% at Stanford, MIT, and CalTech; and more than 40% at top public colleges in California such as UC Berkeley and UCLA.

Many members of the Korean immigrant community in the U.S. are also strongly attached to and often affiliated with ethnic churches (Hurh & Kim, 1990). It is estimated that between 70 and 80% of the Korean immigrants attend ethnic Protestant churches (Hurh & Kim; Min, 1992). According to Chong (1998), ethnic church ideologically defends a “set of core traditional Korean values and forms of social relationships” and serves “as an institutional vehicle for the cultural reproduction and socialization of the second-generation into Korean culture” (p. 262). For Korean immigrants, Korean churches serve as meeting places for gatherings and help to build social networks even among physically remote immigrant communities (Yi, 2005). Additionally, Korean churches help maintain Korean cultural traditions by offering Korean language classes, hosting cultural programs for children, and providing a venue for celebrating Korean holidays (Choy, 1979).

3.3.3 Changes in family dynamics following immigration

Many Korean immigrant families experience significant problems upon coming to the United States that are related to shifts in socio-economic status (SES), gender roles, and family relations (Chuang & Tamis-LeMonda, 2009). For instance, studies have shown that many male Korean immigrants experience downward socio-economic mobility after immigration to the U.S. (Lim, 1997; Min, 2001; Park, 2008). Despite high levels of education and urban middle class
backgrounds, and due to the fact that their work experience and job credentials are often not recognized in the U.S., many Korean professionals are forced to accept low status and low paying jobs (Foner, 1997; Lamb & Bougher, 2009; Park). Additionally, higher costs of living in the U.S. force Korean immigrants to work long hours often holding multiple jobs at the same time (Lamb & Bougher; Park).

This downward mobility also contributes to changing status of female Korean immigrants (Chuang & Tamis-LeMonda, 2009; Foner, 1997; Lamb & Bougher, 2009). For instance, Lim (1997), Min (2001), and Lamb and Bougher suggested that because of the environmental changes, including high costs of living and downward mobility, first generation Korean mothers are more likely to work outside of home to supplement household incomes, which is not considered a traditional mother role according to Korean values. This leads to changes in the perception of motherhood and family dynamics among many Korean households (Kim, Conway-Turner, Sherif-Trask, & Woolfolk, 2006; Min, 1992; Moon, 2003; Park, 2008).

Studies have also shown that women’s participation in the job market leads to tensions and conflicts in Korean households (Lim, 1997; Min, 2001; Park, 2008). For instance, Min found that working in a family store for long hours was a source of marital conflict among some Korean families. The study suggested that spending long periods of time together and husbands’ continued patriarchal authority caused wives to experience more stress and often led to marital conflicts. Lim attributed problems among Korean immigrant families to deeply rooted Confucian beliefs, which allowed men to have dominant position both in a family and in a society. She argued that even though immigration brings considerable changes to the economic roles within the traditional Korean family system, men insist on maintaining traditional gender role attitudes and refuse to share family responsibilities with their wives. This, ultimately, leads to marital
tension, conflict, and often dissolution of marriages. Park concluded that marital conflict can be mainly attributed to a change in women’s perception of gender roles after immigration. He argued that Korean working wives experience a growing sense of independence, become more expressive, and demand equal treatment after immigration.

3.3.4 The 1.5 generation Korean Americans

In many immigration-related studies scholars failed to distinguish between 1.5 and second generation immigrants in the U.S. (e.g., Kang et al., 2010; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Pyke & Johnson, 2003), even though there are significant differences between the two groups (Zhou, 1997). Korean Americans who belong to this category can be differentiated from the first and second generation immigrants in that they are foreign-born and yet are able to pass as Korean Americans born in the U.S. (Danico, 2004). They retain many elements of the Korean culture, interact socially with other Koreans, and often have memories of Korea. However, their “Koreaness” is transformed through various socio-cultural experiences and external factors related to their residence in the U.S. According to Danico, 1.5 generation Korean Americans are able to switch their generational identities between first, 1.5, and second generations depending on whom they interact with and what the particular situation calls for. They can “fit in” relatively easily with different groups by constructing and negotiating generational boundaries. Their sense of being Koreans, Korean Americans, and mainstream Americans is expressed through verbal communication, body language, and cultural etiquette (Danico).

One of the major characteristics of 1.5 generation Korean Americans is that they are bicultural and bilingual (Danico, 2004). However, the degree of familiarity with both languages and cultures varies depending on the age at arrival and how an individual is received by both
Korean and American cultures (Danico). For example, younger immigrants are more likely to have less of a Korean accent and make fewer grammatical errors when speaking English as compared to those who have immigrated at an older age.

Zhou (1997) argued that 1.5 generation Korean Americans are not fully accepted by, and hence remain marginalized from, both first and second generation Korean Americans. According to her, 1.5 generation Koreans are different from other generations in terms of their physical and psychological development, their socialization process in the family, school, and society at large, as well as in their orientation toward the homeland. This belief that 1.5 generation Korean Americans are unique in terms of their values, their attachment to the home culture, language competency, and ability to negotiate generational and ethnic boundaries is also a premise of this study. This research will contribute to immigration studies and to the travel literature by examining the relationship between ethnic identity development / retention and travel behaviors among 1.5 generation Korean young adults.

3.3.5 Conclusion

In this subsection, the literature on Korean diaspora in the United States was reviewed. Specifically, this subsection focused on the histories of Korean immigration to the U.S., the demographic characteristics of the Korean immigrants, changes in family dynamics after immigration, and 1.5 generation Korean Americans. The last section of the Literature Review will examine Korean tourism industry and its resources.
3.4 Korean Tourism Industry and Its Resources

The government of the Republic of Korea has put significant emphasis on the development of tourism due to its potential as a promising industry in the post-modern society (United Nations, 2001). As a result of the national efforts to enhance the tourism industry, in 2007 Korea was ranked 16th in the absolute scale of travel and tourism economy in the world (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2007). In this section, the trends and status of the Korean tourism industry and heritage tourism resources will be introduced to help better understand the travel motivation and search behavior among 1.5 generation Korean Americans.

3.4.1 Trends in the Korean tourism industry

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2007), the contribution of travel and tourism to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Korea is expected to rise from 7.1% (US$70.8 billion) in 2010 to 7.5% (US$136.1 billion) by 2020. The contribution of the tourism industry to employment is expected to rise from 1,910,000 jobs, or 8.1% of the total employment in 2010, to 2,227,000 jobs or 8.5% of the total employment by 2020. Export earnings from international tourists and tourism goods are expected to generate 3.1% of total exports (US$15.3 billion) in 2010, growing to US$27.1 billion by 2020. Korea has been placed 26th in terms of tourism revenues in the world tourism market by earning US$9.49 billion in 2008 (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute, 2010). The revenues generated by foreign tourists who visited Korea in 2009 totaled US$ 9.4 billion and the expenditures of Korean tourists abroad were US$ 9.33 billion. In total, the tourism balance showed a surplus of US$ 55 million in 2009.

One of the major characteristics of Korean tourism is that the number of international
outbound tourists has outnumbered that of inbound tourists from foreign countries. In 2005, for the first time, the number of Korean outbound tourists passed the 10 million mark, growing at a rate of 14.2% per year. In the same year, 6.02 million inbound tourists visited Korea (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute, 2010). Along with the liberalization and internationalization that has led to an increase in income levels and wealth of the Korean people, more and more Koreans travel abroad for sightseeing or for business purposes (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute). More recent statistics (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute) show a consistency in this trend. Even though the gap in the number of inbound and outbound tourists has been decreasing since 2008, Korean departures still outnumber foreign arrivals. The close proximity of the Asian-Pacific countries to Korea is a leading factor in the increase of outbound traffic (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute). Factors affecting the growth of outbound tourism include a strong Korean currency, an increase in leisure time due to the official implementation of a national five-day work week, and enactment of overseas travel liberalization, which for the last 11 years allowed Koreans to travel all over the world without any restrictions (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute).

Table 2: Tourists Arrivals and Korean Departures (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute, 2010) (Unit: Person, %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourist Arrivals</td>
<td>Growth rate</td>
<td>Tourist Arrivals</td>
<td>Growth rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int'l tourism (Inbound)</td>
<td>6,155,046</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int'l tourism (Outbound)</td>
<td>11,609,879</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By region, among the international tourists who visited Korea in 2009, Asian tourists were the largest group (76.82%, of all foreign tourists), followed by American and Canadian...
tourists (9.62%), European tourists (7.65%), and tourists from Oceania (1.67%). In terms of tourist source countries, Japan led with 39.06% of all international tourist arrivals, followed by China (17.17%) and the U.S. (7.82%). Over 200,000 Korean immigrant travelers visited their home country in 2006, which constituted over 3% of all inbound tourists. In 2007, the market share of Korean immigrants in Korean tourism grew to 4.56%.

Recognizing the importance of the tourism sector for the national economy, significant efforts have been made to create a long-term vision for the development of tourism industry in Korea. Following the enactment of “Tourism Vision 21” (1999-2003), Korea formulated precise and quantifiable objectives within the second “Tourism Development Plan” (2002-2011) (OECD, 2002). Whereas “Tourism Vision 21” put emphasis on the ‘development’ of tourism resources, differentiated tourism products, tourism infrastructure, and promotional activities (OECD), the “Tourism Development Plan” (2002-2011) focused on sustainability, information-technology based instruments, and competitiveness. The orientation toward a knowledge-based tourism industry, which can create tourism resources of higher value, was welcomed. The plan also ensured that the Korean tourism policy was aligned with economic and environmental policies of the country.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tourists</strong></td>
<td><strong>Growth rate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Market share</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tourists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>4,551,345</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>73.94</td>
<td>4,683,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2,338,921</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>2,235,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>896,969</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>14.57</td>
<td>1,068,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>338,162</td>
<td>-3.8</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>335,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>248,262</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>263,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>142,786</td>
<td>-14.1</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>140,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>673,118</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>10.94</td>
<td>716,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>555,704</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>9.03</td>
<td>587,324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>92,791</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>98,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>534,834</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>8.69</td>
<td>559,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>91,516</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>107,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaspora</td>
<td>226,702</td>
<td>-19.2</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>294,061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.2 **Korean tourism resources**

The Korean government has divided the country into five tourist regions which are further divided into 24 sub-regions (UN, 2001). According to the Korea Culture & Tourism Institute (2010), 230 tourist sites, 26 special tourism zones, 29 tourism complexes, and 45 cultural festivals are designated as tourism resources as of 2010. Due to the unique political situation in the Korean Peninsula, the government also developed security-related tourism resources which illustrate the political division and insecurity between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) and the Republic of Korea, including Panmunjom, the infiltration tunnels, and the Unification Observatory (UN). At present, 38 security-related tourism resources have been designated and a total of 249,166 domestic and foreign tourists visited them in 2009 (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute).

One of the unique features that define Korea is the fact that it is the only divided country in the world. As one of the last relics of the Cold War, the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) attracts a great deal of public interest and is a popular destination for travelers visiting Korea. The DMZ is a geographic region established on July 27, 1953 at the end of the Korean War by the signing of the Armistice Agreement between the United Nations Forces (UNF) and North Korea (Bigley, Lee, Chon, & Yoon, 2010). The DMZ is about 4 km wide and extends 250 km across the peninsula (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute, 2010). One area within the DMZ is Panmunjom, officially called the Joint Security Area (JSA), which is managed by the United Nations and North Korean troops (Bigley et al.).

Panmunjom has become a popular destination for foreign tourists since it serves as a location for meetings between both Korean governments (Bigley et al., 2010). Moreover, after a Korean movie, “JSA,” aired in Japan in 2001, Panmunjom became a famous site for Japanese
travelers. The movie was shot in Panmunjom and depicted stories of North and South Korean military guards (Bigley et al.). Additionally, the DMZ includes three infiltration tunnels constructed by North Korea to attack South Korea. These tunnels have also become a popular security-related tourism destination (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute, 2010). Imjingak, a memorial park about 50 km north-west of Seoul that allows for viewing of North Korea, is also popular among tourists (Bigley et al.). The memorial park displays artifacts from the Korean War including tanks and other weapons.

The Korean Tourism Organization designated four main palaces as heritage tourism attractions: Gyeongbok Palace, Changdeok Palace, Deoksun Palace, and Changgye-on Palace. Gyeongbok Palace was the first palace to be constructed during the reign of King Taejo (1392-1398) who was a founder of the Joseon Dynasty (Hong, 2004). It is located in the heart of Seoul and regarded as the most important royal palace of the Joseon Dynasty. The palace had been destroyed twice by the Japanese invasions of Korea, once in the late sixteenth century and once in the early twentieth century (Choi, 2010). Since the palace played a significant political and cultural role in Korean history and reflected the vicissitudes of the modern history of Korea, in 1990 the Korean government announced a restoration plan (restoration works have not yet been completed) (Choi). As the design of ancient Seoul originated from the plans of the Gyeongbok Palace (Choi) and its restoration would recover a key feature of the city, it is expected to be a popular location for Korean heritage tourism.

The Changdeok Palace was built during the reign of King Taejong (1400-1418), the third king of the Joseon Dynasty (Hong, 2004). The palace is said to embody the characteristic principles of Korean architecture due to its location, spatial layout, and relationship between its buildings and the natural surroundings (Hong). In recognition of its uniqueness, the United
Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee added the Changdeok Palace to its list of World Heritage Sites (Korea Culture & Tourism Institute, 2010). Park’s (2010) study that examined tourist interpretations of the Changdeok Palace found that it evoked in visitors feelings of ‘calmness,’ ‘familiarity,’ and ‘homeliness.’ It was also evident that visiting Changdeok conjured emotive-based expressions of the Korean nation, described through metaphors like ‘love’ and ‘blood’ in an affective and emphatic manner.

These palaces serve as important heritage tourist attractions and represent the spirit and the histories of Korea. Another important destination for heritage tourists visiting this country is the National Museum of Korea. The museum was reopened after a year-long closure on October 28, 2005. It is located in Yongsan, roughly in the center of Seoul. The museum is the sixth largest in the world and is over three times the size of the previous building and grounds combined. Over 10,000 works are displayed in the new museum’s collection at the Yongsan Family Park, in addition to the 4,850 formerly displayed works. There are also 11 regional national museums in Korean located in Gyeongju, Kwangju, Jeonju, Buyeo, Daegu, Cheongju, Gimhae, Jaeju, Chuncheon, Jinju, and Gongju. Each of these museums specializes in the historical background of the region (National Museum of Korea, 2008). In 2008, 6,596,862 tourists, including 2.8% of foreigners, visited the 12 national museums.

Not only does Korea have tangible tourist attractions, but it also has a great number of intangible tourism resources that attract tourists from all over the world. As Korea has made significant efforts to develop its cultural tourism industry in the past few decades (Lin & Huang, 2008), Korean pop culture including music, movies, food, fashion, and other culturally inspired products have become vogue in Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Japan, China, Thailand,
Vietnam, and Singapore (Kim, Agrusa, Chon, & Cho, 2008). The trend that emerged in the late 1990s was initially called by the Chinese mass media the Hallyu or the Korean Wave (Lin & Huang; Kim et al.). In particular, Korean cultural products such as TV miniseries and movies have emerged as great tourist attractions (Kim et al.; Lin & Huang). For example, 17,456 Hong Kong tourists visited Korea in July 2005, two months after the finale of the “Daejanggeum” series (Kim et al.), a show watched by approximately 47% of Hong Kong viewers (Kim et al.). The most preferred destination in Korea among visitors from Hong Kong was reported to be the theme park of “Daejanggeum.” Likewise, after the Korean TV miniseries “Fireworks” aired in Taiwan in 2000, an increasingly large number of Taiwanese travelers visited Korea, including approximately 370,000 travelers in 2004, a 65% increase compared to the previous year (Lin & Huang). Lin and Huang discussed the contributions TV miniseries make to the Korean tourism industry. They termed this phenomenon “TV miniseries tourism,” and classified it into three categories: on-location, off-location, and on-location theme park. On-location refers to visiting the location where the TV drama was shot. The off-location tourism includes studio tours where travelers can tour the working film studios. In addition, an on-location theme park is a combination of the two forms; tourists go to the film location first and then visit a theme park specifically built for tourists after the completion of the series.

While Lin and Huang’s (2008) study primarily focused on Taiwanese visitors, Kim et al. (2008) explored the influences of Korean pop culture on Hong Kong residents’ perceptions of Korea as a potential tourist destination. The results of the study revealed that Korean pop culture played a significant role in causing a positive change in people’s images of Korea and in attracting potential tourists. According to the study, about 73% of the respondents agreed that Korean pop culture has led to a greater friendliness toward Korea. In terms of the factors most
influential in the decision to travel to Korea, food was ranked to be the most important (55.7%), followed by Korean TV drama series or movies (28.3%), and Korean pop music (15.8%).

3.4.3 Conclusion

The Literature Review chapter was meant to provide an overview of the literature that would help to put in context this study on ethnic identity retention/development and travel behaviors among 1.5 generation Korean Americans. In the first section, the types of travel and travel motivations, including heritage tourism and its motivations, were reviewed. The second section explored the literature on information search behavior of tourists. In addition, background on the Korean diaspora in the U.S. and on the Korean tourism industry and its cultural resources was provided.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Science is “a method of inquiry and a way of learning and knowing things about the world around us” (Babbie, 1998, p. 15), and yet it is the philosophical commitments that decide a researcher’s choice of a method of inquiry (Snape & Spencer, 2003). A paradigm relevant to the philosophical commitments guides the process of social inquiry which begins with raising research questions and ends with the researcher finding answers to these questions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

This chapter will address the following issues: (1) the paradigm that serves as a foundation for this study; (2) the research methods that the study will employ; and (3) the specific research procedures including data collection, data analysis, and the researcher’s background which may influence data analysis process.

4.1 Research Paradigm – Interpretivism

This study is aimed at exploring the ethnic identity retention and development, travel motivations, and travel information search behaviors among 1.5 generation Korean American college students whose ages are between 18 and 24 and who traveled to Korea after the age of 16. For the purpose of the study, the qualitative research inquiry was employed. The qualitative research inquiry has been defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) as:

A situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This
means that qualitative research studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3) Qualitative researchers emphasize the socially constructed nature of reality and the intimate relationship between researchers and what is being studied (Denzin, 1978). They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin). With qualitative inquiry, researchers can preserve chronological flow, see exactly which events led to which consequences, and pursue fruitful explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Eventually, qualitative inquiry helps researchers to get beyond original conceptions, as well as to generate and modify conceptual frameworks (Miles & Huberman).

Qualitative research method has certain important strengths. First, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative data are rich, holistic, and can provide “thick descriptions,” which are vivid and nested in real contexts. Second, qualitative data focus on ordinary events occurring in natural settings, so that researchers can obtain understanding of the “real life” (Miles & Huberman). Lastly, since qualitative research method emphasizes people’s “lived experience,” it is well suited for locating meanings that people place on the events, processes, and structures of their life (Miles & Huberman).

In the context of research, a paradigm is understood as “the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator not only in choices of method but in ontological and epistemologically fundamental ways” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). Inquiry paradigms define for inquirers “what it is they are about, and what falls within and outside the limits of legitimate inquiry” (Guba & Lincoln, p. 108). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), basic beliefs that define inquiry paradigms can be summarized by three fundamental questions — the ontological question, the epistemological question, and the methodological question. The ontological question is related to beliefs about what there is to be known about the world (Snape & Spencer,
The epistemology is concerned with ways of knowing and learning about the social world (Snape & Spencer). The methodological question is related to “how can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known” (Guba & Lincoln, p. 108).

One of the popular paradigms in social sciences that was utilized in this study is interpretivism. Interpretive approaches emphasize the analysis of construction of meaning (Mottier, 2005). They stem from the Verstehen (understanding) tradition of human (social) scientists including Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey (Crotty, 1998). Verstehen, or interpretive approach considers human and social actions as different from the movement of physical objects, because they are meaningful (Schwandt, 2000). Neuman (1997) also argued that “in general, the interpretive approach is the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds” (p. 68).

There are several major assumptions guiding interpretive approach (Humble & Morgaine, 2002). First, instrumental or technical research methods are not appropriate when human needs and interactions are the subject of the study. Second, many actions and interactions of human beings cannot be either predicted or controlled. In addition, since knowledge is dependent upon social realities, learners learn from reflecting on their life experiences. The researcher can facilitate this process, but the presence of a researcher is not mandatory for the process to occur.

