

Nostalgia as a source of strength and driving force among young Peruvian returnees from Japan

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Introduction

Surveys on the adaptation of Peruvian young returnees from Japan in their homeland were annually conducted from 2008 to 2016, in order to shed light mainly on the adjustment process at both, school and society, and on the career paths chosen upon upper-secondary school graduation. The most salient results of the surveys from 2008 to 2015 have already been organized, analyzed and published (Sueyoshi, 2010, 2011 and 2015). Part of those results was evaluated by using the concept of Dual Frame of Reference (DFR) that was developed by Suarez-Orozco (1989). The survey results served to explain the two-side perspective young returnees developed between the life they left in Japan and the life they were currently experiencing in Peru, and more importantly, to conclude that DFR can be an explanatory factor for the resiliency observed among young returnees during their adjustment to the homeland (Sueyoshi, 2011 and 2015). It was observed that even after leaving Japan and being physically in Peru, they usually referred to their former lives in Japan when they tried to explain better their current experience in Peru. Those memories from Japan were not only the foundations of their previous lives there, but also continued to be an important part of the foundations of their current lives in Peru. Moreover, that previous experience in Japan provides them with the strength to go on with their lives in Peru despite they struggled with the anxiety caused by the lack of Spanish language proficiency, the sadness and abandonment feelings due to the absence of their

parents who stayed in Japan, and the frustration they felt at being deprived of their former life in Japan.

Methodologically speaking, the surveys from 2008 until 2016 included a questionnaire, a psychological test and interviews. While the questionnaire was filled out by the young respondents solely in the years 2008 and 2009, and the psychological test only applied once in 2009, interviews were administered every year or twice a year. As they were open-ended interviews, they were conducted according to the respondents pace and willingness to open up and talk about their home and school experiences in Japan and Peru. There were quite a few youngsters who were evidently uncomfortable during the interview. On the contrary most of them were very cooperative and showed their interest in the research and even seemed pleased, as it was therapeutic for them to share with someone their treasured experiences from Japan and their current lives in Peru. However, as it was not a component of either the preliminary assumptions or the expected results of the study, that favorable attitude of the young respondents toward the survey and particularly toward the interviews, remained as an intriguing and pending element of this research. During the fieldwork, it was also observed that sharing time and space with peers who have similar experience was of crucial importance to returnees (Sueyoshi, 2011 and 2015). As most of the young returnees were of Japanese origin and they gathered in the *Nikkei* community in Peru, our research subjects were interviewed at *Nikkei* schools and *Nikkei* associations, where it was evident the

importance of the interaction among returnees, to whom was positive to share their previous and past experiences with other youngsters with similar background.

In the last decade revealing findings on nostalgia in the field of psychology have been reported. Bringing memories back, according to Sedikides et al. (2004, 2008, 2010, 2015, 2016) can be a source of strength and can generate feelings of engagement and self-esteem that leave people more optimistic, inspired and creative. This nostalgia also can be associated with a profound sense of connection between past and current events. When the former are disrupted by, for instance a migratory movement, for the latter to provide migrants with a meaningful current experience, it has to leave enough space for them to bring their also meaningful memories from the past back to the present.

This paper aims to analyze the results of the surveys conducted from 2008 and 2016 under the psychological meaning of nostalgia developed by Sedikides et al. (2004, 2008, 2010, 2015, 2016), and to demonstrate that by using the nostalgia approach, the analysis and the results obtained from the DFR cannot only be more robust, but also more explanatory of the circumstances that surround young returnees' home and school life. As the use of the concept of nostalgia will help us corroborate the importance of sharing past common experiences with peers, this paper will raise awareness on the invaluable significance of providing our research subjects with these common spaces, and particularly will encourage *Nikkei* schools and *Nikkei* associations to continue doing so.

1. The survey: questionnaire, interviews and psychological test

In the last nine years, from 2008 to 2016,

in the months of April and March, and August and September, at least once per year, data on young Peruvians who came back from Japan was collected through a questionnaire, interviews and a psychological test. Considering that returnee parents would like their children to continue studying Japanese and also share their past school and life experience in Japan with other returnee children, *Nikkeijin* schools or schools with high percentage of *Nikkei* students in Lima were the main places for finding our survey's respondents. Also, as returnee tend to gather there, *Nikkei* associations in Lima city, the Constitutional Province of Callao, Huaral a province of the department of Lima, and Chiclayo city in the department of Lambayeque, in the northern part of Peru, were visited to find the survey's targets. In March and April 2008, and August and September 2009 a questionnaire, interviews and a psychological test were applied to 167 young Peruvian who returned from Japan (53 at elementary level, 114 at secondary level), whose parents have worked or were still working in Japan as *dekasegi* when the survey was administered. They were surveyed either in Japanese or Spanish depending on the youngster's Japanese or Spanish language proficiency.