The interpretive social scientists do not seek to discover causal connections in the same way as natural science researchers do (Neuman, 1997). Rather, interpretive social scientists try to discern fundamental interpretations of social reality from participants’ different points of view. The main purpose of interpretive research is to grasp the social context, emotions, and meaning
systems of the study subjects (Neuman). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), different individuals with different backgrounds can acquire very different meanings from a particular social situation. Since qualitative research inquiry is not objective, the experiences of every single participant can be very important sources of information about the phenomena under study.

I employed an interpretive approach to achieve the goals of this study. This paradigm is well suited for the purpose of my research for a number of reasons. First, since one’s travel experiences are very subjective and can be understood and interpreted in a number of different ways, I believe that employing an interpretive approach could lead to deeper and more insightful findings. Second, I believe that being a foreign-born temporary member of the Korean diaspora in the U.S. and a student at an American university, my personal background can help me obtain a deeper understanding of travel motivations and information search behavior among Korean immigrants than if I were to “remove myself” from the research study and employ a positivistic paradigm. Lastly, I recognize that the social science research is a subjective process and that it is very difficult to study social phenomena from a perfectly objective and neutral point of view.

4.2 Symbolic Interactionism

The symbolic interactionism, one of the approaches whose goal is to portray and understand the process of meaning making (Schwandt, 1994), was employed in this study. As scholars argued, human beings create the meanings based on their lived experiences and personal backgrounds (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). These meanings “emerge from interaction, and are formed by the self-reflections that a person brings to his/her situations” (Denzin, 1992, p. 25-26). The four key tenets of symbolic interactionism are: (1) researchers desire to focus on behaviors
of people whose actions are laden with meanings and symbols in understanding of their symbolic reality; (2) behaviors of a person are based on the meanings that he or she derives from the environment and his or her interpretation of how one should behave in a specific situation; (3) humans behave in ways that are melted with meanings and symbols; (4) the culture or the society where one lives perpetuates the actions and symbols attached to a person (Blumer, 1969; Hewitt, 1994; Mead, 1934; Schwandt, 1994).

Blumer (1980) summarized the basic ontological assumptions of symbolic interactionism. First, there is a real world “out there” that stands over against people and that is capable of resisting action toward it. Second, this world of reality becomes known to people only in the form that is perceived by human beings. Third, the world changes as people develop new perceptions. Lastly, the resistance of the world is the test of the validity of the perceptions.

Considering “what is known,” the epistemological assumptions of the symbolic interactionist perspective are that

The actor’s view of actions, objects, and society has to be studied seriously. The situation must be as the actor sees it, the meanings of objects and acts must be determined in terms of the actor’s meanings and the organization of a course of action must be understood as the actor organizes it. The role of the actor in the situation would have to be taken by the observer in order to see the social world from his perspective (Psathas, 1973, pp. 6-7).

From the interactionist perspective, “what is known” in the social inquiry is actors’ meanings or view of the social world around them (Schwandt, 2000). The meanings that the knowers reconstruct can be considered as the original meaning of the known (Schwandt). In terms of the ways in which knowledge is acquired, symbolic interactionism postulates that knowledge can be achieved through “role taking” performed by the observer to understand the social world from the actor’s point of view. This role taking is called “interaction” and occurs through “significant symbols - that is language and other symbol tools - that we humans share and through which we
communicate” (Crotty, 1998, p. 75). Through communication, researchers can grasp perceptions, meanings, feelings, and attitudes toward others, which helps them to interpret people’s meanings and intents (Crotty).

The symbolic interactionism is an optimal approach to study ethnic identity and travel behaviors among 1.5 Korean American young adults because both concepts have a great amount of depth and detail. Through interaction between knower and the known, mainly with the use of the interviews, I can investigate travel experiences among 1.5 generation Korean American undergraduate students, their ethnic identity formation/retention, and the ways in which these analytical elements are related to each other.

4.3 Research Method – In-depth Interviewing

Interviewing is one of the most frequently employed methods within the interpretive approach that allows researchers to examine the reality from the perspective of those being studied (Fetterman, 1989). Many scholars consider interviewing as an excellent technique to obtain in-depth understanding of a cultural group (Fatterman). According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), qualitative interviewing has three unique characteristics that distinguish it from other methods of data collection. First, qualitative interviews are modifications or extensions of ordinary conversations, but with important distinctions. Second, qualitative interviews are more interested in the understanding, knowledge, and insights of the interviewees than in categorizing people or events in terms of academic theories. Third, the content of the interview, as well as the flow and choice of topics changes to match what the individual interviewee knows and feels.

Based on the amount of control the researcher has over participant’s responses, there is a continuum of interview types including informal interviewing, unstructured interviewing, semi-
structured interviewing, and structured interviewing (Bernard, 2000). Semi-structured interviewing was employed in this study. Semi-structured interviewing requires the preparation of an interview guide which includes lists of pre-determined questions to be explored during the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This guide allows researchers to acquire the same type of information from many participants and helps to organize information more systematically than in an informal conversational interview (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). According to Patton (2002), a semi-structured interview, or interview guide approach, allows the researcher some flexibility in the process of collecting data. First, the order of the questions is not decided in advance. Second, the interviewer can pursue certain questions deeper and informants are also able to address questions in more detail. Thus, a semi-structured interview is more conversational than the structured interview (Marshall & Rossman).

However, certain limitations to this method of inquiry also need to be noted. First, some level of prior knowledge of the important issues that the researcher wants to explore is necessary. Second, to obtain more fruitful data, prior experience with the research population is required. Despite these drawbacks, the conversational flexibility and interactive nature of semi-structured interviews was considered the best fit for the purpose of this study.

4.4 Research Procedures

4.4.1 Data collection

In order to recruit participants, a snowball sampling was used. In the first stage of the recruitment, I used my existing contacts with the social service organizations serving the needs of Korean Americans in the Champaign-Urbana area, including the Korean Student Association,
Korean Culture Center, as well as Korean churches. After interviewing the key respondents, I asked them for further names and contacts of potential interviewees. Additionally, recruitment fliers (see the Appendix C) were distributed in locations where Korean American students frequently gather, including Korean churches, libraries, Korean restaurants, and Korean grocery stores in the Champaign-Urbana area. The fliers were also posted on the webpage of the Korean Student Association (KSA) of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The interview guide that was used in this study was developed based on the review of literature on ethnic identity formation and retention, travel motivations, and travel information search behavior. It included questions designed to collect information that allowed to achieve the objectives of the study; (1) to identify ethnic identity among 1.5 generation Korean American college students prior to their most recent travel to Korea; (2) to identify motivations for travel to Korea among 1.5 generation Korean American college students; (2) to investigate their travel information search behaviors; (3) to explore the relationship between ethnic identity retention/development, travel motivations, and travel information search; and (4) to investigate changes in their ethnic identity as a result of travel to Korea. Even though a set of general questions was used in this study, the protocol served just as a guide (Dupuis, 1999). The interview strategy was designed to open up conversations with participants, which facilitated discussing their self-definition in terms of ethnicity and their previous travel experiences to the home country, Korea.

First, initial questions were used to examine participants’ recent travel experiences in Korea. Specifically, they were asked: “how many times have you been to Korea?,” “when was your last trip to Korea?,” and “could you tell me about your recent travel to Korea” (a detailed list of questions is included in Appendix A). Second, participants were asked about their
motivations for traveling to Korea and how their travel experiences influenced retention or development of their Korean ethnic identity. The examples of the questions included: “can you tell me about your motivations for your most recent travel to Korea?,” “what were the most memorable experiences and sites for you?,” and “how important were …[provided examples of motivations] in your decision to travel to Korea?” The third set of questions focused on the information sources they used to plan their trip to Korea. For instance, “how did you plan your Korean trip?,” “where did you find information you needed to plan your travel?,” “were the sources you searched in English or Korean?,” and “did you look for any specific types of travel information?” Fourth, the participants were asked about their ethnic identity. Some of the questions that were asked included: “how would you describe yourself in terms of your ethnic identity before you went to Korea?,” “how would you describe yourself now?,” “please describe the meaning of being a Korean/American/Korean American/Korean immigrant in your everyday life,” “tell me about how your travel to Korea affected your feelings about both the U.S. and Korea,” and “have you changed anything important in your daily life as a result of your travel?” Finally, the participants were asked a series of socio-economic questions, including their age, their parents’ occupation, and how long they lived in the U.S.

Data collection was conducted between December 2010 and February 2011. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, depending on the amount of information that each informant felt comfortable sharing. Interviews were conducted either in English or Korean language depending on the participants’ preference. Interviews were conducted in the coffee houses on campus or near the participants’ residence in the suburbs of Chicago, and in the researcher’s office. Free beverages were provided for all of the interviewees.
At the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were presented with a consent form which explained the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw, and confidentiality issues (see Appendix B). After being debriefed about their rights, participants were asked to sign the consent form. All the interviews were tape recorded with the participants’ consent. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were given to all of the interviewees.

I followed the semi-structured procedure in all interviews. All informants were asked the same series of questions from the interview script. However, the ordering of the questions varied depending on the flow of the conversation. Additionally, I facilitated probing questions to make sure that participants understood the meaning of the questions, to delve into participants’ answers, as well as to acquire more detailed information.

4.4.2 Study participants

Interviews were conducted until the point of theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) has been reached. After 18 interviews, I stopped data collection because the participants’ responses did not yield any new information. In total, 18 Korean American undergraduate students participated in this study. The interviewees included 1.5 generation Korean American college students at the University of Illinois whose ages were between 18 and 24, who emigrated to the U.S. as children or adolescents (between the ages of 6 and 17), and who have traveled to Korea after the age of 16. All of the participants had either American citizenship or permanent resident status. Eleven male and seven female students volunteered to participate in this research study. Seven participants have been residing in the U.S. for more than 10 years and 4 participants have lived in the U.S. for more than 7 years, while only 3 participants have lived in the U.S. for
between 4 and 5 years. The majors of the participants included Civil and Environmental Engineering, Accountancy, Business, Finance, Economics, Industrial Design, Psychology, Painting, Music Education, and Chemistry. Two interviewees had undeclared majors. The majority of the participants came from quite educated households. Thirteen interviewees reported that their fathers had Bachelor’s degrees and one participant’s father held a 2-year college degree. Fathers of three participants had graduate or higher degrees and only one participant reported that her father’s highest education was high school. Occupations of their parents were diverse and included small business owners, branch managers of a company, an engineer, a finance consultant, a soldier, a Taekwondo master, an acupuncture specialist, a politician, a pastor, and a road engineer.

The short profiles of each participant are provided in order to enhance the understanding of the findings of the study. In order to maintain the confidentiality all of their names were substituted with pseudonyms.

**Minhee** was born in Seongnam in 1989 and came to the U.S. when she was 10 years old. At the time of this study she was a junior in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and her goal was to be a pharmacist after graduating from UIUC. She attended a Catholic church. She traveled to Korea in the summer of 2006 when she was 17 years old. She was an American citizen and, along with her parents, lived in a suburb of Chicago for 11 years. Her parents both held B.A. degrees from a Korean university.

**Yoontae** was a 20-year-old male senior majoring in Accountancy. He was born in Seoul and immigrated to America at the age of 13. He traveled to Korea three years prior to the study when he graduated from high school. He and his mother have been residing in a suburb of Chicago for seven years while his father stayed in Korea. Yoontae’s mother finished high school
and his father graduated from college. Yoontae attended a Korean church on non-regular basis. He was an American citizen.

**Kyungmin** was a male student who majored in English Literature. He was born in 1987 and came to the U.S. when he was 11-years-old. He has been residing in a Chicago suburb ever since. Kyungmin was an American citizen. He traveled to Korea in 2006 when he was 19 years old. He attended a Catholic church. Both of his parents had B.A. degrees from a Korean university.

**Hyori** was a 21-year-old female student who majored in Economics. She moved to the U.S. with her family when she was nine years old, but both of her parents returned to Korea at some point due to her father’s work. Hyori has been living in a suburb of Chicago for 12 years. She was a Roman Catholic and an American citizen. Her most recent trip to Korea was in the summer of 2010.

**Inboem** was a 20-year-old male student who majored in Finance. He moved to the U.S. 11 years ago. His mother passed away after coming to the U.S., and he has been living with his father in a suburb of Chicago. Inboem’s father has a bachelor’s degree. Inboem traveled to Korea in 2007 when he was a junior in high school at the age of 16. He held a permanent resident status in the U.S. He was a protestant Christian.

**Chansoo** was born in 1987 and has been living in the U.S. for the last 10 years. He is a junior specializing in Economics. His father runs a travel agency in Korea and Chansoo currently resides in a suburb of Chicago with his mother. His most recent travel to Korea took place during the 2010 winter break. He had a permanent resident status in the U.S. Chansoo attended one of the Korean churches on the U of I campus.

**Seyoon** was a 22-year-old senior studying Economics. At the time of this study, he had a
permanent resident status in the U.S. He moved to the U.S. four years ago at the age of 17. Prior to that, his family lived in Canada for three years. Seyoon’s parents were both in Korea because his father worked as a finance consultant. He attended a Catholic church in Champaign-Urbana.

Seyoon traveled to Korea in December 2010.

**Hongkil** was a sophomore majoring in Accountancy. He was born in 1989 and has been living in America for five years. Before he came to the U.S. and settled down in St. Louis, he lived in Daegu in Korea and in Europe. His stepfather was a Caucasian American who was in the army when he met his mother who worked in an American base. His mother earned a bachelor’s degree in Korea. Hongkil had an American citizenship. His recent trip to Korea was in 2010. He attended to a Catholic church.

**Jinseo** was a 20-year-old female sophomore majoring in Industrial Design. She has been living in the U.S. for eight years after coming to the U.S. at the age of 12. Both of her parents were living in a suburb of Chicago. Her father was a Taekwondo master both in Korea and in the U.S. Jinseo traveled to Korea for the first time during the summer of 2010. She had a permanent status in the U.S. She was affiliated with a Korean church in Champaign-Urbana.

**Seungmin** was a 20-year-old sophomore majoring in Accountancy. He and his parents left Korea and moved to America when he was nine-years-old and have been living in a suburb of Chicago for eleven years. Seungmin is an American citizen. Both of his parents were residing in Chicago and running a small business. They both finished college. Seungmin had been to Korea only once after his immigration in the summer of 2009. He attended a Korean church on the U of I campus.

**Yuna** was a 20-year-old female junior who majored in Psychology. She came to the U.S. when she was 13-years-old. Her father worked for a newspaper company in Korea and now
worked as an acupuncture specialist in the U.S. Her family resided in a suburb of Chicago after they immigrated to the U.S. Yuna visited Korea almost every year and her most recent trip was in the summer of 2010. She was affiliated with a Korean church on U of I campus.

**Dongjun** was a 23-year-old Accountancy major. He immigrated to the U.S. when he was 13-years-old. His father was a politician with a Ph. D degree who lived permanently in Korea. Dongjoon has been living with his mother in a suburb of Chicago for the last 10 years. He traveled to Korea about 3.5 years ago in the summer of 2007. Donjoon was an American citizen. He was affiliated with a Korean church in Champaign-Urbana.

**Youngjoo** was a 19-year-old female Chemistry major. She planned to attend Dental School after graduating from the University of Illinois. She immigrated to Seattle, WA, with her parents when she was 10-years-old and moved to Chicago five years ago. Youngjoo had a permanent resident status in the U.S. She was affiliated with a Korean church in Champaign-Urbana. Her parents run Korean restaurants in Chicago. Youngjoo made her most recent trip to Korea in the summer of 2010.

**Seungkyu** was a 20-year-old male student. He was a freshman and has not decided on his major yet. Seungkyu came to the U.S. when he was 13-years-old. His family has been living in a suburb of Chicago since then. Seungkyu’s father was a Pastor and held a graduate degree from a Korean university. Seungyu was a permanent resident in the U.S. He traveled to Korea only once during the winter of 2009. He was affiliated with a Korean church on campus.

**Taeyeon** was a 20-year-old female sophomore student. She has not decided on her major yet. Taeyeon left Korea when she was 13-years-old and has been living in Tennessee since coming to the United States. Her father held a bachelor’s degree and worked as a road engineer in the U.S. Taeyeon had a permanent resident status in the U.S. She made her most recent trip to
Korea during the summer of 2010. She attended a Korean church on campus.

**Minyoung** was also a 20-year-old sophomore student with an “undecided” major. She was adopted by her aunt and came to the U.S. when she was 15-years-old. Her stepfather was a Caucasian American. Her stepparents lived in a suburb of Chicago. Minyoung traveled to Korea only once during the summer of 2010. She attended a Korean church in Champaign-Urbana. She was an American citizen.

**Jieun** was a 21-year-old Painting major at UIUC. She has been residing in the U.S. almost 11 years and has been living with her parents in a suburb of Chicago for the last 7 years. Her father held a graduate degree and was a pastor both in Korea and in the U.S. Jieun made her most recent trip to Korea when she was 19-years-old in the summer of 2009. She had a permanent resident status. She was affiliated with a Korean church on campus.

**Hyunbin** was a 22-year-old Music Education major. He immigrated to the U.S. when he was 14-years-old. Hyunbin and his younger brother were adopted by their uncle and have been residing in a suburb of Chicago for the last six years. Both of Hyunbin’s stepparents held bachelor’s degrees and run a small store together. Hyunbin traveled to Korea in the summer of 2009. He was an American citizen and was affiliated with a church in Champaign-Urbana.
Table 4: Demographic Information about Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Age at arrival</th>
<th>The number of trips to Korea</th>
<th>Age at the most recent trip to Korea</th>
<th>Time since the last trip to Korea</th>
<th>Immigration Status</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Major</td>
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<td>Age of the most recent travel to Korea</td>
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<td>Immigration Status</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
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<td>1 year</td>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.5 year</td>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>0.5 year</td>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
<td>Adopted by her aunt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jieun</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyunbin</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>American Citizen</td>
<td>Adopted by his uncle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.3 Data analysis

All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. During each of the interviews, notes were taken about any specific situation, body language, facial expressions and other contextual factors that were considered to be relevant to the study. I also summarized each of the interviews once they were completed.

The objectives of the analysis were to understand the data by taking them apart and assembling them into major categories. That is, data analysis was aimed at revealing “how interview responses are produced in the interaction between interviewer and respondent, without losing sight of the meanings produced or the circumstances that condition the meaning-making process” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, p. 124).

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and the ones conducted in Korean language were translated to English sentence by sentence. Interviews conducted in English were analyzed as soon as transcription had been completed and feedback from participants was received. Interviews conducted in Korean were sent for the external audit to individuals who are fluent in both Korean and English in order to verify the accuracy of translations. Based on the comments and feedback on the translation, the revisions were made until I was sure that the translations are correct. Once the translation was finalized, the data were analyzed using constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This strategy combines data collection and data analysis simultaneously, which allows the researcher to modify questions, organize the data, and form themes that depict main issues that surfaced during the interview process.

The first step of the data analysis was to review each interview in-depth. By doing this, I began to establish the main themes. In this stage, coding, a process that generates conceptual labels based on the repetitive key words, was used to split the data (Strauss, 1987) and to
reorganize them into theoretical concepts (Maxwell, 1996). The next step was to identify all of the data that were relevant to the already categorized patterns, and then to combine related patterns into sub-themes (Constas, 1992). Finally, after all the relevant points and themes had been synthesized from the data, the transcripts and notes were re-read to make sure that all of the important aspects of the phenomena have been accounted for.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness consists of four components, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability which are equivalent to internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. To optimize the criteria of credibility, I employed “member-checking” and “peer debriefing” (Lincoln & Guba). The former involves researchers sharing interview transcripts and/or analyses with participants and the latter refers to sharing the findings with other colleagues who are asked to provide their feedback. Thus, to maximize credibility of the study, all of the interview transcripts were sent to the informants for verification and feedback. When the interviewees provided additional information or asked for revisions of the transcripts, all of the comments and feedback were included in the analysis of the data. Also, to reduce the potential bias or misunderstanding of the collected information due to the gender or cultural background of the researcher, the preliminary themes were cross-checked with researchers who have opposite gender or are of different cultural backgrounds. By doing so, the data analysis process could be more accountable and credible. In terms of transferability, I attempted to provide “thick descriptions,” to allow the readers to make an informed judgment about whether they can transfer the findings to their own unique situations (Lincoln & Guba). Regarding dependability, I accounted for the research process by developing four types of audit trail tracking information. They included a raw data (the interview guide, audio interview files, and notes taken during each interview), data-reduction and analysis records (notes of major
themes and peer-debriefing notes), data reconstruction and synthesis records, and the final research findings.

4.4.4 Researcher’s background

After the first semester of my graduate studies at the University of Illinois in 2007, I received a phone call from my youngest aunt, who had immigrated to Canada when I was still in college and who currently resides in Vancouver. She invited me to come to Vancouver for a visit, as we have not seen each other for more than five years. Since it was a winter vacation, I was tired and missed my family, I decided to travel to Canada and spend two weeks with my aunt’s family.

I was happy to spend time with her family and visit many tourist attractions in the Vancouver area and tour the University of British Columbia where my cousins were studying. Since my aunt and her husband owned a small restaurant, I also used this time to help her in her work when she had problems with her part-time employees. At the restaurant I met many Korean immigrants and was able to observe their lives and discuss their immigration experiences. After learning about their high socio-economic status before emigration from Korea, I was shocked to discover how their lives have changed for the worse after settling in Canada. Later I learned from the scientific literature that this significant downward socio-economic mobility is quite prevalent not only among Korean immigrants in Canada, but also in the United States. It was at that time when for the very first time I began to ponder the fates of many members of the Korean diaspora.

On December 23, 2007, Amy, who is the youngest and the only daughter among four children in the family, approached me and asked “Eonni (meaning older sister), can you come to
see my Christmas concert?” I agreed and at 7PM I went to the elementary school that she attended. At the beginning of the performance all of the students came out to the podium and joined in a song and dance. While watching their performance I was astonished to see that almost 80% of the students had black hair and I could only spot a few Caucasian or Black children. I took a picture of the scene, uploaded it to my Korean facebook page, and wrote “what made them immigrate to this country and what can this country do for the immigrants who came here for their dream?” That night, for the second time, I pondered the fate of immigrants and began to wonder what roles tourism or leisure can play in the lives of Koreans, many of whom live in relative isolation after settling in the United States and Canada.

Up until now, I could not find answers to these questions, but through my doctoral dissertation research I hoped to learn what roles tourism, and specifically travel to their ancestral homeland, plays in the lives of Korean immigrants. Although my status as a temporary immigrant to the U.S. who is pursuing a Ph.D. degree likely influenced the interviews and the interpretation of results, it also allowed me to delve deeper into the lives and experiences of 1.5 generation Korean American young adults and, thus, to understand the role of travel in their ethnic identity development processes.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined the research paradigm, method, and procedures that were employed in this study. The process of data collection, study participants, data analysis, and the position of the researcher were examined in detailed. In the following chapter, the findings of the study will be described and analyzed.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings of the research project will be described. In the first section of the chapter, ethnic identity prior to travel to Korea among 1.5 generation Korean American students will be examined. The next two sections will address motivations to travel to Korea and travel information search behaviors among students with various levels of ethnic identity. The fourth section will explore the effects of travel experiences in Korea on ethnic identity changes among Korean American students. The last section of this chapter will address additional influential factors which impacted the (re)development of ethnic identity among 1.5 generation Korean American college students who participated in this study.

5.1 Ethnic Identity Prior to Travel to Korea

Korean American students who participated in this study asserted three types of ethnic identity prior to their most recent trip to Korea – Korean, Korean American, and American.

Korean ethnic identity. The majority of the informants (11 out of 18) defined themselves as Korean. The reasons for why they considered themselves Korean varied. Some of the participants claimed that they maintained their ethnic identity due to their intrinsic connection to their homeland and ethnic culture. They also believed they were Korean because they had native Korean parents and/or were born and raised in Korea prior to emigrating to the U.S., even though they had left their home country at a young age. For them, physical absence from their home country was not a reason for replacing their Korean identity with an American one. Many of them seemed to take their ethnic identity for granted without much reflection on
the process that led to its development. For instance, a 19-year-old female participant, Youngjoo, who had immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 10 and who was a Chemistry major, commented, “I thought of myself definitely as more of a Korean before I went to Korea last summer. […] I’ve never really considered myself not Korean. I have no doubt about it.” Another participant, Seungkyu, a 19-year-old male who has resided in one of Chicago’s suburbs for seven years, considered himself Korean primarily because he was born into a Korean family: “I am Korean because my mom and dad are Korean. I was born and raised in Korea. In my home, I speak Korean.” Similarly, Yuna, a Psychology major commented, “I am a Korean. My families are all Korean, so I am Korean.”

Interviewees who described themselves as Korean shared a significant amount of ethnic pride, largely attributed to strong cultural bonds that tied them to Korean émigré community. Strong ethnic pride was evoked during sporting mega events, such as the 2002 World Cup and 2010 Winter Olympics, when Koreans cheered for their teams. Some of the interviewees recalled celebrations accompanying the 2002 World Cup when thousands of people dressed in red T-shirts cheered on the streets. A few of the interviewees traveled to Korea during the World Cup or when the Winter Olympic Games were held so that they could join in the mass cheering in the streets. This cultural experience was very unique for Korean Americans who have been immersed in an individualistic American society, and provided them with an opportunity to reaffirm their Koreanness. For instance, Jieun, a 21-year-old female painter, explained that her ethnic identity was related to the ethnic pride she felt as a Korean:

[I am] Korean, proudly Korean. I had a lot of pride in being Korean. I don’t know why. I think one of the things that I really liked happened during the World Cup. We were the only country that really got together and cheered. I really had a big pride in that.

Another female participant, Youngjoo, who went to Korea during the 2010 summer vacation,
shared her experience:

The World Cup was held during the hot summer [when I was there in Korea]. I went to Kangnam [a downtown of Seoul] Kilgeori [street cheering]. It was really fun. I felt like Koreans are all their own but when they need to come together they come altogether. I didn’t even think that anything like that would be here. Even though people are excited about sports and everything here I don’t think that I could see that many people all wearing red. I was proud of them.

This important cultural experience played a significant role in the process of discovery of Youngjoo’s ethnic identity.

Interviewees also identified a number of factors that influenced their perceptions of ethnic identity. First, many of the participants stressed the exposure to an environment filled with Korean symbols and experiences that surrounded them in the U.S. Some claimed that they thought of themselves as Korean because they were exposed to the ethnic culture in their daily lives through interaction with families, eating Korean food at home, and speaking the Korean language. For example, Taeyeon, a 21-year-old female who had emigrated to the U.S. seven years prior to the interview, commented that she could maintain her Korean ethnic identity since she was always exposed to Korean culture at home. When asked about her ethnic identity prior to her travel to Korea, she replied,

I thought of myself as a Korean. I haven’t thought of myself as an American. Even though I got my green card and live in America, I am still Korean. I am always exposed to Korea. I watch Korean TV shows, drama and I eat Korean food at home. I am living with my family maintaining Korean culture. There’s no change at all.

Youngjoo, a 19-year-old female Chemistry major who came to the U.S. at the age of 10, related her Koreanness to her diet and the language she spoke at home: “I am definitely Korean. […] At home, I use Korean with my parents. I eat Korean food.” Frequent interactions with other Koreans also contributed to the interviewees’ perceptions of Koreanness. For instance, Kanghoon, a 24-year-old English major, emphasized interactions with other Koreans in the
maintenance of his Korean identity. He commented,

I would have identified myself as Korean who have lived long enough in America yet still thinks, acts, behaves and interacts as a regular Korean. […] Because the majority of friends around me speak Korean, think in Korean, interact with a lot of Korean culture through the Internet.

Yoontae, a 20-year-old male Accounting major, also believed that frequent interactions with other members of his ethnic group contributed to his Korean ethnic identity: “I am Korean. […] Most of my friends are Korean. Usually, I socialize with them, I mean Korean friends. I use Korean a lot with my friends.”

Technological innovations, and the Internet in particular, provided participants with access to real-time news from their home country, as well as Korean TV shows and dramas. Moreover, using social networking media such as Facebook, Twitter, Cyworld (Korean social network site), and messengers, Korean American college students communicated with Korean peers, relatives, and families back home. Such communication technologies enabled Korean American college students to reinforce their Korean ethnic identity. Kanghoon, a 24-year-old English literature major, discussed how media contributed to maintaining his ethnic identity.

I would have identified myself as Korean. […] I have stayed long enough outside of Korea but still [I am] Korean. Because a lot of my friends around me were speaking in Korean, thinking in Korean, interacting with a lot of Korean culture overseas through the Internet. Even though I lived for a long time in the U.S., many of my interests still focus on Korea. I watch a lot of TV shows and I read the news and all the stuff from Korea, so a lot of things that I can talk about would be from Korea. […] I have my old friends from elementary school [back in Korea]. I try to contact them frequently but it’s kind of hard to contact them. They are busy. I am busy but I try to stay in touch with my friends in Korea in order to define myself as Korean. It’s mostly through the Internet, like Facebook or instant messaging.

Another important factor that helped participants maintain their Korean identity was related to the difficulties they faced while trying to assimilate into American society. Contact with mainstream Americans and American culture served as a constant reminder of their ethnic
distinctiveness and reinforced in them feelings that they belong to another cultural group. For instance, when asked about his ethnic identity prior to his trip to Korea, Inbeom, a male Finance major who had immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 10, replied,

I am Korean because I grew up in Korea and I guess I relate more to Korean culture. I speak Korean, born and raised there. I guess I wasn’t fully assimilated into American culture. That’s why I think I am still Korean.

Another 21-year-old female respondent, Minhee, who specialized in Civil and Environmental Engineering, explained that being perceived as a foreigner by mainstream Americans and lack of American friends solidified her perceptions of Koreanness. She commented,

Before I went to Korea, I felt that I was a Korean because I came here as a foreigner and everybody saw me as a foreigner. And I didn’t speak English fluently at that time. I still hung around with Korean friends, only Korean friends, and I spoke Korean at home. I didn’t really get into American culture at all. I had one American friend like one or two and that’s about it. So if I got many friends like American friends and if I got into the culture, then I could have changed but I thought well, no, I was a foreigner.

Being treated as foreigners in America and occasional experiences with discrimination influenced perceptions of ethnic identity among a number of participants. For instance, Jinseo, a 20-year-old Industrial Design major commented, “I experienced racial discrimination. The language barrier also played a role in this [discrimination]. It is one of the reasons why I haven’t grown attached to America.” Being discriminated against and excluded from their peer group or society at large negatively influenced their adaptation process but enabled them to maintain their Korean ethnic identity.

Overall, participants who described themselves as Korean prior to their travel to Korea identified a number of reasons why they had retained their ethnic identity. They were mainly related to the interactions with Korean culture and Korean people (both at home in the U.S. and those residing in Korea) and difficulties they faced in assimilating to American society.

*Korean Americans.* A number of students interviewed in this study (4 out of 18)
described themselves as Korean Americans. These participants recognized cultural differences between Koreans in Korea and Koreans in the United States. Due to their Americanization they no longer saw their culture as equivalent to typical Koreans from their home country, but at the same time, they recognized that they would always be considered foreigners in the U.S. and face assimilation-related problems. A 21-year-old male student, Seyoon, who immigrated to Canada when he was 9 years old and then came to the U.S. when he was 17, defined himself as Korean American because of his ambivalent position in the American and Korean societies. He commented, “I have no doubt that I am a Korean American. I realize I won’t assimilate to Korean or American culture completely. I am more ambivalent. I cannot fully be either Korean or American. I am Korean American.”

His unwillingness to assimilate to some of the American cultural norms and the realization that he was not fulfilling certain responsibilities toward Korean society helped to establish a Korean American ethnic identity for Chansoo, a 23-year-old Economics major. When asked about his ethnic identity prior to his travel to Korea, he replied,

I am in between. I am neither a Korean nor an American. Literally, I am 1.5 generation. It is hard to say that I am a Korean because there are responsibilities as a Korean I have not fulfilled, such as serving in the military as a Korean man. But it is also hard to say that I am an American because I don’t think that I will accept some aspects of American culture such as being independent after I graduate from college. I don’t think that I am going to live alone without my family. Well, maybe I could say that I am a Korean American.

Some of the participants stressed Chansoo, a 23-year-old Economics major the importance of education in developing their ethnic identity. Being educated in the United States after immigration influenced them in a sense that they became Americanized even though their ethnic roots were Korean. Since education shaped the culture, values, beliefs, social norms, and way of thinking, it also had a profound influence on the ethnic identity of young adults. Seungmin, a 20-year-old student who came to the U.S. at the age of nine, declared that he
considered himself Korean American. He described,

I think that I am Korean American because I came here when I was really young, when I was back in elementary school and I spent my teenage and puberty years here. The education I had affected [my ethnic identity]. My education is more Americanized compared to what I have learned in Korea. Now I am here in the U.S. I just describe myself as Korean American.

Seungmin and other participants recognized the power of education in introducing them to the American value system and cultural norms and, thus, in shaping their ethnic identity.

Overall, three types of situations seemed to contribute to the development of Korean American ethnic identity among the interviewees. First, they established their Korean American ethnic identities when they realized that their culture was distinct from that of Koreans residing in their home country, but at the same time they could never fully assimilate to the American society. Second, they recognized that they were uncomfortable following certain American cultural norms and they were not fulfilling responsibilities to Korean society. And lastly, they acknowledged that educational experiences in the U.S. have made them a part of the American mosaic.

When asked about their ethnic identification prior to travel to Korea, 3 out of 18 students replied that they considered themselves American. The reasons for why the interviewees decided to embrace American identity varied. Most of them remarked that socializing with an American peer group played a significant role in their ethnic identification. For instance, Dongjun, a 23-year-old Accounting major who came to the U.S. at the age of 13, mentioned that he thought of himself as American since he saw himself as a part of his American peer group at school. He reminisced, “When I was in high school I hung out with a lot of Americans and I spoke English a lot, so I thought that I was part of them. I saw myself as more American, I think.”
Others seemed to develop their American identity as a result of their desire to distance themselves from other members of their ethnic group and be accepted by their American peers. Experiences with racial and ethnic discrimination, mistreatment, and feelings of being excluded from their American peer group in the school setting facilitated their desire for cultural transition. For instance, Hyunbin, a 22-year-old Music Education major, recounted that he had felt ashamed of other Koreans in his high school and wanted to be seen as American. He commented, I experienced a lot [of discrimination] during high or junior high. I mean, even in college, I am the only Asian in the class. I am very quiet in the classroom usually. When we have group projects I don’t have anyone to have a group with, so I am kind of lonely. I was kind of left out. […] Before 2009 [his trip to Korea], I felt that I was American, because when I was in junior and junior high, I was kind of ashamed of Korean people. They are very loud. It’s hard to describe but I didn’t like them for some reason. It was very embarrassing sometimes. I just wanted to become just like other American students because I didn’t want to be made fun of.

Having negative experiences such as discrimination, exclusion from other people in the U.S., and feeling ashamed of being a member of their own ethnic group significantly impacted participants’ ethnic identity.

In summary, participants described themselves in terms of ethnic identity in different ways. First, some participants defined themselves as Korean before the most recent travel to Korea. Interactions with other Koreans and Korean culture, exposure to Korean media, and difficulties assimilating to the American society contributed to the maintenance of their Korean ethnic identity. Those interviewees who perceived themselves as Korean American stressed their cultural distinctiveness from people from their home country, but at the same time, realized that they were markedly different from Americans born in the U.S. They also recognized that it was unlikely they would ever be accepted as “fully American” by native residents of the U.S. Feelings of exclusion and discrimination, particularly in the school setting, contributed to the desire to distance themselves from other Koreans and embrace American identity by those
interviewees who described their ethnic identity as American prior to their travel to Korea.

5.2 Motivations for travel to Korea

*Travel motivations among those with Korean ethnic identity.* The participants who defined themselves as Korean prior to their trip showed diverse motivations for travel to Korea. The majority of them revealed that the main purpose of their travel was to learn more about Korean culture and language. Interviewees claimed that since they had left Korea when they were very young, they did not have much opportunity to learn about Korean culture prior to emigration. Moreover, the years that have passed since their departure contributed to their loss of memory of Korean culture. For example, Inbeom, a 20-year-old Finance major who had left Korea at the age of 10, explained, “I went there to re-learn the culture. It is my homeland. I need to know it.”

The motivation to learn about Korean culture was closely related to participants’ desires to learn about Korea as a country and to polish their Korean language. To achieve their educational goals, several of the interviewees attended a camp that was designed to educate Koreans who were living abroad about Korean language and culture. Minhee, a 21-year-old Civil and Environmental Engineering major who had emigrated to the U.S. at the age of 10, commented on her travel motivations in these words:

> When I went there, I attended a camp. It’s called *Kuk-Je Hanminjok Camp* (International Korean Camp). It was like 50 Korean Korean students and 50 foreign Korean students who live abroad and we got together and learned about Korean traditions and stuff. Yeah, I went there and that’s where I mostly made my Korean friends. We stayed for a week in a camp and then we visited a lot of museums. We’ve been to Sang-am Soccer Stadium and we did Archery and like Pansori [Korean traditional song].

Another participant, Kanghoon, a 24-year-old English Literature major also attend a program
called Korean International Seminar funded by the Korean government and designed for the members of the Korean Diaspora. When asked about his motivations to visit Korea, Kanghoon stressed educational goals, and learning Korean language and culture in particular.

My last travel experience [to Korea] was to participate in the program, Korean International Seminar. This was a great opportunity to visit Korea and learn Korean culture, kind of professionally not just me being there by myself and kind of searching it alone. It was a program [organized] by the government so it was really good to join this program. Other motivations were that I always felt that I needed to learn about Korea, more specifically towards the language or language-related culture. I am adequate with the Korean language but I am not adequate with Chinese characters. We cannot learn Korean language without learning Chinese characters. I know what they mean by the Korean pronunciation but, as you know, there are different meanings of the same Korean words, so I felt that I am not adequate, and I wanted to learn more about Korean language and literature. […] I would not visit Korea if I didn’t have any educational goals or with just purely a leisure goal.

He further commented that the travel experience in Korea affected his plans for the future as it “made me try to make the goal of teaching Korean literature in the U.S.”

Several other interviewees also commented that their motivations for visiting Korea were related to their plans for the future. Some of the participants stated that they considered living in Korea after graduating from college, and their trip to Korea was meant to help them learn about the country and Korean society. A female participant, Youngjoo, who considered moving back to Korea after finishing college, commented that she traveled to Korea to refresh her Korean language, to keep up-to-date with the Korean society, and to make sure she wanted to spend her future there.

I am really lucky that I haven’t forgotten Korean. So I want to keep visiting to refresh my Korean language. I am not really sure whether I will keep living here or not even though my parents are over here. I have taken into consideration including Korea in my future. I think I will keep going back so I could see and keep myself updated on the culture and the lifestyle over there. I don’t want to go back in 10 years and realize, “Oh, this is not where I want to live.’” I want to make sure I want to live somewhere before I make the decision. I don’t want to spend the rest of my life there, maybe a big portion of it though.

Another female participant, Hyori, also shared similar motivations for traveling to Korea. Her
family recently decided to resettle back in Korea and so Hyori visited the country in the summer of 2010 to prepare herself for the move. She commented,

One of it [reasons to visit Korea] was for my future. My family and myself sort of decided to move back to Korea when I graduate. I wanted to see what’s going on in Korea. Since I have to go back to Korea, it was not [purely] for the purpose of tourism. It was for my future.

Many participants with strong Korean ethnic identity considered relocating to Korea at some point in their life and their travels were meant to help them keep in touch with changes in Korea, Korean culture, and to help them establish a basis for their future life in Korea.

Interviewees who described themselves as Korean also shared strong feelings of attachment to and longing for their homeland. Many of them traveled to Korea because they wanted to reconnect with their country of birth. For instance, Minhee commented,

I am really homesick…so I would really like to go back. I didn’t get adjusted to America that well. America just wasn’t for me. I like the Korean system better, like the cultural setting. You can go anywhere without a car. You can get anything without that much money, you know. And I watched too many dramas. The celebrities that I like… I don’t really like American celebrities... I am not that into American culture as I am a Korean.

Youngjoo also revealed that feeling homesick was an important motivation for her to travel to Korea: “Even though we immigrated here, I miss Korea a lot, like the culture and everything. My memories and everything are there.” Their strong desire to go back to what they considered to be their home was a strong travel motivation for those interviewees with Korean ethnic identity.