Table 1 shows seven *Nikkei* schools and associations where the subjects were surveyed: *Nikkei* schools in Lima such as La Unión, La Victoria and Hideyo Noguchi; in the Constitutional Province of Callao, José Gálvez; in Huaral, department of Lima, Inka Gakuen; and *Nikkei* associations such as Asociación Estadio La Unión (AELU), Asociación Peruano Japonesa (APJ) and Asociación Okinawense del Perú (AOP), all of them located in Lima, and Sociedad Japonesa de Auxilios Mutuos in Chiclayo. In Table 1 we can find the total number of students in each institution at each educational level, elementary and secondary education. The questionnaire

respondents and interviewees gathered mainly at the so-called *Nikkei* schools. In absolute terms, two of these *Nikkei* schools, namely La Victoria and La Unión, had a similar number of young returnees at the secondary level, while at the elementary level,

La Unión had a higher number of students who came back from Japan. In the other *Nikkei* schools, Hideyo Noguchi, José Gálvez and Inka Gakuen, there were fewer returnees.

Table 1
Surveyed Schools and Institutions

Schools/Institutions	Elementary Education	Secondary Education
La Unión		
Total population	411	369
Returnees	27	33
La Victoria		
Total population	102	98
Returnees	15	31
Hideyo Noguchi		
Total population	109	85
Returnees	6	8
José Gálvez		
Total population	96	115
Returnees	4	2
Inka Gakuen		
Total population	310	310
Returnees	10	26
<i>Nikkei</i> associations in Lima		
Returnees	7	13
Sociedad Japonesa de Auxilios Mutuos Chiclayo		
Returnees		9
Total Returnees	69	124
Total Subjects	53	114

The questionnaire was distributed to 167 students, figure that excluded the children of Peruvians parents who did not work as *dekasegi* in Japan, such as Peruvian government officials, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) officers, Peruvian financial institutions' employees, or parents who went to Japan to engage in religious activities. The respondents provided information on basic personal data (age, place of birth, sex, school grade, school attended in Japan and Peru, period of stay in Japan, period of stay in Peru and family information); regarding their life in Japan (Japanese language proficiency, and family and school situation); their

life in Peru after coming back from Japan (Spanish proficiency, and family and school situation); and finally, regarding their links with Japan (current feelings toward their life in Japan, if a family member is still in Japan, reasons for their return, own future plans and family plans). Out of 167 target students for the questionnaire, only 128 were interviewed. Based on the possibility of providing reliable information, only older than eight-year-old respondents were interviewed and this is the reason for the attrition.

A psychological test, TAMAI (by its Spanish acronym, *Test Autoevaluativo Multifactorial de*

Adaptación Infantil, translation into English by the author, Auto-evaluative Test of Children's Multifactorial Adjustment) was applied in August and September of 2009 to 64 returnees (7 subjects were eliminated from the sample later on), whose ages were between 8 and 18, and who were enrolled in three main *Nikkeijin* schools (La Victoria, La Unión and Hideyo Noguchi). All of them at least studied 3 years in Japan, and have spent more than 3 months and less than 10 years in Peru after their return. By applying a psychological test, in Japanese or Spanish, according to the language proficiency of the subject, this test intended to shed light on these returnee children's degree of adaptation or inadaptation in their homeland by dividing the results into three different categories: individual adjustment, school adjustment and social adjustment.

From 2010 and 2016 follow-up surveys were carried out to keep up with the trend of the flow of Peruvian children from Japan to Peru. Most *Nikkeijin* schools in Lima were visited and unstructured interviews to the school principals, Japanese language teachers, classroom tutors, psychologists and program coordinators, were conducted. In March and August-September 2013 and in March 2014 returnees who came back to Peru after graduating from Japanese high schools (32 subjects) or former interviewees from the 2008-2009 survey upon finishing upper secondary education were interviewed again (23 subjects). Graduates were interviewed in order to understand their professional career building, decision-making among different career paths, and how their own experience of receiving Japanese education and living in Japan has had an impact on the career selection they made. Finally, 16 students from La Victoria *Nikkeijin* school were interviewed at two different stages: 1) during August-September 2015, half a year before high-school graduation

when they have to start preparing for entrance examinations to tertiary education, and 2) in March 2016, two months after graduation and right after they have started the academic year at tertiary level. In August 2017, exactly one year and a half after their admission as university students, the same 16 subjects will be interviewed again, in order to know their academic or work experience, their interaction with non-*Nikkei* peers in a non-*Nikkei* environment, and career building.