Longing for home was related to the students’ desire to reconnect with their past. Many of the interviewees who had a Korean ethnic identity prior to their trip to Korea visited Korea to see places where they used to live, schools they attended, and changes that occurred while they were away. Minhee, for example, mentioned, “I wanted to see how my house or school I went to changed over time. It’s like 5-6 years passed.” Another participant, Inbeom, commented,

I wanted to see how it [his hometown in Korea] is doing and how it has changed. For the
six years that I was not in Korea it has changed a lot from landscapes and buildings to
development and technology. It was a really big difference. I am sure if I go back there
now it will be a completely new city.

Many of these interviewees desired to maintain constant contact with their homeland, to update
their memory of places from their past and, thus, to help preserve their Koreanness.

About half of the respondents who defined themselves as Korean prior to the last trip
reported that they traveled to Korea to visit their families and friends. For many of them it was
their first trip to Korea since immigrating to the U.S., as lack of permanent resident status
prevented them from foreign travel for the first five years after arrival. Many of the participants
who described themselves as Korean commented that “getting a green card or a citizenship
status” allowed them to travel back to their home country. For instance, Yoontae, a third year
Accounting major, said that he had arranged a trip to Korea immediately after receiving his
American citizenship because he missed his family. “That was the year that I got citizenship and
I got passport so my aunt asked me ‘where do you want to go?’ and I said I want to go back to
Korea to see my family.” Seungkyu, a 20-year-old freshman, also commented that he had
traveled to visit his family in Korea right after obtaining the permanent resident status: “My
family just wanted to go back to visit [my family in Korea] but we just didn’t have the status. As
soon as the green card came, as soon as winter vacation started, we just left. It was the main
reason. Because my grandfather on my mom’s side passed away but she couldn’t go back before,
so my mom wanted to visit her family in Korea.” Jieun also explained that right after being
granted permanent resident status she decided to travel to Korea to visit her family and old
friends from elementary school.

We didn’t have the choice because we didn’t have a green card before. So it was the year
after we got our green card. That’s when we got an opportunity to visit, so I think like
before we wanted go but we couldn’t but now we had an opportunity to travel. I missed it
a lot, I mean, I missed my family. I missed my friends.
In general, travel motivations among those who defined themselves as Korean prior to their visit were strongly related to reconnecting with Korean culture and Korean society by bridging the gap between Korea from their memories and the contemporary country. More specifically, they traveled back to Korea to refresh their knowledge of Korean culture and Korean language. Feelings of longing for home, places from their past, as well as friends and family members they had left behind also served as powerful motivations for travel. Many students had vivid memories from their lives in Korea and decided to travel “back home” immediately after gaining permanent resident or American citizenship status.

Travel motivations among those with Korean American and American ethnic identity.

Informants who perceived themselves as Korean American and American prior to their travel to Korea shared many similarities in their travel motivations. Visiting families and friends was the main reason for their travel. Unlike those interviewees who described themselves as Korean, however, none of them was planning to relocate to their home country. Moreover, narratives of longing for home and deep connection to their homeland were not as vivid as in the interviews with the first group of participants. Those who described themselves as Korean Americans and Americans seemed to be primarily motivated by a desire to reconnect with people whom they left in the home country (in some cases one or two parents) and not with their childhood memories and places they were still attached to. Moreover, certain utilitarian reasons for traveling to Korea such as completing studies, gaining professional experience that would help them advance in American workplace, and medical and dental treatment were brought up in the interviews.

Hongkil, who described his ethnic identity prior to travel as Korean American, revealed that he had traveled to Korea because he missed his family and was offered a chance to go study
abroad at a Korean university. He described his travel motivations in these words:

I missed my family first of all. Second, I wanted to go to a school that all Korean people go to. Like college wise, I wanted to know about how Korean people spend college life. I missed my friends and family. That’s like a main reason. […] I decided to go to Korea to study abroad because I didn’t have a chance to go back to Korea since I came here to the States. It was a good chance for me to go back to Korea and study there.

Another participant, Chansoo, commented that had travelled to Korea during the 2010 winter break to see his father and to undergo a dental treatment.

I went there to meet my father. That’s the most important reason why I went there. I met my dad because he’s staying in Korea and I met my dad’s side of the family. I also hung out with friends. I had medical service for my teeth, too.

Seyoon, a 22-year-old Economics major, wanted to travel to Korea before he graduates from the university and takes on a regular job that will make his time schedule less flexible. He also wanted to learn from his father – a businessman who lived in Korea—as he believed it would help him in his professional career in the U.S.

I knew I wouldn’t go back as often because I started working, so I was “okay this is the last time.” […] I read more books mostly related to my major economics, business related. My father wanted to see me and I wanted to see what he is doing in his work, so I spent about two weeks as a shadow and learned a lot of new things, it was a great experience.

Dongjun, who defined himself as American prior to his trip to Korea, also wanted to visit his father and his relatives in the home country. He commented,

I really wanted to go back because I really wanted to meet my old friends again. At that time, I hadn’t seen them for like six years. Obviously, I missed them a lot and they missed me too, and my dad, because we only saw each other like maybe every 2 years for a week or so. Also, my relatives, aunts, cousins, and uncles.

While Dongjun and Seyoon were separated from their father, Minyoung’s mom and dad still resided in Korea. For the 20-year-old, visiting her mother and other family members were the main reasons for travel. She said,

I missed Korea. I miss my mom. Right after I got my citizenship, I flew to Korea because
I have never been there after coming to the U.S. It’s been a pretty long time. I haven’t been there for five years. I missed delicious Korean food.

For Hyunbin, another participant who defined himself as American, reconnecting with his mother left in the home country was also the main reason for travel. He went to Korea “to visit my mom and try to experience new things where all my friends are going.” Interestingly, the last two participants, Minyoung and Hyunbin, were adopted by their uncles and aunts in the U.S. Because of their status as adoptees, they were eligible for American citizenship immediately after arrival. While this has fostered their development of an American ethnic identity, they were less ready to blend in with their adopted families and still referred to their adopted parents as “my uncle” and “my aunt.” The desire to reconnect with their biological parents in Korea was a very strong motivation for the two adoptees to travel back home.

It is important to note that visiting families and friends in Korea were important reasons for travel for all interviewees, regardless of how they described their ethnic identity prior to their trip to Korea. However, while re-establishing a connection with Korean culture, improving Korean language proficiency, “testing the ground” for future relocation to Korea, and rekindling memories of their childhood, were important motivations for travel for the first group of participants, these reasons were not mentioned in the interviews with participants who described themselves as Korean American and American. In contrast, more utilitarian reasons, often connected to furthering their lives in the U.S., could be identified in conversations with the last two groups of interviewees.

5.3 Travel Information Search

Few differences have been observed in travel information search behavior among the
participants with different ethnic identity types and motivations for travel to Korea. What was unique about most of the participants is that they seemed to engage in little planning prior to their trip. The majority of the participants considered searching for travel information prior to their trip unnecessary, as Korea was their home country, they spoke the local language, and could rely on friends and family members there when in need of advice. Even participants who had little memory of Korea due to their young age at emigration engaged in little pre-trip planning behavior and tended to rely on family and friends at the destination. Thus, the information search was performed mainly at the destination rather than prior to departure.

The majority of participants recalled that they made few plans regarding what they were to do or see in Korea, and they only searched for a convenient and economical airfare to the destination. For example, Yoontae, an Accounting major who described himself as Korean prior to the trip, commented, “There was no plan. It was not something I planned. The only thing I knew before I left for Korea was my plane ticket.” Similarly, another participant, Hongkil, a Business major who considered himself Korean American, said,

Well, before I left I just searched [for a] plane ticket. I guess I wasn’t really planning out well because I already had family in Korea, so I wasn’t really worried about, you know, where I needed to be or what I needed to do.

Another participant, Inbeom, a Finance major who came to the U.S. when he was 10-years-old described,

I had a list of things I wanted to do but it was a short list. I didn’t know what to expect there. It wasn’t a specific list [it was] more general, like eat a lot of food, see as many places as you can, see some celebrities. [It was] very general.

Similarly, Seungmin, who defined himself as Korean American, commented, “I didn’t plan at all because Korea is where I came from.”

Interviewees recalled that the main reasons why they did not search for information or
prepare in advance of their travel was that they knew Korea quite well, had excellent information sources at the destination, and because the main purpose of their trip was to meet their families and friends rather than to engage in sightseeing. When asked why he did not do much preparation prior to his trip, Yoontae explained, “I mean they [families] were the reasons why I went to Korea, so I have not searched for any information about Korea and what to do in Korea.”

Additionally, Seungmin, an Accounting major who had a Korean American identity prior to his trip, noted,

I did not search for any information about travel. The meaning of travel to Korea is not like to go to events or attractions but more like hanging out with friends or meeting families. So the meaning of travel to Korea is, like for Koreans or immigrants, mainly to go to meet families and families don’t like to visit places, climb the mountains, or watch shows. I think the objective of travel to Korea is different for us compared to Americans.

Although visiting friends and relatives were the main reasons for travel, the interviewees also engaged in a variety of other activities at the destination for which they needed information.

Those interviewees primarily engaged in the search behavior after arriving in Korea. For instance, Yuna, a Psychology major who defined herself as Korean, described it in these words:

My dad bought my plane ticket through a Korean travel agency. And that’s it. […] I actually searched for information after arriving in Korea when I needed to. […] I searched for information about shopping and something that I wanted to eat, like something that I can’t eat here [in America].

The main types of information the interviewees searched for at the destination included shopping, transportation, location or routes, restaurants, and medical services. Interestingly, the specific types of information the students were looking for seemed to be related to their ethnic identity and motivations for the trip to Korea. For instance, participants who searched for information about shopping malls were more likely to have a Korean ethnic identity prior to their travel. The appeal of shopping malls to Koreans with Korean ethnic identity is likely to be related to the fact that Korean fashion is still attractive to them and that those who wanted to
reconnect with their culture and their roots were making an effort to resemble native Koreans not
only in their customs and language, but also in the way they looked. For instance, Minhee, a
female student who perceived herself as Korean before the trip, commented on Korean fashion
and why she searched for information about shopping malls.

[I searched for information about shopping malls. Well, the first thing that I got was
Dongdae-moon [the biggest shopping mall complex in Seoul] and the shopping malls
were around it and department stores and stuff. […] Because that was like one of the
most important reasons why I visited Korea. Because the fashion in America is not as
good as in Korea, I think. Even clothes in the street stores, or like Shijang [market] are
better than the American ones, I think. Not brand-wise but it is mostly prettier and better.

A 19-year-old student, Youngjoo, who considered herself a Korean and whose main reasons for
tavel were to refresh her knowledge of Korean culture and language, also found Korean
shopping malls very attractive. She said,

I searched for information about shopping malls. When I go to Korea I do a lot of
shopping because I can’t find shoes of my size over here. […] And I think Korean clothes
are of better quality and more detailed.

She further explained that she still wore her make-up the same way as other young Korean
women, which was different from the style popular among the second generation Koreans or
mainstream Americans.

Other participants who perceived themselves as Korean American or American also
engaged in shopping during their trip to Korea. However, the meaning of the shopping
experience was different in that these interviewees mostly focused on buying gifts or souvenirs
for their families and friends in the U.S. For instance, Seungmin said, “I just had to shop for my
family and then pack my clothes. Shopping was not for me.” Consistent with research that argues
that the type of dress is strongly related to the level of ethnic identity and acculturation among
immigrant populations (Isajiw, 1990), shopping behaviors in Korea seemed to reflect the ethnic
identity of interviewees in this study.
Whereas participants who defined themselves as Korean primarily searched for information about shopping opportunities, those who perceived themselves as Korean American were more likely to seek information about public transportation and routes to get to places. Since many of the participants left Korea when they were young, they forgot the bus routes and how to use the local subway system. Inbeom, a Finance major who identified himself as Korean American prior to his trip, commented,

I rented out a cell phone and I called my uncle anytime I needed help with bus routes and I learned the subway system on my own by looking at a map there. I guess I did most of my research on the road, while I was there.

Another participant, Hongkil, who thought of himself as Korean American also searched for information about transportation. He said, “I did search about the transportation system. […] I had no idea about it at first, so mostly my research was about transportation.” Several of the participants who defined themselves as American prior to the trip recalled that they searched for information about restaurants while at the destination. They tended to rely on more visual sources of information such as TV programs and brochures.

With regards to the travel information sources, the interviews revealed that students tended to rely primarily on word-of-mouth. For example, Dongjun, who considered himself American prior to the trip, said, “All I did to get information was just asking my friends and family members. I didn’t search on-line or travel guides.” Another participant who thought of himself as Korean commented, “I just asked my friends and family. I just asked around.” Inbeom also depended on his family and friends for information: “I talked with friends and asked them what I should do there. (…) I rented out a cell phone and I called my uncle anytime when I needed to ask [about] bus routes and roads.” Jinseo, who was very interested in watching theatre performances in Korea recalled, “One of my friends told me that he had information about
performances, so I contacted him and we went to see a play.” Yuna, who went to Korea to have an eye surgery, relied on her aunt to obtain information about the medical treatment: “For surgery, actually my aunt looked for it [hospital] when I went to Korea.” Another participant, Chansoo, who traveled to Korea to have a dental treatment said, “My father found a hospital that I went to for the treatment. I did not search for it. I just went there.”

Another essential information source that many participants relied on was the Internet. Because Korea is one of the most “wired” countries in the world, the Internet made the information easy to obtain and accessible. Moreover, all participants in this study were college students who were quite proficient in computer technologies and relied on the Internet as an information source in their everyday lives. Taeyeon, who described herself as Korean, recalled, “I referred on-line a lot. I just typed what I wanted to find.” Youngjoo, who was a Chemistry major, shared a similar story. When asked what sources of information she used in Korea, she replied, “On-line and through friends’ recommendations. I didn’t specifically search, but I went and browsed the web, Korean websites, and discussed what I found on-line.”

Whereas most of the interviewees claimed that they usually relied on their families and friends for information or searched on-line, participants who identified themselves as American seemed to also use more visual sources of information. For example, Minyoung commented,

I missed Korean food, [so I searched for] famous restaurants in cities. I got information through TV. I watched a program introducing good restaurants and stuff. In the program’s website, there are lists of restaurants that the program introduced. So I watched the TV programs, visited the webpages of the program because usually, after the show, the program webpage posted the lists of restaurants that they introduced during the shows. After I found the names, I went to the restaurants. They were good.

Another respondent who described himself as American prior to the trip, when asked about his sources of information, replied, “TV shows, like 1 Day 2 Nights, or Indefinite Challenge, they kind of introduced some places I could visit.”
In terms of the language of the information sources, the majority of the participants were bilingual, so the language did not pose many problems for them. Interestingly, however, most participants showed a strong preference for using Korean sources over the American ones. There were a number of reasons for this preference. First, many interviewees believed that Korean language sources were more appropriate to use because Korean information seemed more “authentic” and “accurate.” For example, Youngjoo, who perceived herself as Korean prior to the trip, commented that English language sources portrayed the reality from a “foreigner’s point of view,” while she saw herself as a native of the country.

I preferred to search Korean info because the way Americans see things and the way Koreans see things are really different. American information sites are from a foreigner’s point of view, but the Korean are from a native point of view. If you’d like to go to Korea, the native point of view will definitely be more correct, I guess. I do the translating work for the Chicago Korean News articles and sometimes the ways they portrait things are different from Americans.

Her comments were echoed by Minhee, another participant with a Korean identity.

I prefer to use Korean [sources] because if I go to American websites, it feels like I am visiting Korea as a foreigner, in a foreigner’s point of view. […] I thought I was going as a Korean going home. I don’t really want to go there with an eye of foreign people, so I don’t really go to American websites.

For those interviewees the language of the sources was not as important as their content. The participants believed that the information provided by Korean sources was more accurate and better suited for Korean travelers who were not “foreigners” in their home country.

Other participants preferred Korean-language sources because they were concerned that the meaning of Korean words might have been lost in translation. Yuna, a Psychology major who described herself as Korean prior to the trip, commented that it was more difficult for her to read English translations of the Korean names of places.

I used it in both languages, I mean, English one and Korean one. The language doesn’t matter to me. But if I have a choice, I will use the Korean one since it is kind of
confusing because the name of places is Korea are hard to read when they’re written in English.

Similarly, for another female participant, 20-year-old Taeyeon, it was more difficult and cumbersome to read English translations of Korean names of subway stations. She commented,

Well, it’s even harder when the names of the subway stations are written in English. I can read Korean language, Shin-do-rim, but when it is written in English, it is like Shin-do… I have to read it slowly. It is more difficult for me.

Interestingly, Minyoung, who described herself as American prior to the trip, noted that although she preferred to use Korean sources, she would also check American ones to compare their content. She commented,

I would at least read English information about Korea because I am curious about how American sites introduce Korea. But in terms of using information, I would definitely prefer to refer to Korean information because it is easy to read and understand for me.

Several other participants also relied on both Korean and American sources of travel information. Hongkil, who considered himself Korean American and traveled to Korea for a study abroad program, believed that the content of the websites was different depending on the language. As a foreign student in Korea, he found the English information more useful and appealing. When asked about the language of information sources he relied on, Hongkil replied,

English and Korean […] The English websites were easier to search for me than the websites in Korean. It is not that I am better in English than Korean. The websites were made easier, so I searched it in English. After I searched the websites in Korean, I felt like the websites in Korean are more designed for Koreans. To get information about international students and study abroad, you have to pass, pass, and pass and search everywhere but then the websites in English were like the study abroad student information was just right there. You didn’t need to search here and there to find necessary information.

Another participant, Seyoon, who described himself as Korean American prior to the trip, also noted that the content of the sites differed based on their language.

The reason I used English in Kiosk (multimedia station which gives you transportation
and local information) in Kangnam (a downtown of Seoul) is because the information that is shown to tourists is different. If it is Korean it is heavily related to restaurants, something like that, whereas if you did it in English it’s more based on sightseeing. I wanted to have sightseeing because I am not going to come back for a long time for sure that’s why I used English information.

In these cases, searching for English information was more related to the content, not just a matter of language itself.

Overall, it was found that the language of the information sources searched by visitors had little to do with the language itself. Rather, it was related to how things were portrayed (for example, with the names of places and translation issues), curiosity of how others saw their home country, reliability of sources, and content of the source itself. It also somewhat depended on the motivations of travelers and their ethnic identity because those who described themselves as Korean and who traveled to Korea primarily to visit their family and friends did not consider themselves “foreigners” and thus were more likely to rely on Korean sources, while those who traveled for educational purposes claimed that English language sources were more convenient for them.

5.4 Impact of Travel on Ethnic Identity Change

This section of the findings will focus on the ways in which travel experiences in Korea shaped ethnic identity among the participants. The experiences of travelers with Korean, Korean American, and American identity prior to their trip and subsequent changes in their ethnic identification will be described.
5.4.1 Travel experiences among those who defined themselves as Korean

During the course of the interviews, participants shared various experiences from their trip to Korea. For many of the participants, their travel experience played significant roles in shaping their ethnic identity, but the direction of change and the degree of the impact varied among the interviewees. Among all of the participants, travel to Korea seemed to have the strongest impact on those who perceived themselves as having a Korean identity prior to the trip.

A number of interviewees who described themselves as Korean noted that their trip confirmed their ethnic identity. Even though they emigrated at a young age, they did not feel uncomfortable or distant after returning to their home country; they could communicate with other Koreans easily and felt “right at home” after arriving in Korea. For instance, Taeyeon, who had moved to the U.S. at the age of 13, remarked,

To me, even though I stayed for a long time after I immigrated in the U.S., when I went back to Korea, I could recognize the places and I was familiar with the environment. I didn’t feel awkward. I felt comfortable.

For Taeyeon, meeting her old friends and visiting the school she used to attend were the most memorable moments in Korea. “I met my old friends,” she continued, “I saw my friends from my middle school. There’s one friend I first met when I was five. Everybody had changed but it was really nice. It was fun to talk about our memories.” Interestingly, her experiences in Korea made her seriously consider moving back to her home country after graduating from college. After her return to the U.S., Taeyeon began to interact more with native Koreans and became more interested in Korean society and culture. She commented about the changes brought about by the trip:

I think I have some changes in my life as a result of the travel. After I came back from Korea I think I am more exposed to Korean culture. I talk to more Korean friends, and I watch Korean shows more. It was the opportunity to make more Korean friends during
the travel and to like Korea more. I met more Korean friends who live in America or international students who were from Korea who study at the university. […] Actually I have talked to my mom about living there after I finish college when I came back from the travel.

Another female participant, Youngjoo, who immigrated to the U.S. when she was 10-years-old and described herself as Korean prior to the trip, also claimed that the travel made her re-confirm her Korean identity. She described the impact of her trip in these words:

I thought of myself definitely as more of a Korean [prior to the trip to Korea]. I’ve never really considered myself not Korean. But definitely after going back last year, which was the first trip on my own, I confirmed myself as Korean. Because I didn’t feel like I was a stranger or anything like that. I thought that I could live there and not feel awkward or anything. There’s no language barrier. I think the fact that I like Korean food and the cultural things, and that I watch everything Korean. […] Just because of the familiarity, I guess, and feeling comfortable there. I wasn’t unfamiliar with things. If I had been, then I might have thought, “Oh, my god. I don’t belong here.” But everything was what I was pretty used to.

One of the most memorable experiences in Korea that made Youngjoo proud of her heritage was watching the 2010 World Cup street celebrations. Korea is famous for its sport fan culture where thousands of people dressed in red cheer on the streets or city landmarks. These expressions of collective behavior and strong bonds shared by people made Youngjoo proud of her culture. She commented,

The World Cup took place over this past summer, so I went to the streets of Kangnam (a downtown section of Seoul) for cheering. It was really fun. I felt that Koreans are individualists but when they need to come together they like all come together. Even though Americans get excited about sports, I don’t think I’d ever see so many people gathered together, all wearing red. It was impressive. I feel proud to be Korean.

Youngjoo recalled that she was also impressed with the culture of young Koreans, and the time she spent socializing with her friends on Friday nights remained in her memory for a long time. The socializing with young Koreans made her feel like she belonged to their group and, conversely, lead to even stronger feelings of isolation in the United States.

The more I consider myself Korean, the more foreign this place [America] seems to me. I
don’t think I completely fit in. After the trip I feel like this place is not 100% home anymore. It doesn’t mean that I am going to live in Korea for sure, but I mean I could live there. There are pros and cons for both places. I like how it is more laid back here [in the U.S.], but I like it over there too.

Youngjoo further articulated how much travel to Korea has affected how she felt about her heritage: “[My] clothes and make-up have changed. They’re more Koreanized, I guess. After the trip, I think I am more Koreanized. I eat even more Korean food after the trip.”

Yoontae, who went to Korea to celebrate his citizenship with his family, shared Youngjoo’s options. He also pointed out that meeting friends and learning about the social culture of young Koreans was a memorable experience for him. However, he described this experience as “cultural shock,” since he left the country as a young child and was not used to the nightlife enjoyed by Korean young adults. He reminisced,

One time I went to Kangnam (a downtown of Seoul) which is like a really emerging area in Korea. I went there with my friends. I stayed there for the night and it was really good. In Korea, I was legal to drink, so I drank a little bit, so that was really fun. Because that was the type of activity that I have not encountered when I was in Korea when I left. It was a new culture that I have encountered. […] It was most memorable because it was just a cultural shock to me.

Interestingly, although travel to Korea did not make Yoontae change his ethnic identity, it made him realize that he was not “purely Korean” and that he was different from other Koreans in terms of his appearance, language, and way of thinking.

I mean, when I visited Korea, I noticed that I was different from most of the people. I used a different language, I looked different. From my appearance to thought process, I think I was different. So from there I kind of realized that I was not truly, purely Korean. And even here, you know, like when I talked to the international students, I feel a clear difference in our mind set, in our thought process and appearance and whatever. I feel a clear difference. So I can see how I am different from like Koreans who lived in Korea and who have spent most of their time in Korea, but I still identify myself as a Korean.

A number of other interviewees who described themselves as Korean both prior to and after the trip recalled differences they observed in the behavior of Koreans and what they have
been accustomed to in the U.S. Some of these encounters took place at tourist places where Korean travelers complained about being treated like the domestic tourists and “brushed off” by the attendants. Other travelers, to the contrary, were annoyed by the overly pushy behavior of Korean store clerks. For instance, Taeyeon commented, “I was annoyed when I went shopping. Americans leave customers to look around and give them time to choose but Koreans kept asking me ‘how can I help you?’ which made me uncomfortable.”

While a number of interviewees maintained their Korean identity following their travel, the majority of others (11 participants out of 18) altered their ethnic self-identification from Korean to Korean American as a result of their trip. The main reasons for changes in their ethnic identity were cultural differences they observed between themselves and Koreans who lived in their home country. The fact that Koreans seemed to be reserved and even impolite, and that they refused to initiate or carry on a conversation with strangers seemed to particularly bother the travelers. Hyori, for example, commented,

_I haven’t been to Korea for a long time and I identified myself as more Korean than American in America [before trip to Korea]. But when I went to Korea, I thought like this isn’t my home country. I felt like Koreans are more like savages. They weren’t educated enough. They didn’t have good manners. For example, people are rude to you if people don’t know you. For example, in America when you bump into someone, you say “excuse me” or you can say “excuse me, I have a question” and you can ask anytime, but in Korea you can’t do that. They look at you like weird like “Who are you?” “Why are you talking to me?”_

Yuna, who had visited Korea during the summer of 2010, had similar views to Hyori and, following the trip, changed her ethnic identity from Korean to Korean American. “I thought that they are kind of rude,” she commented, “When I asked them about directions, they didn’t answer. They just did their own work, they didn’t really answer my questions.” Hyori’s and Yuna’s observations were correct in a sense that it is not expected of Korean people to try to carry on a conversation with complete strangers. Since the interviewees left Korea at a very young age, they
had little understanding of this Korean custom and judged Koreans they met using American norms of behavior.

Their travel to Korea helped the interviewees realize cultural differences, including values, beliefs, and opinions between themselves and Koreans in Korea, and that recognition played an important role in reshaping their identity as Korean Americans. Such realizations of cultural differences happened during social occasions when the interviewees met with their friends in Korea. Minhee, who described herself as Korean prior to the trip, changed her ethnic identification to Korean American when she realized how much she differed from her Korean friends. Her travel to Korea led to many frustrations and made her question her belonging in both countries. She commented,

I am not a part of the group there [in Korea], but I am not even a part of the group here [in the U.S.]. That’s [Korea] where I thought I belong. So now when I think about it, I don’t belonged anywhere. I don’t belong in Korea because I am here [in the U.S.]. I don’t belonged here [in the U.S.] because I want to go back. So I don’t belong anywhere. I am just like floating in the air. If I go back [to Korea] later after I graduate with my own money and stuff then I will be settling somewhere, but I won’t be settling in America, I don’t think. […] Blond people from Europe, they come to America, they learn English, they can get a family here, they can get a home here, they can be American. But us, Asians, even if we speak total, complete, and perfect English and get a home and a job and a family here, we are still seen as foreigners because we don’t look the same. And I would not like that. I hate that. I want to become like one of the groups.

A certain sense of bitterness, disillusionment, and alienation echoed in this interview because the trip to Korea made Minhee realize that she did not fully belong in either country, and that she was a stranger in the place she considered her home.

Traveling in Korea also provided an opportunity to observe the differences in the educational systems of the two countries. Many participants focused on how differently they were educated in America as compared to family members and friends in Korea. For instance, Yuna, who thought of herself as Korean prior to her 2010 trip, commented,
Before I went to Korea, I thought I was 100% Korean. I thought that I am no different than people who live in Korea. I thought that I was exactly the same but the only difference was the place where I live. However, after visiting Korea, I have noticed that I am different because I am Americanized. I think differently than what they think. It is very important what you experience and learn. I think all those experience and lifestyles that I have in America made me Korean American rather than pure Korean. […] I felt that I was more Americanized when I wasn’t able to understand how children in Korea are educated very differently. I saw some of my nephews who are like seven or eight years old go to school and then go to another place to study something right away. I mean they are only like seven years old! That’s kind of sad for them because that is not how people teach in America. I went to play with friends and did something fun after school instead of going to study in another school. I don’t understand why they have to do that to children.

Interestingly, in a number of cases, it was not the interviewees who noticed cultural differences between themselves and other Koreans, but rather it was other Koreans who brought up their cultural distinctiveness. Kanghoon, for instance, described how other Koreans treated him as an outsider. Similarly to Minee, the trip to Korea made him question his belonging. As Kanghoon commented,

Actually I learned a lot [from the trip to Korea]. Before the travel, before visiting Korea I never felt that I was a foreigner in Korean society since my Korean language skills are overall adequate, I guess. I thought that I was natural, that at least they would not recognize it [that I was from America], but I was treated like a foreigner. People were speaking to me with a little awkward English. They told me information that I already knew such as subway system, that kind of stuff that I really knew well. That was when I felt that I was not a part of the [Korean] society at all. Whereas when I was in America or in the university and such, I’ve never felt that I am American either. I’ve always thought that I am Korean living in America not even Korean American. But I really felt that I am Korean American when I actually visited Korea.

Inbeom, who identified himself as Korean prior to the trip, shared Kanghoon’s experiences. He explained that even though he was of the same ethnic background and spoke the same language, somehow he was perceived as a foreigner by people in Korea. These experiences made him reexamine his ethnic identity and, when asked how he defined himself after the trip, he replied “Korean American.” He shared his experiences:

Actually, when I went there I realized how Americanized I have become, people noticed
the differences I had with them. When I went to the shopping mall one day they asked “You’re American, aren’t you?” I did not even say an English word. I was just walking around. When I was eating with my family, they said that I was kind of Americanized by just observing my table manners. It was kind of a surprised. It made me examine the way that I think.

Jinseo, a 20-year-old female student who as a result of the trip changed her identity from Korean to Korean American, echoed Inbeom’s and Kanghoon’s comments. She recalled how her Korean friends immediately noticed how her language and looks have changed.

When I went to Korea and met my friend, she told me she could tell that I was American. I asked “why?” and she answered, “The way you dress and speak, you are obviously an American.” And I realized that there are many Korean words I don’t know since I came here [to the U.S.] when I was in 6th grade.

Besides witnessing their own cultural dissimilarity from people in their home country and being labeled as the “Other” by Korean friends and family members, there was another powerful factor that made some of the interviewees alter their ethnic identification from Korean to Korean American. The moment came when they realized the significant difference between their old memories and current images of the places where they used to live before they emigrated to the U.S. To them, seeing old places and sharing memories with their friends were important motivations and reasons to keep their ethnic identity. However, after realizing the places they were attached to have changed or did not exist anymore, they lost the motivation to maintain their ethnic identity and even became emotionally detached from Korea. For example, Hyori commented,

I met one of my old friends and I went to the old school and to the apartment where I used to live. It’s more than 10 years since I have been there and it’s changed a lot. It’s like I remember that place, but it is no longer there, you know. I was very excited to see them, but they were no longer there. No more. They were all gone. It is like there wasn’t me any longer. [emphasis added]

Minhee, who also changed her identity from Korean to Korean American, expressed the emptiness she felt after seeing how much her favorite places in Korea have changed.
I wanted to see how my house or school I went to have changed over time. It’s like 5-6 years passed. And the mountain, kind of like forest, behind the school got removed and an apartment was placed there. There was like a small store in front of my elementary school, but no more. And they put there like a huge department store. Even my apartment itself got bigger. There were only like three buildings there and now they put many apartments there. And then the last place I lived in, it wasn’t an apartment, it was like a house and now there is a huge street there. I feel like it has changed a lot. The places from my memories are gone.

Since the interviewees were physically removed from Korea for a long period of time, their old memories were their main connection to home. After realizing the disconnect between how they remembered and imagined Korea and how this country looks now, the foundations of their ethnic identification were shaken.

In conclusion, for some of the interviewees who embraced Korean ethnic identity prior to the trip, travel to Korea provided an opportunity to reconfirm their identity and reconnect with the contemporary culture in Korea. For the majority of others, however, the trip to Korea led to significant changes in their ethnic identification. It was mainly related to the differences they observed between their culture and the culture of Koreans in Korea. Being recognized and labeled as “Other” also made them reevaluate their ethnic identification. Feelings of loss and emptiness associated with physical changes they noted in Korea and differences between the “Korea of their dreams” and the “real country” furthered their identity change process.

5.4.2 Travel experiences among those who defined themselves as Korean American

Interestingly, all four participants who defined themselves as Korean American prior to their trip maintained the same ethnic identity after traveling to Korea. Their travel experiences have helped them to reconfirm their belief that they differed in certain important cultural aspects from people in their home country. The interviewees shared both positive and negative
experiences from Korea and how they affected their views of their home country.

Seyoon was positively surprised with the changes he observed in his home country and, in particular, with how diverse Korean society has become. Until Korea began accepting laborers from Asian countries such as the Philippines, Viet Nam, and China, it was 99.99% homogeneous and comprised of ethnic Koreans (Han-min-jok) only. However, in recent years, the ethnic makeup of Korea has begun to change and the attitudes of Koreans to foreigners have improved. In addition, for a person like Seyoon it meant that he, as a Korean American, did not stand out as much and “could even pass as an insider.” He commented,

Korea is changing, that is obvious. Korea used to promote the culture of one. “We are one culture/country, one ethnicity,” that is what I learned in elementary school. But these days it’s not. There are a lot of international people in Korea, people are being kind to foreigners, and TV is portraying international workers abroad. After all, maybe it’s because the place I stayed in was famous for finance; there were a lot of international employees. I was from the States but I was more insider than they were. […] It was welcoming.

Seyoon’s fears that he would be treated as an outsider and would have trouble “fitting in” in Korea did not materialize and he attributed it to the fact that Korean society was becoming more diverse and accepting of other cultures. Seungmin’s views on the same issue, however, were quite different. A 20-year-old Accountancy major believed that Korean society still emphasized the mono-ethnic structure of its population, and this fact made him feel excluded during the visit to his home country. He commented,

I think because Korea is mainly [composed of] Koreans and they can bond together better than Americans, but I think it shows more racism, I think Koreans are the most racist ethnic group of all. They just bond together and they don’t want to let anyone else in. I felt that while I was in Korea. I mean, the bonding is good but it’s also bad. I think in America, because there are so many ethnicities and nationalities people can respect each other and people know how to act towards other cultures and respect other cultures better than Koreans. […] Even people here, even foreign students, sometimes I hear them saying the most racist stuff ever.

He further explained how his travel experience has reassured him that he was Korean American
and even made him not want to travel to this country again.

I am a Korean American. The travel made it clearer that I am Korean American. I am more Korean American than Korean because there were a lot of conflicts and differences that I faced and I noticed. That’s just different and I don’t want to go back. I felt the difference—even in my family I felt the difference.

Other interviewees, including Seungmin, who described themselves as Korean American noticed some important differences between themselves and Koreans in Korea in terms of their social and cultural norms, behaviors, looks, and ways of thinking. Similarly to Seungmin, Chansoo, who had immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 10, commented on what he believed was a rude behavior of Koreans:

I feel that Koreans are kind of rude to me whenever I go back to Korea. I don’t know whether it’s because I lived here in the States for a long time or not. When people run into each other or even brush past a person while walking, Americans say, “Excuse me” or “I am sorry,” but Koreans never do that. And sometimes even break out in arguments. I don’t like it.

Other interviewees remarked that the way Koreans socialized and drank made them feel awkward and uneasy. Because participants left Korea when they were very young, they were not familiar with the norms governing certain types of social behavior in their home country.

Seyoon, a 22-year-old participant, and several others described they had experienced “culture shock” after being exposed to the type of night life enjoyed by their Korean friends. As Seyoon commented,

Some of the [cultural] characteristics conflicted with who I am. For drinking matters, in Korea you go drinking a lot, [you drink] basically until you pass out. I don’t like that. I don’t think drinking until you pass out is a good idea. It’s a more of alcohol poisoning, but my [Korean] friends think it’s perfectly fine because it’s an end of the year type of thing. Where I am like, “no, you are not supposed to die, you are supposed to go home and sleep.” I guess, there is a different between Koreans and myself. […] After making a trip to Korea, I always get reminded that I am Korean American.

While some of the interviewees were able to recall specific moments when they became aware of their cultural distinctiveness and cognizant of their ethnic identity, others saw identity
development as a gradual process. For example, Seungmin evaluated the role of tourism in establishing his ethnic identity:

> It [my ethnic identity] gradually changed. It was not like a sudden [change]. I didn’t change anything just because of that trip. First visit, it’s like everything was new to me in Korea. Second visit, I got to know more. I watched more Korean shows and am having more Korean pride seeing the World Cup and stuff.

He pointed out that not only one trip, but multiple travel experiences, combined with other leisure activities and events helped to shape his ethnic identity. Seungmin further elaborated on the role travel played in his identity development process:

> Because I have been to both places and I felt the differences, and how people treat me. I was able to see the pros and cons in both cultures, so it kind of made me appreciate both, but also see the negatives of both. I appreciate some parts of each and don’t appreciate some parts of each. But, I mean, a person doesn’t really have feelings toward a country like personal feelings. There isn’t one identity in Korea, but that people create their own sense of identity.

Seungmin discussed the important fact that his identity emerged not only as a result of his own internal development process, but it was also socially constructed based on the messages he was receiving from his social environment. Other interviewees have also mentioned that travel to Korea was only one of the factors that shaped their ethnic identity development process. The influence of other factors such as peer culture, academic environment, and faith-based organizations will be further discussed in the following sections of the Findings chapter.

In general, interviewees who perceived themselves as Korean American recognized the uniqueness of their cultural background and the differences between their culture and values and those of Koreans who lived in their home country. For them, travel back to Korea played an important role in helping them realize the complexity of the Korean society and culture and, thus, to reevaluate their ethnic identity in a more informed and rational way.
5.4.3 Travel experiences among those who defined themselves as American

Interestingly and quite unexpectedly, all three participants who thought of themselves as American prior to their trip to Korea changed their identity to Korean following their trip. For the participants who considered themselves American, travel back to Korea reminded them that Korea was their home country and their place of birth, and was an important turning point that marked a beginning of their ethnic identity discovery process. For instance, Dongjun, who had emigrated from Korea at the age of 13, traveled back home for the first time in 2007. At first, he felt that Korea was a foreign country, but after the time went by, and after having an opportunity to meet old friends, he began to feel at home. He commented,

I knew that Korea and America are very different. I just felt and experienced the difference. I just came here [to the US] when I was very young, so I felt Korea was a foreign country right after I got to Korea. But when I began meeting my friends, I felt like “I am back home.” Now I desire to go to Korea.

Similar to the interviewees with Korean American identity, many other participants remarked that the travel experience itself was not solely responsible for their identity change, but rather was one of the factors that contributed to their identity development process. To these participants, their travel experience was a stimulator that made them rethink their ethnic identity, attachments, friendships, and values. Dongjun, for instance, stressed the importance of friendship circles to his ethnic identity development. He mentioned,

Travel was a part of the reason why I think that I am Korean now. […] When I was in high school, I mostly hung out with Twinkies, so I thought that I am Twinkie as well. But after I came to the college, with friends, I joined Korean clubs, and met a lot of friends who have similar background with me. Naturally, I began socializing with them; I started to feel that I am closer to them not Twinkies. I think that’s why people around me are really important.

Hyunbin, who is a Music education major, also emphasized the role of the college setting in establishing ethnic identity, but his experiences were quite different from Dongjun’s. Being
the only Korean as well as the only Asian in his major, Hyunbin felt ethnically different than other colleagues in his class. He commented,

I think it [the influential factor that made him think he was Korean] is the college, not just the travel experience itself. Maybe if I was with other Koreans, things would be different, but I am the only Korean in my major, like as a whole. I tend to look different than them because I am different. When I am in the classroom, I am Korean.

The effect of college environment on ethnic identity development among participants will be discussed in more detail in the next section of the Findings chapter.

Minyoung put more emphasis on the cultural conflict and tension with mainstream Americans. She was adopted by her aunt’s family when she was 15 years old. Since her stepfather was Caucasian American, Minyoung was more exposed to an environment that in many circumstances could have promoted assimilation to the mainstream American culture. For Minyoung, however, interacting with Anglo American family members made her realize her ethnic distinctiveness. As the time went by, she came to accept the fact that she was Korean because of a cultural barrier with her family she could not seem to negotiate. She commented,

I sometimes watch [American] TV shows with my uncle [her stepfather]. Sometimes he laughs so hard but I cannot laugh because it is not funny to me at all. It is not an English [language] problem. Even though I understood what they were talking, I could not laugh because it was just not funny to me at all. I sometimes asked my uncle, “Why is it funny?” […] In this kind of situation, I felt that I could not be American.