2. Dual Frame of Reference

According to Suarez-Orozco (1989) "Migration has afforded many migrants a dual perspective on the nature of their unfolding lives. As they made sense of their current reality, they often paused to make reflective statements comparing a given issue in the two social contexts: their past home and the new host society." The development of a DFR among immigrants in the host society has been extensively referred as an explanatory factor for the endurance of Central Americans (Suarez-Orozco, 1989) and Mexican immigrants (Gallimore et al., 1999; Reese, 2001), or Latin American immigrants in general (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003) in the United States. Thanks to the existence of DFR, these Latin American immigrants could bear the hardship caused not only by moving to a unknown land, far away from their beloveds, but also by accepting living and working conditions that they could have rejected in different circumstances, such as settling in dangerous and slum-like neighborhoods or engaging in extremely low-paid jobs. These unacceptable living and working conditions in the homeland became acceptable in the host society, because of the trade-off between economic or material wellbeing and moral or emotional wellbeing. While at home, by sharing their culture (values and beliefs) with their own countrymen, immigrants enjoy moral wellbeing. On the other hand, in the host society, by

being employed and paid (salary and remittances), they enjoy economic wellbeing. In sum, the operation of the DFR mechanism allows the immigrants to evaluate and face difficult circumstances in the host society by referring to the homeland standards and achievements that are precisely an outcome of those circumstances if they are overcome.

There is evidence of the operation of the DFR among young returnee Peruvians from Japan (Sueyoshi, 2011 and 2015). Back to Peru, they did not only evoke memories of their home and school life in Japan, but also used them as a reference for evaluating their current life in Peru, and vice-versa. When they were asked to assess their home and education in Japan, it was easier for them to refer to their actual conditions regarding home and education in Peru to better explain those past circumstances in Japan. For instance, when they were asked to what extent they liked their life in Japan in a

five-scale question (not at all, not much, more or less, absolutely, and very much) and the reasons behind their choice, they did not just state why they liked Japan, but also why they disliked Peru to make themselves easily understood, as if both countries and the degree of their liking could be reduced to a binary system. In their mindset, Japan and Peru and the merits or demerits derived of living and studying in each country, also bring them almost antagonistic or diametrically different benefits. Rather than saying that Japan is clean and this is why they liked it, they resorted to use Peru as a counterexample of what they did not like it, because Peru is dirty, that is to say the opposite. In many items of the questionnaire and several questions of the interviews, the same dual rationale between Japan and Peru was observed, from which the former was mainly associated with economic or material wellbeing, and the latter with moral or emotional wellbeing, primarily.

Table 2
Dual Framework or Reference among Young Peruvian Returnees

	Japan	Peru
	More economic or material wellbeing	More moral or emotional wellbeing
Positive	Technology Urban safety Clean environment Shopping (stationary, stuffed toys) Extracurricular activities Scholarships Part-time job Speaking Japanese	Nuclear and extended family Peruvians are: Cooperative Friendly Spontaneous “Peruvians are warm”
	Less moral or emotional wellbeing	Less economic or material wellbeing
Negative	Bullying No friends Loneliness Extremely silent Lack of Japanese proficiency “Japanese are cold”	Dangerous Dirty environment No one follows the rules Parents’ absence Lack of Spanish proficiency

Sueyoshi (2011).

Table 2 depicts a dual approach of the assessment of their home and school lives in Japan and Peru, in which most positive items associated with Japan are related to economic or material wellbeing, while the positive ones associated with Peru pertain to their moral or emotional wellbeing. With regard to the negative items, in Japan most of them can be related to moral or emotional wellbeing, while in Peru the negative items are mostly connected to economic or material wellbeing. However, it is important to indicate that some positive or negative items associated with each country do not fall neatly in the corresponding quadrant. For instance, “Parents’ absence” is definitively a source of less wellbeing, but it does not refer to the economic or material wellbeing, certainly. The table above summarizes the dual perspective of the young Peruvian returnees when they assess their past and current lives in Japan and Peru, respectively. As it can be observed in Table 2, their experience in Japan provided them with economic or material wellbeing (safety, cleanliness, shopping, extracurricular activities, scholarships and part-time jobs), and by coming back to Peru they were deprived of them (dangerous, uncleanliness, limited shopping, no extracurricular activities, no scholarships, and less possibility of part-time jobs). Regarding the moral or emotional wellbeing they perceived in Peru, young Peruvian returnees used adjectives such as “cooperative, friendly, spontaneous and warm” to qualify the people who surrounded them and interacted with in Peru, and that was precisely the source of their moral or emotional wellbeing. Pertaining to the Japanese, respondents did not use many adjectives, on the contrary they just used one to qualify them: “cold.” On the other hand, when respondents refer to the negative aspects of Japan, it is interesting to notice that they mainly used nouns such as “bullying, loneliness, no friends

and silence.” In other words, their responses only expressed the circumstances where they were placed in, opting for just assigning a noun to the surrounding context or their feelings derived from it.