Minyoung clearly recognized the fact that establishing an American identity did not necessarily come with the complete acceptance of American culture and a mastery of the English language. It led to some frustrations on her part and recognition that her cultural background was Korean.

For the interviewees who considered themselves American prior to their trip, travel provided an opportunity to reexamine their ethnic identity and was one of the factors, along with their college experiences and family circumstances, that lead to the ultimate change in their ethnic self-identification. Overall, the interviews showed that travel experiences played
significant roles in affecting the development of ethnic identities among 1.5 generation Korean American college students. It seems that the participants who claimed to have a Korean or American identity prior to their trip were more likely to change their ethnic self-identification than those who already had a Korean American identity. Since the Korean American identity is more of a negotiated type of identity, it was less likely to be altered as a result of the trip. The interviews also revealed that travel was one of many factors that influenced the development of ethnic identity among Korean college students. The college setting and faith-based organizations were also mentioned as having important impact on ethnic identity development among these young adults. They will be described in more detail in the next two sections of the Findings chapter.

5.5  Additional Factors Influencing Ethnic Identity Development among College Students

In addition to their travel experiences in Korea, there were a number of other factors closely related to the development of ethnic identity among 1.5 generation Korean American college students. In this section, the influence of the college setting and faith-based organizations will be examined.

5.5.1  College setting

During the course of the interviews, the majority of participants remarked that the college environment strongly influenced their self-perception of ethnicity. Among many aspects of the
college setting, the large population of Korean students on the University of Illinois campus was the most frequently mentioned factor that shaped their ethnic identity. It gave Korean American students the opportunity to speak the Korean language, socialize with people from their home country, and to learn and discuss Korean culture. Kanghoon, a 24-year-old English Literature major, compared the Illinois campus to “Little Seoul.” He commented that he was able to develop a peer group of other Korean students and that it has helped him to maintain his Koreanness but, at the same time, had a negative effect on his assimilation to American culture.

[The] Korean community in UIUC is like Little Korea or Little Seoul. It is really a miniature of it. There are just many Korean people and you can just have a entire peer group created with Korean international students. (...) It [being a Korean student on the Illinois campus] has a negative impact on me because I am trying to assimilate myself into American culture and I am not learning enough. I am not speaking English enough and I am not assimilating enough into American culture because I am spending too much time with Korean international students. Pros, I would say, [if not for it] I guess, I would have lost much of my Korean heritage. I mean, the language itself I might have forgotten.

Taeyeon, who thought of herself as Korean prior to the trip and who maintained her Korean identity after her travel, emphasized the impact of the large population of Korean students on the University of Illinois campus on her ethnic identity.

Well, after I got into the U of I, I think of myself as more Korean because I can hear Korean [language] everywhere. I greet with my friends “Annyong,” not “hi” when I run into them. I think if I went to a school with fewer Koreans then I might have thought differently, I guess. I think I am more Koreanized even though I live in America. I think this environment is really the key to identity.

Yoontae, who maintained his identity as Korean following the travel to Korea, also expressed his thoughts about the importance of the University of Illinois environment. He commented,

The good part [of being a Korean student at UIUC] is that I can create a lot of contacts and I can create a lot of networking with Korean people and I can increase my Korean identity. But the trade off would be that I lose my chance to create the social networks with other American people.

Many participants observed that the Korean student population at the University of
Illinois campus was not homogenous and consisted of three sub-groups: Korean students coming to the U.S. just for their education called *Yuhaksang* (international students) or FOB (“Fresh Off the Boat”); 1.5 generation Korean immigrant students; and 2*nd* generation Korean students, often called “Twinkies.” Some of the interviewees commented that their identities often evolved as a result of people they associated with. For instance, 1.5 generation students who interacted more with Korean international students tended to embrace more of a Korean identity. There were also others, however, who felt more affinity for 2*nd* generation Korean students. As Taeyeon, a 20-year-old female, commented,

There are variations among 1.5 generation [Korean students]. The 1.5 generation who keep more Korean heritage socialize with international students. But 1.5 generation who have lost their Korean heritage socialize with 2*nd* generation or foreign friends more. I socialize with international students at UIUC. That’s why I feel more Korean now.

Another female student who was adopted by her aunt also made a comment:

When I was in Chicago, most of my friends were 1.5ers but now I have a lot of international student friends because there are so many of them. I don’t socialize with 2*nd* generation. Now, I think I am more of a Korean than American because of many international students from Korea at U of I.

Dongjun, who had identified himself as American prior to the trip and who had changed his identity to Korean, further elaborated on the influence of the college environment, including peer associations and becoming a member of ethnic clubs, on his ethnic identity and compared his experiences to those of his sister. He commented,

When I was in high school, I mostly hung out with Twinkies, so I thought that I am Twinkie as well. But after I came to the college, with friends, I joined Korean clubs, and met a lot of friends who have similar background to mine. Naturally, I began socializing with them; I started to feel that I am closer to them not Twinkies. […] I think that the close friends are really important. My older sister came to the U.S. at a later age than me. She goes to other college that doesn’t have a lot of Koreans. I think she thinks she is more American than Korean. She listens to American music. She likes American TV shows. When she is asked where she is gonna live, she always answers that she wants to stay here. She says that she feels more comfortable in the U.S. But me, I am not comfortable in the U.S. and prefer to live in Korea. I think that’s why people around me
Peer associations were also affected by the students’ travel to Korea. As Dongjun described, following the trip to Korea he began to socialize with other Korean students on campus, watch Korean TV shows, and discover other aspects of their heritage. When asked about his ethnic identity changes, he remarked,

I don’t think it is only because of that trip. […] But then my college experience, I think it is a lot more influential. They [Korean students] are always speaking in Korean and stuff. I watch TV shows and Korean drama. I feel like now I am a Korean living in America.

The age at arrival is usually considered an important mediator of acculturation and ethnic identity retention (Gonzalez, 2003) among Korean immigrants. However, based on Dongjun’s and his sister’s experiences, the existence of ethnic peer group in college and exposure to Korean culture through ethnic clubs on campus seemed to play a more important role in developing their ethnic identity. Another factor that had a strong effect on students’ ethnic identity was membership in faith-based organizations.

5.5.2 Faith-based organizations

Interestingly, all of the interviewees declared that after immigrating to the U.S. they became religious, even though they did not identify themselves and their families with any church while they still lived in Korea. At the time of the interviews, all 18 participants claimed that they attend Korean church on campus. More specifically, five participants attend a Roman Catholic church, and the rest of the interviewees attended (Protestant) churches with different levels of regularity. For the majority of the interviewees, church was not only a site for religious worship, but also a place to get together, socialize, and thus reshape and confirm their ethnic identity. There are a number of Protestant churches in Champaign-Urbana where Korean students
come to worship. For instance, services at the Covenant Fellowship Church (CFC) are usually attended by second generation Korean American students; 1.5 generation and first generation students often visit Yesu Sarang (Jesus Love) Korean church, while Korean international students tend to prefer the Korean Church of Champaign-Urbana. Many of the interviewees claimed that they changed the church they attended when they developed their Korean identity during their college stay. Seungkyu, who changed his ethnic identity from Korean to Korean American following his trip to Korea, explained why he began attending CFC church.

I now see myself as more second generation than first generation because it’s just different -- the way I think and the way the first generation people do. I think I just fit better with second generation friends than with first generation. Just because I have been hanging around them and friends from high school, they all are second generation. The church I go to now they have only English service. I go to CFC.

Minyoung, who considered herself American prior to the trip and who switched her identity to Korean following her return, commented about church being a site for the reproduction of ethnic identity among Korean American students. She also noted the divisions among the Korean ethnic community and the existence of many sub-groups of Korean students on campus.

Second generation Korean American students get together and socialize together among themselves. They go to [a] different church, I mean CFC. But 1.5 generations or immigrants, we get together and hang out with ourselves. We go to Jesus Love. We go to [a] different church.

Dongjun, who switched his identity from American to Korean following his trip, commented that as his ethnic identity developed and his social networks evolved, he also felt the need to change his church affiliation.

Well, when I just came to the college, like freshman and sophomore, I went to CFC, with my high school Twinkie friends. But once I got familiar with Korean culture, with other Korean friends, I didn’t feel comfortable there. So from my junior [year], I go to Jesus Love.

Another participant, Hyunbin, whose identity evolved from American to Korean, shared the
same feelings. As his ethnic self-identification gradually changed following his travel to Korea, the composition of his peer group was also altered and it affected the church he felt most comfortable in. He commented,

From high school to freshman, I was hanging out with Twinkies the most. They go to CFC church like Twinkie church, and there’s like Jesus Love and KC - an FOB church. I was in CFC because of my high school friends. [However] during the sophomore year, junior year and senior, it kind of changed. I go to Jesus Love now because my FOB friends go to Jesus Love.

Thus, for the Korean American students at the University of Illinois, church played a much broader role than the site of religious worship. It was a place where Korean Americans got together, socialized, and shared experience with their friends, which went hand-in-hand with the process of ethnic identity development and retention.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings of the study were presented. This chapter was divided into five sub-sections that tried to provide answers to the questions posted in this study. In the first section, the ethnic identity among 1.5 generation Korean Americans was examined. In the second and the third sections, travel motivations, travel information search behavior, and their relationship with ethnic identity among 1.5 generation Korean American students were explored. In the fourth section, the impact of travel to Korea on ethnic identity changes was addressed. Lastly, the additional elements which influenced the development of ethnic identity among 1.5 generation Korean American students were examined. In the following chapter, the findings of the study will be discussed in light of the existing literature on ethnic identity, tourism motivation, and information search behavior.
CHAPTER VI
DISCUSSION

In line with most previous models (i.e., Erickson, 1968; Marcia, 1966, 1980; Phinney, 1989), the findings of this study showed that ethnic identity development among 1.5 generation Korean American students was a complex, dynamic, and multi-stage process. When asked to self-describe their ethnicity prior to the most recent trip to Korea, all of the informants have categorized themselves as Korean, Korean American or American. However, it is hard to argue that they have reached the “foreclosed” ethnic identity status since their identity has evolved as a result of their travel experiences and due to a number of social and environmental factors that influenced them during their college years. Both Macia’s and Phinney’s three stage models labeled the last stage of ethnic identity development as “achieved” identity. Marcia claimed that this stage is characterized by the presence of both commitment and exploration, while Phinney argued that it occurs after a person had a chance to understand oneself and the culture, and reveal a sense of the self as a member of an ethnic minority group. The findings of this study showed that the participants were committed to the membership in an ethnic group, but that their understanding of the culture and their place in Korean, American, and immigrant Korean societies was still evolving. College years were clearly the time of increased exploration and major shifts in ethnic self-identification; however, it is hard to argue that the process of self-discovery would ever be fully completed.

It is important to first examine the factors that influenced ethnic identity of participants prior to their trip to Korea in order to put in context the role of travel and other factors related to college environment in their ethnic identity development process. In the following sections of
this chapter, the specific findings of this study with respect to ethnic identity achievement/retention prior to the trip, motivations for travel to Korea, information search behavior, and the impact of the travel experiences on ethnic identity development will be discussed in relation to the existing literature.

6.1 Ethnic Identity Achievement/Retention among 1.5 Korean American College Students prior to their Trip to Korea

The majority of the interviewees described their ethnic identity as Korean prior to their most recent trip to their home country even though they immigrated to the U.S. during their childhood or early adolescence. The degree of their ethnic identity retention and reasons why they thought of themselves as Koreans, however, differed. The findings revealed that some participants believed that this ethnic distinction was a natural outgrowth of their place of birth and showed a significant amount of pride in their ethnic heritage. Others developed their ethnic identity through interactions with their families or other Korean people, eating Korean food at home, speaking the Korean language with their families, and using ethnic media including the Internet and TV in their everyday lives. At a macro level, maintaining Korean identity was also related to the influence of social structures such as difficulties in assimilating into American society due to language problems, scarce social networks, and experiences of racism.

The findings regarding the significant levels of ethnic identity retention among 1.5 generation Koreans are consistent with Jung and Lee’s (2004) study that showed that Korean American college students were likely to retain a strong sense of ethnic identity. As many previous studies found, the familial context is critical in helping retain ethnic identity among
Korean American students (Huh & Reid, 2000; Kibria, 2000; Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin, 2006). This research project also confirmed Jung and Lee’s assertion that interactions with both “in-group (peer Korean American students and family members) and out-group (other ethnic group members)” play significant roles in the process of ethnic identity negotiation among Korean American students (p. 153). Additionally, the various kinds of media such as the Internet, mobile phones, and ethnic movies facilitated communication with other members of the group and, in turn, helped to reinforce their “Koreanness” (Jung & Lee). The findings of the study were also in line with the previous research that showed that ethnic pride and the level of ethnic identity are positively correlated (Lee, 2005).

The interviewees who defined themselves as Korean American before their travel to Korea positioned themselves in between on the continuum of ethnic identity. They became cognizant of their Korean American identity in three types of situations. First, they developed their distinct identities when they realized that they could not completely assimilate into Korean or American society. Second, they recognized that they did not fulfill their duties to or follow social norms of either of the two countries—Korea and the United States. Third, they recognized that they were Americanized owing to their education in the U.S. These findings are consistent with the assertion of Yi (2005), who argued that even though 1.5 generation Korean American participants of her study were educated in the American school system and had enough opportunities to socialize and be exposed to mainstream Americans, they developed an “ethnic American identity.” Such identity was strongly related to the recognition that their place was in America, but that they were culturally different from both mainstream Americans and native Koreans who resided in their home country.

Many participants who described themselves as American prior to their most recent trip
to Korea tended to reject their Korean identity due to negative experiences with discrimination, being excluded from their American peer groups, and feeling ashamed of other Korean people. Other participants thought of themselves as American since they socialized and interacted with other American friends. While much of the existing research claimed that being excluded from mainstream American society often reinforces ethnic identity (Matute-Bianchi, 1986), the findings of this study revealed that feelings of exclusion made interviewees develop some degree of envy and an even stronger desire to “fit in.” Such feelings and behaviors have also been detected among other ethnic teens (e.g., Pyke & Dang, 2003) and are in line with the argument of Kibria (2000) who claimed that Korean Americans often downplay their ethnic background in order to establish American identity. At the same time, however, they try to maintain some degree of ethnic identity in order to be able to take advantage of the social capital afforded by membership in the ethnic group.

Interestingly, there were variations in the degree of ethnic identity acceptance even within the same category of ethnic self-identification -- Korean, Korean American, and American. Many of the participants who identified themselves as Korean, for example, described themselves differently as “FOB,” “more Korean,” or “just Korean.” Likewise, participants who identified themselves as Korean American described themselves as “Twinkies,” or “almost 2nd generation.” Thus, with regards to ethnic identity, their “in betweeness” between the home and host society was clearly observable. Also, when asked about changes to their ethnic identity after the most recent travel to Korea, the participants used different terms to describe themselves. They depicted themselves as “Korean American more of Korean side” “Twinkies” or “just Korean,” which showed that there existed many variations even within the three-tier ethnic classification.

It is interesting to note that except for one participant, all informants who claimed to be
Korean American or American were male. Conversely, only one female interviewee considered herself to be American while the rest of female students described themselves as Korean prior to their trip. It may be related what De Santana Phinho (2008) claimed to be a feeling of duty among many women to be the “bearers of the nation” responsible for nourishing the cultural traits of their own ethnic group. In regards to the age at arrival which was previously shown to be a strong mediator of ethnic identity development (Rogler, Cooney, & Ortiz, 1980), it did not come up as an important factor in this study. The age at arrival among participants who described themselves as American prior to the trip was not much different from the age at arrival among other interviewees.

In addition, the participants’ perception of the socio-economic status of their families seemed to be related to their ethnic identity development. The majority of the participants who described themselves as either Korean or Korean American considered their family as “middle class” in American society. These participants were also least likely to change their ethnic self-identification after the trip. This finding could be related to Waters’ (1994) study of second generation teens and young adults. As her study showed, more than half of the middle class teens described themselves in ethnic terms, while less than 20% of the working class and low SES class teens identified themselves ethnically.

### 6.2 Travel Motivation across the Levels Ethnic Identity

The travel motivations among 1.5 generation Korean American college students were quite diverse and included visiting family and friends, visiting places from childhood, “just for fun,” a celebration of obtaining American citizenship or permanent resident status, having medical service or surgery, being homesick, refreshing their Korean language, and learning more
about modern Korean culture in preparation for their move back to Korea. Also, young travelers displayed travel motivations unique to people of their age group such as attending an international camp or educational seminar for Korean students from abroad, experiencing Korean college life, and learning job skills useful in their future career.

Travel motivations among 1.5 generation Korean American college students were somewhat related to the levels of their ethnic identity development. Motivations among students who defined themselves as Korean prior to the trip were mainly related to their desire to reconnect with their homeland -- to improve their Korean language skills and to learn more about Korean heritage and the culture of contemporary Korea. Many of the participants commented that they missed their homeland and decided to travel to Korea immediately after receiving American citizenship or permanent resident status. Their ties to Korea seemed to be strong enough for some of them to consider resettling back to their home country.

Participants who described themselves as Korean American prior to the trip travelled back home not only to reconnect with their friends and families but also for somewhat utilitarian reasons -- to have medical or dental treatment, to study abroad, or to learn skills helpful in their future career in the United States. From their point of view, Korea was more of a country that could be helpful in accomplishing their goals by using their cultural capital such as Korean language skills and social networks, rather than a place they had strong emotional attachment to. As their place of birth, Korea was closer and more familiar than other countries, but it was not the place they considered resettling to or a home they were particularly longing for. These feelings might have been related to their perceptions that they were already culturally different from Koreans living in their home country and that their future was firmly rooted in the United States.
Interviewees who perceived themselves to be American prior to the trip also traveled to Korea mainly to visit their family and friends. However, some of them had either one or both of their parents living in the home country and, thus, were more interested in reuniting with their biological parents than visiting more distant family members, similar to other participants. The data do not support the assertion that their motives for travel to Korea included longing for the home country or a desire to establish links to their culture of origin.

The most salient travel motive across levels of ethnic identity development, to visit families and friends, confirmed the results of previous studies (e.g., Butler, 2003; De Santana Pinho, 2008; Kraskiewicz, 1990) conducted on a number of different ethnic groups. Kraskiewicz’s research revealed that Polish immigrants in America traveled back to Poland for social and cultural kinship, to visit family and friends, and because of emotional ties to their homeland. The studies of Meaney and Robb (2006) and De Santana Pinho also revealed that Irish American and other European immigrants of Italian and Jewish descent traveled to their ancestral homes to visit friends and relatives. The primary motives among the Lebanese immigrants to Australia who traveled to Lebanon were to visit their relatives and pleasure seeking. Thus, regardless of the ethnic group and age at immigration, the primary reasons for traveling to the home countries among immigrants both in this and in other studies seemed to be remarkably similar.

Unexpectedly, however, although travel did seem to play an important role in helping Korean young adults shape their ethnic identity, when asked about it during the interview, none of the participants mentioned that searching for their roots or helping to clarify “who they are” were conscious motives for their travel back home. This finding was quite surprising given that the majority of studies that have focused on travel patterns of ethnic minorities argued that visits
to ancestral homelands are related to people’s efforts to establish their identity and search for family roots (i.e., Basu, 2005; Ostrowski, 1991). The potential reasons for this can be numerous. For instance, whereas many studies on the topic did not specify the age of ethnic travelers (e.g., Kang & Page, 2000; McCain & Ray, 2003) or focused on middle aged people only (e.g., Ray & McCain, 2009b), this research focused solely on a relatively young, college student population. Although college years are considered the prime time for ethnic identity development (Phinney, 1990), many younger people may not be cognizant of this process taking place and may not consider the search for ethnic roots as the primary reasons for their travels. This is likely to change with age, as middle age and older ethnic minority members may engage in conscious efforts to trace their family histories or search for places from their childhood. Another possible reason may lie with the fact that the majority of young Koreans immigrated to the U.S. with their parents and thus could easily trace their lineage. They were also busy with their studies, careers, and establishing personal relationships and may not have reached the moment of conscious retrospection typical to many middle age people.

In light of that, these participants can be regarded as a new type of genealogical tourist. They are very different from the old generation, “traditional” genealogical tourists who traveled to their home countries mainly to trace their family roots or reconnect with their country of origin. Such genealogical tourists that were depicted in the majority of the existing studies were usually either 2nd or 3rd generation ethnics or immigrants who have managed to establish themselves socially and economically in their country of destination. Genealogical tourists depicted in this study, however, were all young, 1.5 generation ethnics for whom travel was a normative phenomenon rather than once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Their mobile lifestyles were shaped by the globalized economy and made possible by the economic betterment of their and
their parents’ generation. For the young 1.5 generation Korean American college students, visiting home country was an expectation rather than a life-long dream. Thus, they showed different tendencies and behaviors in terms of travel motivations and information search than their predecessors from the twentieth century. As shown in this study, many participants considered their ethnicity as human and social capital. Their multi-national social networks and language skills furthered their economic opportunities and fostered their job careers. As such, their travel motivations included more utilitarian reasons such as experiencing college life, improving language skills, and expanding their social networks in their home country.

Unexpectedly, some motivations such as experiencing Korean Wave (Hallyu) were not found among participants in this study. Because Korean Wave is an important global phenomenon reaching across Asia, South America and even Europe (Korea Joongang Daily, 2011), it was expected to be a powerful factor motivating young Korean Americans to travel to their home country. However, even though Korean entertainment is gaining popularity in America (Korea Joongang Daily), 1.5 generation Korean American college students did not travel back home to experience the Korean Wave.

The findings of this study helped to identify several unique motivations for travel, such as taking advantage of cultural capital to prepare for future careers, which may be found among younger ethnic minority members. It is also worthwhile to note that several of the participants traveled to Korea to receive medical services. According to Yu and Ko (2011), owing to Korea’s high medical standards and excellent qualifications of Korean doctors, medical tourism is a growing industry in this country. The total number of medical tourists has increased from 19 million travelers in 2005 to 25.8 million in 2007, representing an annual growth rate of 16.5%. According to the survey conducted by the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO, 2009), 54.5% of
Chinese and 37.5% of Korean overseas visitors were motivated to visit Korea to receive medical services, including rehabilitation and aesthetic procedures (Yu & Ko). Another KTO study (2008) found that regardless of the cultural or national differences, patients considered bed-side manner, followed by the cost, ease of access, convenience of communication, aftercare service, tourism-products package, and insurance assistance as the most important factors that motivated them to seek medical services in this country (Yu & Ko). While other tourists may face language barriers while seeking medical services in Korea, Korean overseas travelers do not have to contend with this problem. Moreover, since Korea is their home country, they can often combine medical treatment with visiting friends and relatives and other tourist activities. Tourism agents and medical practitioners need to recognize the potential market not only among older people, but also among younger, college age Korean immigrants who consider their home country to be a convenient place to seek medical services.

6.3 Travel Information Search Behavior among 1.5 Korean American College Students

Interestingly and quite unexpectedly, travel planning behavior among 1.5 generation Korean American college students was found to be quite limited and occurred mostly after arrival to their home country. Korean students tended not to organize their trip well in advance, regardless of their travel motivations and degree of ethnic identity achievement. The majority of the participants considered planning for the trip to Korea unnecessary, as they believed they knew the country despite their long residence in the U.S. and could consult on-site with their friends and family members. Moreover, their knowledge of the Korean language and their social and cultural familiarity with the destination influenced their planning behavior. The study
showed that young Korean travelers were highly dependent on their families and friends not only in the pre-trip planning phase, but also at the destination when they had to make decisions about places to visit, restaurants to eat in, and modes of transportation.

To some extent, the findings of this study confirmed the results of past research on tourists’ planning behavior. For instance, as Woodside and Dubelaar (2002) suggested in the model of tourism consumption systems (TCSs), the use of travel information was related to the primary motives for the trip, not only in the pre-trip stage but also during the trip and in the post-trip stage. The findings are also consistent with Stewart and Vogt’s (1999) case-based vacation planning theory that proposed that travel information search occurs from the pre-trip stage to the post-trip stage. From the perspective of Fodness and Murray’s (1998) strategies for information search behavior (spatial, temporal, and operational), the information search among young Korean travelers was more likely to be external (spatial), pre-purchase (temporal, in response to a specific current purchase problem) and decisive (operational). Based on the in-depth interviews, it was found that information was obtained primarily from family members and friends, and by consulting the Internet. The search activity took place usually when it was perceived to be necessary to solve a particular problem or to enhance the travel experience. The obtained information was more likely to be related to the decision-making (decisive).

Interestingly, the most frequently used sources of information (family members, friends, and the Internet) were common to all participants, regardless of their level of ethnic identity development or travel motivations. As noted by a number of existing studies (i.e., Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Murphy, 2001), word of mouth is critical in travel decision-making and often considered more reliable and credible than marketer-sourced promotions (Herr et al., 1991; Simpson & Siguaw, 2008). In addition, young Korean travelers considered the Internet to be one
of the two most important information sources due to its convenience, real-time information, and interactive communication (Castañeda et al., 2007). In that sense, these findings run contrary to those obtained by McCain and Ray (2003) who found that diaspora travelers relied mainly on travel guides and chambers of commerce. Also, they are quite different from those of Chen and Gursoy (2000) who found that travelers for leisure and VFR were more likely to rely on travel guides than other sources of information. It is likely that the relatively young age of Korean travelers and the fact that they still had extended networks of friends and families abroad were responsible for these differences. It has been previously suggested that young travelers tend to increasingly rely on electronic media sources, such as the Internet, rather than on more traditional sources of travel information (Beritelli et al., 2007; Luo et al., 2004). However, and interestingly, none of the participants in this study seemed to take advantage of Web 2.0 technologies, and instead relied on traditional search engines to obtain general information on the destination including its history, restaurants, and the transportation system.

In general, information search behavior among 1.5 generation college students who participated in this study was somewhat different than among other tourists. First, genealogical tourists who were the focus of this study had families in their destination country. Thus, they had reliable sources of information they could rely on while making travel decisions. Second, their travel search behavior was also altered by their unique travel motivations -- visiting friends and relatives rather than sightseeing and visiting main tourist attractions. In addition, the information that they had sought during their travel was different from the information that typical leisure tourists are searching for. Immigrant tourists specifically looked for information about their old schools, homes, and other meaningful places from their past -- items that would be next to impossible to find in tourists’ guidebooks or websites. Therefore, while a significant portion of
the past research has argued that searching for tourist information could contribute to reducing uncertainty and risks (Bieger & Laesser, 2004; Fodness & Murray, 1997), information search behavior and purposes among young genealogical tourists were essentially different from other travelers.

Arguably, and contrary to expectations, the choice of whether to search Korean or American-language information sources had little to do with the language itself. The majority of the interviewees were quite proficient in both languages, and they were more concerned about the portrayal of things in Korean and American sources, the names of places and translation issues, the reliability of the sources, and their informational content. From the evaluation categorization of travel information sources suggested by Jarvis (1998) and Thorelli and Engledow (1980), the Korean travelers paid most attention to their trustworthiness, credibility, accuracy, and accessibility, as well as to the way in which the information was presented. As found in Nolan’s (1978) study, the dimension of authenticity was found to be an important measure of the credibility of the information source. Participants valued how authentic and credible the sought information was when selecting travel information sources.

It is interesting to note that the specific types of information that the travelers looked for were somewhat related to their motivations for travel and levels of ethnic identity achievement prior to the trip. Those who considered themselves to be Korean were more likely to search for information about shopping malls, those who considered themselves as Korean American tended to seek information about routes and public transportation, and interviewees who described themselves as American were more interested in obtaining information about restaurants and tourist sites.
6.4 The Impact of Travel to Korea on Ethnic Identity Development

It was evident from the findings of this study that travel experiences in Korea had widened the interviewees’ perspectives and brought changes to their ethnic self-perceptions. The most significant changes in ethnic self-identification were found among participants who described themselves as Korean and American prior to the trip. In the majority of cases, those who described themselves as Korean recognized the cultural distance that separated them from people who lived in Korea, including their own family members and, as a result, altered their ethnic identification to Korean American. The ethnic identity of those who considered themselves to be Korean American prior to the trip seemed to be more stable and did not undergo any significant changes as a result of the trip. Visiting Korea confirmed what they suspected even before the trip -- that they behave, act, speak and dress differently even though they have the same ethnic background and cultural roots as people who reside in their home country. Unexpectedly, the findings showed that all participants who described themselves as American prior to the trip changed their ethnic identification to Korean as a result of their travel experience. Travel helped them to reconnect with their home country and was an important turning point in the process of ethnic identity development.

Although this study found that travel to Korea had a strong influence on ethnic identity development among 1.5 generation Korean American college students, its findings seem to run contrary to those of a number of other studies on the topic (e.g., Day-Vines et al., 1998; Meier, 1999). For instance, while much of the previous research has claimed that travel to the home country helps to strengthen ethnic identity among immigrants, the findings of this study revealed that changes in ethnic identity development are not always one-directional and may depend on the degree and the type of ethnic identity prior to the trip. In particular, for travelers who
described themselves as Korean, the trip to their home country helped them to recognize the cultural distance that separated them from their compatriots, which ultimately led to a reevaluation of their ethnic self-identification and development of a hyphenated Korean American identity.

The findings of Bergquist (1999), who suggested that diaspora tourism helps to achieve a stronger sense of ethnic belonging, also could not be fully supported by this study. Rather, our findings were consistent with the central argument of Meier (1999) who examined the travel experiences of 23 Korean adoptees who had visited their homeland. Since they seemed to lack a sense of home, many participants in Meier’s study were ambivalent about returning to their country of birth and reconnecting with their Korean heritage. Some of them argued that by traveling to Korea they realized that due to the long stay in the U.S. they developed mixed cultural traits and thus could not perfectly fit in either Korean or American society. In line with this argument, the majority of the participants in this study either retained or reshaped their ethnic self-identification to Korean American -- a more negotiated form of ethnic identity-- as a result of the travel. Self-identifying as Korean American can be seen as a compromise that involves accepting both cultural traits and obligations. This, in turn, may help ease the emotional tension of having to align themselves with either their home or host country. The findings of this study were also consistent with those of Day-Vines et al. (1998) who examined how diaspora travel impacted the establishment of ethnic identity among African American college students. First, as suggested by Day-Vines et al., visiting places where they used to live and schools they used to attend before emigration played a significant role in connecting students to their past. These experiences have helped Korean students to reconnect with their heritage and reminded them of their Korean roots. In addition, as suggested by Day-Vines et al., travel allowed
Participants to compare and contrast the behavior and everyday life of Americans and Koreans, which made them critically reexamine Korean cultural values. Thus, travel experiences served as a catalyst for revisiting and redeveloping ethnic identity among Korean young adults.

It is worthwhile to note that in the majority of cases changes in ethnic identity among Korean interviewees did not occur solely because of the trip, but were a result of a long term process in which the trip to Korea was just one of the elements. Since ethnic identity formation is affected by many factors and takes place in complex environments, travel experience alone cannot be solely responsible for changing the ethnic identity of an individual (Isajiw., 1990). As shown by Bergquist (1999), Korean adoptees did not exhibit any notable behavioral changes after returning home from their trip to Korea. They resumed their daily lives seemingly with ease and without much identity confusion. The main perceived difference reported by the participants was related to the contacts they maintained with other adoptees they had met during the trip. Also, travel itself led to other changes in their lives that further contributed to identity development. As many participants declared, they made new friends in Korea who shared their interests in Korean culture and heritage. Travel to Korea also gave them an opportunity to search for information about Korean history, culture, and everyday life. The familial context is important to consider when examining ethnic identity of adoptees (Bergquist; Meier, 1999). Two adoptees who were interviewed in this study identified themselves as American prior to their most recent trip to Korea, but after their travel they had changed their identity to Korean. It is impossible to draw many inferences based on two cases only, but the fact that they were adopted by Korean immigrant families (their aunt and uncle) and not by Caucasian families or families of other racial backgrounds likely played some role in their identity development process.

It is also important to note that travel back home took place during an important and
unique period in young Koreans’ life -- their college years. As Min and Kim (2000) noted, identity development may still be actively taking place during this time period and the impact of the college environment on people’s identity development process cannot be discounted. Past research has indicated that ethnic identity consolidates with age as individuals develop the ability to reflect on and understand the importance of their ethnicity and have more chances to interact with people from other ethnic groups (Phinney, 1992). Ethnic identity development tends to parallel that of ego identity formation, with the majority of young adolescents being in the process of exploring their identity and the majority of college-age students reporting that they achieved ethnic identity during their college years (Phinney, 1989). Within this significant period of time students are influenced by many environmental factors such as peer groups, co-ethnic socialization, religion, and racial discrimination (Levin et al., 2006; Ontai-Grzebik & Raffaelli, 2004). Some of these factors will be examined in the next section of the Discussion chapter.

6.5 Other Influential Factors in Ethnic Identity Development

The majority of the interviewees emphasized the important role of the college environment in establishing their ethnic identity. Among the many aspects of the University of Illinois, a large population of Korean students on campus was most frequently mentioned as a factor that helped them to develop their ethnic self-identification. This large population of co-ethnics allowed 1.5 generation Korean American students to meet and socialize with other Koreans, speak the Korean language, and discuss various aspects of Korean culture.

While this large population on Korean students on the University of Illinois campus has helped them to maintain Korean identity and heritage, it also hindered their assimilation into the mainstream American society. As interviewees mentioned, they mainly socialized with other
Koreans and did not have many chances to interact with American students due to the large number of Korean students on campus. Unlike in secondary school, Korean students who did not wish to interact with mainstream Americans had an opportunity to limit their social networks to other members of their ethnic group. Since peer group is regarded as one of the most influential factors in the developmental process (Jung & Lee, 2004), social ties established during the college years likely had a significant effect on the ethnic identification of Korean young adults. Fewer friendships with mainstream Americans and limited opportunities to speak English were also likely to affect their acculturation process to the mainstream American society.

It is important to note that the Korean student population on the University of Illinois campus was not homogenous and that it included a number of sub-groups based on different backgrounds and immigration statuses of the students. The majority of the participants divided Korean students on campus into international students (Yuhaksang) who came to the U.S. just for their education, as well as 1.5 and 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation immigrants. The ethnic identity of students was reshaped by the peer group they associated with. The most noticeable and frequently exemplified change was that of 1.5 generation Korean students who repositioned themselves as Koreans due to the influence of contact with many international Korean students on campus. On the one hand, these findings confirm the significance of peer group in the identity development among minorities (Jung & Lee, 2004), but on the other, they highlight the unique role of the University of Illinois college setting in this process. The results also suggest that identity construction among 1.5 generation Korean American college students is an on-going process that is affected by diverse social and environmental factors.

Interviewees also clearly recognized the power of church in their ethnic identity development. Chong (1998) and Hurh and Kim (1990) argued that ethnic churches play an
important role in maintaining a sense of ethnic identity among Korean Americans. Research has shown that by attending religious services in ethnic churches, Korean immigrants are more likely to build or maintain social networks with other Korean Americans and to preserve ties to Korean culture and language. In line with this argument, this study has shown that church is not only a place for confirming one’s own ethnic belonging, but also a site for reproducing their ethnic identity. Attending services and participating in the activities of Korean churches has helped interviewees to strengthen their sense of belonging to the Korean American community. At the same time, when ethnic self-perceptions of participants evolved, they responded with changing their church affiliation to align themselves better with the ethnic orientation of members of a particular congregation.

Interestingly, the findings of the study showed that none of the interviewees attended a local American church and that many of them went to Korean churches not necessarily because of their religious beliefs. Their church affiliation fostered their ties with other Koreans on campus and solidified their membership in the Korean student community. By attending church ceremonies and worship, they obtained and shared information about classes, campus life, as well as news from Korea. As Demerath (2003) noted, religion may serve as a strong marker of one’s ethnic identity. He introduced the concept of ‘cultural religion’ which asserts that even though a person might not attend religious ceremonies or have a spiritual connection to the teachings of the church, his or her sense of belonging to an ethnic group may be strengthened by religious affiliation. In line with this reasoning, the findings showed that church facilitated the process of discovery, reevaluation, and reestablishment of Korean students’ ethnic self-identification and helped them to reconstitute intra-ethnic boundaries. As Chong (1998) observed, ethnic church involvement can be a great vehicle for group empowerment through its
capacity to confer a positive value on group identity and to enable the members to challenge the discrimination and stereotypes imposed by the larger society.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the major findings of the study with respect to ethnic identity prior to the most recent trip to Korea, travel motivations, travel information search behavior, and the impact of travel on ethnic identity development among 1.5 generation Korean American college students were highlighted. Subsequently, I discussed how these findings are related to the existing literature in field. In the following chapter, the summary of the findings, the research and practical implications of the project, and overall evaluation of this study will be presented.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of the Research

The current research project was designed to explore (1) the ethnic identity achievement/retention of 1.5 generation Korean American college students prior to their most recent travel to Korea; (2) their travel motivations for their most recent trip to Korea; (3) their information search behavior for their most recent trip to Korea; (4) the relationship between ethnic identity retention/achievement, travel motivations, and travel information search behaviors; and (5) the impacts of their most recent trip to Korea on their ethnic identity development. In order to accomplish these goals, the research project employed 18 in-depth interviews with Korean American students who were registered at the University of Illinois at the time of the study. The data collection was conducted between December 2010 and February 2011. Interviews were conducted in either English or Korean depending on the participants’ preference and took place in coffee houses, the researcher’s office, and restaurants. Pseudonyms were given to protect the participants’ anonymity and data were analyzed using the constant comparison method.

The findings of the study revealed that 1.5 generation Korean American college students exhibited different levels of ethnic identity achievement prior to their most recent trip to Korea and described themselves as either Koreans, Korean Americans, or Americans. Although all participants mentioned that visiting friends and families were important motivations for travel to the home country, in general the motivations of those who described themselves as Korean were somewhat different from motivations of those who considered themselves to be Korean
American or American. Few differences in the travel information search behavior were found among interviewees with different types of ethnic identity achievement and motivations for travel to Korea. Interestingly, for all participants, most of the search behavior took place at the destination. Moreover, no clear relationship was found between planning behavior, language of the information sources, and the level of ethnic identity retention. Travel to Korea played important roles in (re)developing ethnic identity among 1.5 generation Korean American college students. Those who identified themselves as Korean prior to the trip either confirmed their ethnic identity or changed their identity to Korean American. Those who considered themselves Korean American retained their ethnic identity, while those who thought of themselves as American altered their identity to Korean as a result of the travel and other environmental factors related to the college setting and their Korean peer group.

7.2 Contributions of the Study

This study provided valuable information about travel behavior patterns and ethnic identity development among Korean American college students. Research and practical contributions of this study will be discussed in the following sections of the Conclusion chapter.

7.2.1 Contributions to research

The findings of this study provided several important contributions to the field of tourism and ethnic studies. Its main contributions to the scholarship on the motivations of tourists are fivefold. First, this study showed alternative dynamics and patterns in ethnic identity development. The early foundational research on ethnic identity (i.e., Cross, 1980, 1987;
Erickson, 1968; Helms, 1990; Marcia, 1966, 1980) generally theorized that the ethnic identity development proceeds from denial or absence of exploration of ethnicity to acceptance or fully achieved ethnic identity. However, the findings of this study showed that ethnic identity development could be multi-directional rather than uni-directional. For example, the majority of the participants who identified themselves as Korean altered their identity to Korean American.  

Second, the study constitutes one of the first attempts to examine the relationship between tourism motivation and ethnic identity retention and development. The focus of the few existing studies on the topic was to identify unique travel motivations among immigrants and members of minority groups such as Polish Americans (Kraskiewicz, 1990), Irish Americans (Meaney & Robb, 2006), and Lebanese immigrants (Butler, 2003). Some of the existing studies (e.g., Lee & Cox, 2007) have also explored the interest in travel among Korean Australians of different acculturation status. The current study was one of the first attempts to explore travel motivations among young adult minority members who are in the process of establishing their ethnic identity.  

Third, this study helped to widen the topic of tourist motivation research by focusing on a niche market, diaspora travelers, who travel to their home country. Despite repeated calls about the necessity to explore this topic, researchers have generally overlooked the uniqueness of motivations among heritage and especially diaspora travelers (Santos & Yan, 2010).  

Fourth, while previous studies have examined tourist motivations among people across the lifespan (i.e., Ostrowski, 1991) or among older adults (Ray & McCain, 2009a), this study has widened the scope of tourist motivations research by focusing on young adults.  