The following paragraphs illustrates the trade-off between economic or material wellbeing and moral or emotional wellbeing observed among young Peruvian returnees, and how in their minds they built a whole structure with two components that complement each other, as they are sources of two different types of wellbeing.

“When I was in Japan, what I missed the most were my relatives. I wanted to meet them so badly. Now I miss Japan so much, especially the cute things from there, stationary for example, stuffed animals.”

“If Peru had Japanese-like cities, I mean no garbage on the streets, drivers who do not infringe traffic-rules, for example, I think I would not have any desire to go back to Japan.”

When the young Peruvian returnees moved from Japan to Peru felt deprived of the economic or material wellbeing that they had to leave behind unwillingly in most cases. However, at the same time their deprivation of economic or material wellbeing is compensated by gaining moral or emotional wellbeing in Peru, which in turn is also supported by the previous Japanese experience and the potential future experience in Japan. This mental mechanism allows young Peruvian returnees not only to develop a dual perspective that transcends time and space, but also to resort to it because it is a source of strength for bearing an unfavorable new environment, in which the past experience can help them go on,

because their previous life in Japan remains also as a possibility in the future.

3. Bringing back memories from Japan in the *Nikkei* community

Through their schools and different recreational and cultural associations, the *Nikkei* society serves as a transitional step between Japan and Peru for the young Peruvian returnees from Japan. *Nikkei* schools have played an important role in the adjustment process of these returnees in Peru, by serving as a socializing agent that offered a safety network along with other *Nikkei* organizations. In *Nikkei* schools and *Nikkei* associations, returnees can continue recreating their Japanese school and social life, because they can use Japanese language, celebrate Japanese events, practice the same sports they did while in Japan, eat similar food, etc. Also in these institutions, returnees are accepted by their peers and adults (school teachers, principals, coordinators and the association leaders), this in turn brings multiple emotional and functional benefits, such as the understanding of reciprocity, sharing, and rules and authority. Here there are two testimonies from the interviewees, who expressed their longing for the Japanese educational system, and found a “proxy” in *Nikkei* schools.

“In Japanese schools there are extracurricular activities, which are fun. Here (Peru) schools with sports facilities are really rare. Before coming back to Peru, when we were in Japan, I told my parents that I would only accept going back if they promised to enroll me in a *Nikkei* school like La Unión, where there are plenty of sport facilities and equipment, and because it looks like a Japanese school. Being in La

Unión makes me feel as if I were in Japan. I feel like being close to Japan.”

“I was in Academia de Cultura Japonesa (ACJ) until last year. However, there is no high school (according to Japanese educational system) there, and I had to leave that school and come here (La Unión School). When I was in that school (ACJ) I felt as if I were actually in Japan, now being at this school still makes me feels close to Japan because there are other students who have been there and because I can study Japanese, but in ACJ was just like being there (Japan).”

On the other hand, *Nikkei* associations such as Asociación Estadio La Unión (AELU), Asociación Peruano Japonesa (APJ) and Asociación Okinawense del Perú (AOP), all of them located in Lima, and Sociedad Japonesa de Auxilios Mutuos in Chiclayo also offer spaces for returnees’ socialization outside *Nikkei* schools. It is common for the pupils who attend *Nikkei* schools in Lima to go to this *Nikkei* associations after school or during weekends, so they can continue experiencing Japanese culture or practicing sports, and gathering with other pupils who have lived in Japan before. The most popular *Nikkei* associations among returnees are AELU and APJ, the first one is the largest sport facility of the *Nikkei* community, it is a membership-based organization, and it is very well know in Peruvian society as they even have a professional first league soccer team. Returnees are affiliated at some specific sport clubs such as soccer, volleyball, basketball, baseball, softball, and Japanese martial arts. As baseball and softball are not very popular in Peruvian society, most of the athletes in the Peruvian national teams of