Fifth, and most importantly, contrary to the argument of many previous studies that heritage/diaspora tourists are motivated mainly by push factors (intrinsic motivation) rather than attributes of a destination (McCain & Ray, 2003), this study showed that pull factors such as quality of medical services or unique
university culture are also important in attracting ethnic tourists.

This research also provided some interesting contributions to the heritage/diaspora tourism literature and to the scholarship on ethnic identity formation among minority members. Many existing studies (e.g., Ray & Cain, 2009a; Ray & Cain, 2009b) have argued that travel to ancestral homes strengthens ethnic self-identification among minority members. The findings of this study, however, revealed that in some cases travel to Korea lead to a weakening of ethnic identity among young adults. The realization of cultural differences between themselves and people residing in their home country has helped some Korean students to verify their romanticized notions of their homeland and to reconfirm that their future was firmly grounded in the United States. Much of the classic research on ethnic identity formation (e.g., Cross, 1980, 1987) argued that ethnic identity development follows several distinct stages that begin with denying one’s ethnic identity, and proceeds to becoming aware of their membership in an ethnic group, involving themselves in the activities of the ethnic group, and ultimately leads to the acceptance of membership in the ethnic group. The findings of this study showed, however, that increased knowledge of one’s heritage and contemporary culture of their homeland spurred by travel may lead to a process quite different from the one proposed by classic models. In fact, improved knowledge may not necessarily lead to increased identification with and acceptance of an ethnic group and may foster, instead, embracing either American or hyphenated Korean American identity.

As discussed before, with some notable exceptions (e.g., Day-Vines et al., 1998; De Santana Pinho, 2008), the university students have been underrepresented in heritage tourism studies that mainly focused on middle age and older adults. However, in-depth examinations of travel behaviors among young adult minority members may provide important insights into the
identity development process. Judging from the responses of Korean Americans who participated in this study, it can be argued that the college students are still actively engaged in the process of exploring, changing, and re-confirming their ethnic identity. While early scholars of identity formation such as Erickson (1968) argued that identity development takes place predominantly during adolescence and young adulthood, pursuing post-secondary education can clearly extend this process (Meeus et al., 1999; Min & Kim, 2000; Waterman, 1999).

The existing research on the effects of heritage travel on ethnic identity development has also mainly focused on African Americans and European ethnics (e.g., Cohen et al., 2002; Palmer, 1999), while examinations of people of East Asian background were relatively scarce. Since the ethnic identity development process can show significant differences among people from different racial and ethnic groups (Phinney, 1990), this study provided useful contributions to our understanding of the complex ethnic identity formation processes among 1.5 generation Korean Americans. Due to methodological considerations, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to Korean immigrants in other countries and to people of different generational status and different age groups. To better grasp the roles and the meanings of travel to ancestral home among Korean immigrants, it is important to investigate diverse Korean immigrant populations.

7.2.2 Contribution to practice

The findings of the study can help to provide several recommendations for tourism practitioners who strive to provide quality services to the increasing numbers of Koreans visiting their home country. First, tourism practitioners should make an effort to acknowledge and understand unique aspects of Korean culture that make Korean Americans and other international
tourists uncomfortable during their travels to Korea and that may negatively influence their impressions and images of the country. The unique social norms such as avoiding casual conversations with strangers, avoiding eye contact, or the drinking culture were described by the interviewees as reasons for a “culture shock” when visiting Korea. Considering that participants in this study were familiar with Korean culture and language, one may expect that some foreign travelers may find such Korean manners even more problematic. Providing some background information on Korean customs or cultural norms on tourism-related websites or in travel-related materials can be helpful in decreasing the amount of discomfort felt by people visiting Korea.

Second, participants reported that different norms related to customer service in tourist locations (e.g., shopping malls and tourist attractions) made them feel uncomfortable and left negative impressions from their visit. Thus, it would be important to educate tourism service providers and staff who have direct contact with tourists about the need to adjust the ways in which they interact with foreign customers. For instance, short polite conversations that Western tourists are accustomed to can greatly improve their impressions from the visit, which may have a significant impact on the tourism industry and on the image of Korea as a whole.

Third, one of the significant lessons learned from this study was related to the different content of travel information sites depending on their language. The strategy of differentiating the content of the tourist information sites based on their language seems to be logical, but at the end it failed to meet the needs of some of the travelers. For example, interviewees recalled that despite their fluency in the Korean language they found English information sources more useful because they contained information necessary for travelers from a foreign country. Thus, to serve Korean international tourists better, Korean tourism organizations should put more emphasis on the development of travel information sources in both languages and be careful not to assume
that all Korean speakers will have the same knowledge of the country as domestic travelers.

Fourth, tourism practitioners should recognize that travel plays important roles in the development and formation of ethnic identity among Koreans who live abroad. Travel back to Korea may generate both positive and negative impressions and feelings toward their homeland and lead to people developing stronger allegiance to their country of birth or, conversely, to increasing the distance they feel toward Korea. Thus, it would be important to continue organizing and delivering travel or educational programs which can bridge the cultural distance, familiarize oversees Koreans with Korean heritage and life in contemporary Korea, and develop or maintain their attachment to their home country. Helping Koreans who live abroad to maintain Korean identity is crucial because they are great source for tourism development in Korea and also significant human resource for Korea in the future.

Lastly, the findings of the study also suggested that Korean immigrants who had obtained permanent resident status or American citizenship are an important customer market that can be targeted by tourism providers. Unlike other common constraints on travel such as lack of time or money that may be negotiated by individual travelers, immigration status is largely beyond the control of immigrants and depends on the length of the queues at the time of the application for permanent residency. This study showed that the desire to travel back home and to visit friends and relatives was very strong among the immigrants and that many of them undertook the travel immediately after their immigration paperwork had been processed. Thus, these potential tourists are an important market segment that tourism providers should recognize and market to appropriately.
7.3 Limitations of the Study

While this study provided some interesting additions to the existing literature, it also had several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, since this study employed qualitative research methods, it is hard to generalize its findings to other 1.5 generation Korean American students who live in different regions of the United States and attend different schools. As discussed earlier, the unique environment of the University of Illinois has played an important role in shaping ethnic identity among Korean Americans and other ethnic minority students. The findings of the study might have been quite different if the data were collected from Korean American students from other universities in the U.S.

Second, it is plausible that social desirability of responses might have tainted the accounts of the interviewees related to their struggles with ethnic identity development. Since many Koreans have strong ethnic identity, students might have been hesitant to discuss American aspects of their identity. The questions asked might also lead them to place a value on post-visit identity and a change in identity because they knew that the researcher was looking for change based on the questions. Moreover, since the study relied on self-reported data, honesty of the interviewees, and their recollection of past experiences, it is hard to establish the accuracy of some of the information provided by the participants.

Third, my own position in the study needs to be acknowledged. On the one hand, being a Korean and a temporary resident in the U.S., it was easier for me to understand the circumstances of the interviewees who lived as minority members in this country. Being an insider put me in a good position to discuss ethnic issues and subcultures among Korean American students. However, on the other hand, as a Korean international student in the U.S. and as a woman of middle class status, my own background and perspective might have affected the
collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data.

Fourth, even though this study focused on the participants’ experiences during the most recent trip to Korea, it must have been difficult for some of the interviewees to separate out the effects of the last travel to Korea from their previous travel experiences to this country. Although I reminded the participants on several occasions during the interview that they should focus on their last travel to Korea, many of them remarked that their self-perceptions have changed gradually every time they traveled to Korea.

Fifth, the investigation of ethnic identity relied on the memory of the informants. They were not asked about their ethnic identity prior to their trip to Korea and then after their return to the U.S., but were asked to speculate as to what their identity had been at some point in the past. Therefore, the recall problem could have affected the findings of this study.

Sixth, the potential effect of how long participants have lived in the U.S. was not accounted for the data analysis. It is expected that the length of the residence in the U.S. could be related to the sense of belonging to the participants. However, the data analysis did not include the relationship between the length of the residence in the U.S. and their ethnic identity.

Seventh, potential artificiality might have been introduced due to the grouping of ethnic identity of the participants into three categories -- Korean, Korean American, and American. By clustering their identities into such broad categories many nuisances with respect to ethnic identity of the participants might have been lost.

Lastly, the focus of the study was narrowed down to 1.5 generation Korean American college students. Due to the narrow demographic focus, the diverse ethnic identity among other generational track and other age groups could not be explained by the findings of the study.
7.4 **Suggestions for Future Research**

To further the understanding of the travel experiences and ethnic identity development among 1.5 generation Korean American students, studies should be conducted with Korean Americans who attend different universities across the U.S. and in different countries with large Korean immigrant populations such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Such additional research could involve comparisons among experiences of various subgroups of the Korean diaspora who visit their ancestral homeland. Moreover, to provide generalizable results that can be helpful in tourism marketing efforts, it would be beneficial to conduct research on the topic with the use of a variety of different methodologies, including surveys.

Second, exploration of generational differences in the impact of tourism on ethnic identity development and retention among Korean Americans is recommended. As many studies have shown, ethnic identity is a complicated and dynamic process that interacts with other social, contextual, and ecological factors in the society (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Since each generation has its own unique experiences related to adaptation to American society, the process of development and maintenance of their ethnic identity is also likely to be different. While this study focused on 1.5 generation Korean Americans, the effects of tourism on ethnic identity development among 2nd generation Korean Americans remains largely unexplored. To provide an in-depth understanding of the roles of travel in the ethnic identity development process, examinations of immigrants of other generational status are necessary.

Third, further empirical investigation of the impacts of diaspora travel on the immigrant tourists’ identities would be recommended. As this study focused on the identities of tourists within a limited time after their return, it would be interesting to investigate how long-lasting these changes were and how the identities of the interviewed migrants developed over their
lifespan. It is likely that ethnic identities of this study’s participants are likely to undergo further changes considering the young age of the travelers.

Fourth, different focus on motivations for travel among college students could be interesting idea for tourism researchers in the future. As this study focused on 1.5 generation Korean American college students who traveled back home, the travel motivation was concentrated more on families. However, college students travel with variety reasons such as church related purpose, participating in study abroad program, and volunteer purpose. Thus, widened focus of college travelers’ motivation could be an option for tourism researchers.

Lastly, for the tourism practitioners, further research on the specific sites, activities, and travel behaviors of Korean immigrants while traveling in Korea can be helpful. Existing research highlighted the importance of the diaspora tourism market due to the large number of immigrants across the world (McCain & Ray, 2003). To meet their needs and to better serve immigrant travelers, research on this segment of the travel market is recommended. Such research could help to boost the Korean tourism industry as well as help Korean immigrants scattered across the world to maintain connections with their homeland.

7.5 Concluding Thoughts

When asked by many professors and friends “why do you want to study tourism in the U.S. and not continue with your major, International Studies?”, I answered, “I think the essence and the core of travel is attractive to me. I believe that the core of travel is its potential to have an effect on people.” I have a strong belief that the tourism industry is not just about creating profits but about changing people’s lives. My motivation for choosing the topic of my dissertation was quite simple. By conducting this research, I wanted to understand more about the powerful
influence of travel on people’s lives. I am happy to say that at the end of this journey my initial beliefs about the roles of travel were not misplaced.

When I decided on my concentration area -- ethnic diversity as an international phenomenon related to migration and international marriage, my friends and professors in Korea expressed a concern that it might be difficult for me to find research opportunities in Korea considering that it is such an ethnically and racially homogeneous society. However, the rapid development of information and technology prompted the movement of a labor force from Southern and South East Asian countries such as China, Philippines, and Vietnam. Immigration has been an emerging issue and a recent social phenomenon in Korea. At the same time, however, racial and ethnic diversity is still in the budding stage in Korea and lags far behind the U.S. and other Western countries. Also, research on ethnic diversity and its relation to tourism is slowly developing. I believe that my special interest in human development, travel, and leisure will guide me in my future research career in Korea, and the experience and knowledge I gained while studying in the U.S. will help me establish a future academic career and contribute to the development of this research area in my home country.
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Rassool, N. (1999). Flexible identities: Exploring race and gender issues among a group of


APPENDIX A

Interview Script (English Version)

Travel experiences in Korea

1. How many times have you been to Korea?
2. When was your last trip to Korea?
3. Did you travel by yourself or with your family? Who made the decision about the travel?
4. Tell me about your recent travel to Korea.
5. What activities did you do while there; places you visited; ecologies of the visit? Please show me the places you visited on this map (a small map will be provided).
6. Which places/activities were most memorable for you and why?
7. Which places/activities impressed you the most?
8. Do you have family or friends in Korea?
   a. Did you meet them during your visit? If so, tell me about your experiences with them.
9. What did you learn about Korea/Koreans during your trip?
10. What did you learn about the Korean culture during your trip?
11. Do you plan to go back to Korea at some point in the future? If so,
   a. What would you like to do differently when planning your next trip?

Travel motivations and information sources

1. Can you tell me about your reasons/motivations for your most recent trip to Korea?
2. How important was ...[provide examples of motivations] in your decision to travel to Korea?
3. How did you plan your Korean trip? (including in the U.S. and in Korea)
4. Did your family and friends in Korea [if she/he has any] play any role in helping you plan your trip to Korea? (i.e., helped you decide what to do, where to go, and what to visit)
5. Where did you find information you needed to plan your travel? Please be specific.
[probe for specific sources of information included blogs, travel websites, word-of-mouth etc.]

6. Were the sources you searched in English or in Korean?
7. Do you prefer to search local (American) information or Korean travel information sources? Why?
8. Did you look for any specific types of travel information? Why were they important to you?

**Ethnic identity**

1. How would you describe yourself in terms of your ethnic identity before your trip to Korea? (did you feel you were a Korean, an American, or something else?)
   a. Why did you consider yourself…?
2. How would you describe yourself now? If different from above:
   a. Has your trip to Korea had anything to do with how you feel about who you are / your ethnic identity now?
      - What was it about this trip that made you reevaluate your identity?
   b. What were the other reasons that made you reevaluate your identity? [probe for specific turning points].
3. Please describe the meaning of being a Korean/American/Korean American/Korean immigrant in your everyday life (i.e., media use, language, food, friends, socialization, religion etc.). BEFORE OR AFTER THE TRIP? DOES IT MATTER??
4. How important was it for you to retain Korean culture before your trip to Korea?
   a. Has it changed after your trip to Korea? If yes, please describe the changes.
5. Tell me about how your travel to Korea affected your feelings about both the U.S. and Korea.
6. Have you changed anything important in your daily life as a result of your travel? (i.e., media use, diet, school life, religion…)
University context

1. Let’s discuss your school life at UIUC. What are the pros and cons of being a Korean student on this campus?
2. Did you notice any sub-groups within the Korean student community on this campus? If so, which group do you feel you belong to?
3. What is the ethnic background of your closest friends on campus?
4. Do you socialize with other Korean students on this campus? If so, who are they? [1st, 1.5, 2nd generation Korean Americans?]
5. Have you taken any classes related to Korea or the Korean culture on this campus? If so,
   a. Did you take them before or after you traveled to Korea?
   b. What did you learn about Korea in these classes?
6. Are you a member of any ethnic organizations on campus or in church? If so,
   c. Is this a Korean or East Asian organization? If so,
      i. Does being a member of this organization have anything to do with how you feel about your ethnic identity?

Socioeconomic/demographic information

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender?
3. How old were you when you came to the U.S.?
4. How long have you resided in ________ (the specific area)?
5. Where do your parents live?
6. What is (was) the highest education obtained by your father and mother? What is their occupation in the U.S.? What was their occupation in Korea?
7. Would you consider your family to be working class, middle class or upper class?
APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Letter

Dear study participant,

My name is Jungeun Kim. I am a graduate student at the University of Illinois working under the direction of Dr. Monika Stodolska from the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism. I am conducting a survey and in-depth interviews for a research project the purpose of which is to examine ethnic identity, tourism motivation, and tourist information search behaviors among 1.5 Korean American young adults. 1.5 Korean American is defined in this study as those who were: (1) born in their home country, in this case Korea, and who (2) immigrated to the U.S. between the ages of 6 and 17 with their parents.

I really appreciate you taking the time to share your experiences and perspectives with me. Your opinions will help me accurately represent the impact of ethnic identity on travel behaviors among 1.5 Korean American young adults. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. The expected length of the interview is approximately 30-60 minutes (45 minutes on average). The interview will be audio-recorded with your permission.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate nor are there any risks to participation beyond those that exist in everyday life. You can decide whether or not you want to participate in the survey and/or the interviews. Furthermore, you don’t have to answer any questions you don’t wish to answer. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. In order to ensure that I accurately record your comments, I would like to audiotape the interview. The information collected will be kept confidential and the only people who will have access to the interview tapes are the people working on the project (specifically Dr. Monika Stodolska and Jungeun Kim). The audiotapes will be destroyed within one month of the interview and a pseudonym (fake name) will be used on any written notes and transcripts instead of your real name so that the interview cannot be traced back to you.

A benefit to you for your participation is the opportunity to openly discuss and reflect on your travel experiences and your ethnic identity in a confidential venue. A broader benefit of your participation is that it will help us examine the motivations and information search behavior among Korean American tourists to better understand their needs and to be able to provide them with better services while they travel to Korea. I sincerely thank you for your help with this study. The results of this research (with the use of pseudonyms) will be disseminated to researchers in the field of tourism via conference presentations and potential journal articles or book chapters. If you would like to receive a copy of the results or if you have any questions or comments, please contact me or Dr. Stodolska at:
If you have any further questions regarding your rights as a project participant you may contact University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at (217) 333-2670 (collect) or by email at irb@uiuc.edu. The Institutional Review Board is the office at the University of Illinois responsible for protecting the rights of human subjects involved in studies conducted by University of Illinois researchers.

By placing a check in the spaces below:

___________ I certify that I’m at least 18 years of age.

___________ I have read and understood the information on this form.

___________ I agree to take part in the survey.

___________ I agree to take part in the interview.

___________ I have had the information on this form explained to me.

___________ I grant permission for my interview to be audiotaped.

___________________________________________________________________________
Participant’s signature                                           Date
APPENDIX C

Recruitment Flier

STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

We would like to invite you to participate in a research study being conducted by the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of ethnic identity on tourist motivation and information search behavior among 1.5 Korean American young adults.

We are seeking Korean-born college students to participate in a 30-60 minute interview.

The participants have to meet all of the following criteria:

- Between 18 and 24 years old
- Immigrated to the U.S. between the ages of 6 and 17
- Made at least one trip to Korea while they were 16 years of age or older

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. The information collected will be held in strict confidence, and will not be provided to any outside entity. The researchers will not link your name to the information you provide during the interview.

If you are interested in participation, please contact:

Jungeun Kim
217-418-2777 (cell)
kim287@illinois.edu
APPENDIX D

IRB Approval Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research
Institutional Review Board
524 East Green Street
Suite 203
Champaign, IL 61820

November 30, 2010

Monika Stodolska
Recreation Sport and Tourism
104 Huff Hall
MC-584

RE: Ethnic Identity Development Travel Motivations and Travel Information Search Behavior among 1.5 Generation Korean American Young Adults
IRB Protocol Number: 11210

Dear Monika:

Thank you for submitting the completed IRB application form for your project entitled Ethnic Identity Development Travel Motivations and Travel Information Search Behavior among 1.5 Generation Korean American Young Adults. Your project was assigned Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol Number 11210 and reviewed. It has been determined that the research activities described in this application meet the criteria for exemption at 45CFR46.101(b). Category #2 applies because the study involves the completion of interviews and surveys related to ethnic identity and travel motivations and travel search behavior among the 1.5 generation Korean American young adults. The surveys are completed in an anonymous fashion. Interviews are audio recorded with permission but no other identifiable information is used to code the interview transcripts (no identity key is created). Any disclosure of responses would not reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal/civil liability nor would it be damaging to their financial status, employability or reputation.

This determination of exemption only applies to the research study as submitted. Exempt protocols are approved for a maximum of three years. Please note that additional modifications to your project need to be submitted to the IRB for review and exemption determination or approval before the modifications are initiated. To submit modifications to your protocol, please complete the IRB Research Amendment Form (see http://irb.illinois.edu/?q=forms-and-instructions/research-amendments.html).

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subject research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me or the IRB Office, or visit our website at http://www.irb.illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Sue Kaechn, Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Jungeun Kim