these two sports come from AELU. However, even for the returnees who are not interested in practicing sports, AELU is a good space for socialization and a place they just can hang around with their peers. The second one is a cultural center, where Japanese language and Japanese arts and crafts are taught. There are also Japanese restaurants where returnees like to gather with their friends. Likewise, since 2007 APJ has been organizing two extra gatherings of young returnees from Japan. One of them is called Donguri Club, in which approximately fifty children aged up to fifteen years old meet for two hours once per month, usually on Saturday afternoons and play Japanese games, talk in Japanese and celebrate Japanese holidays, while they have some refreshments. There is another group Shaberikai that also gathers for two hours or more every month, usually right after the Donguri Club takes place, and it has an average of thirty participants, who are youngsters aged fifteen through late twenties. They gather to share their different points of views on topics of their interest and also to share the previous experience in Japan. These two associations, AELU and APJ, offer more than spaces for recreation and entertainment, both provide a safe environment for the returnees, where they can feel the freedom they have being deprived of once they arrived in Lima. For Japan-raised returnee youngsters, *anzen* and *anshin* are very important concepts, both are similar and connected, and they mean safety and security, but the first one refers more to the environment (macro) and the other to the self (micro). Without a doubt, returnees feel that AELU and APJ are *anzen*, where they can feel *anshin*, therefore the anxiety caused by the Peruvian environment can be abated and feel free and act freely.

As *Nikkei* schools and *Nikkei* associations provide the young returnees with this cultural and social

capital, those institutions have been concentrating a large number of returnees. The returnees, aware of the benefits of the confluence of youngsters of similar background, asked their parents or guardians to enroll them in *Nikkei* schools and signed them up to *Nikkei* associations, so they can share their previous experience in Japan and current experience in Peru, and also circumstances and feelings that are caused by moving from Japan to Peru.

4. The interviews and the interviewees' attitude

As it was mentioned before, they were open-ended interviews, whose purpose was to gather extra information that could not be collected through the questionnaire, which in most of the cases was followed by the interview. The interviewer supervised every questionnaire's filling out by the respondents, whose hesitation in completing some items was a signal for further in-depth questions. For instance, a common confusing item was the place of birth, because it was often mistaken by nationality; moreover, it was even more difficult for interviewees to respond when they had more than one nationality, usually because the parents also had different nationalities. Another item that created confusion among respondents was that pertaining to "the reasons for leaving Japan." Despite that item did not have multiple choices from where to choose an answer, respondents were very hesitant to write reasons such as those associated with being banned to reenter Japan because their families were deported, due to their illegal status as immigrants or for having problems with the Japanese law. As it can be observed, the interviews were semi-structured as the interviewer used a general outline of issues or questions given by the questionnaire, but also could use other questions generated spontaneously or bring other topics based on the responses of the

interviewees. These interviews, besides gathering basic factual data on respondents such as place of birth and nationality, they focused more on the respondents' thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories, experiences, perceptions, ideas and preferences.

Usually each one of the 128 interviews lasted 45 minutes or one hour on average, very few were shorter and for some respondents took even up to two hours to make a personal recount of their young lives. Regardless of their length of stay in Japan, their lack of Spanish language proficiency, or vice-versa their lack of Japanese language proficiency, or their *Nikkei* ethnicity, almost all interviewees seemed glad to participate in the survey, partially because of their natural curiosity that was intensified by the interviewer's coming from Japan, the country they lived a significant part of their developmental age, and the possibility of speaking in that language they still use with other classmates and youngsters who share the same previous experience of living and studying in Japan. During the interviews, even if they were conducted entirely in Spanish because the respondent's Spanish language proficiency was higher than his or her Japanese language proficiency, the interviewee tended to use loose words in Japanese so he or she could convey more accurately his or her previous and current experience, in Japan and Peru.

Rather than becoming tired of answering the interviewer's questions, respondents narrated their stories with precise detail connecting events, explaining the reasons for these events to happen and their effects, trying to put them in context, so they could make sense and have meaning in their lives, not only in their past life in Japan but also in the current life in Peru. They were not only inclined to answer the questions, but for some of them the interview was the occasion for making a stop in their life and school routines in Peru, and to make

a balance of what they left in Japan, and what they have achieved since they were back in Peru. Finally, the interview brought them back memories of their past life in Japan, memories that reminded them not only of their daily life there, but also recalled the most profound feelings and emotions, which were brought to Peru as part of the rich experience they acquired in Japan, this experience in turn had an impact of the perception they have of the community, the others and themselves.

As the interviewees were amenable to this semi-structured interview, they went through a cathartic process that allowed the returnees to release their accumulated feelings and emotions, providing a psychological relief with therapeutic results.

5. Nostalgia: the link between Japan and Peru

Once stigmatized as mental disorder and consequently associated with negative connotations, nostalgia has been studied since the latter part of the twentieth century as a universal positive emotion, as a positive experience that, most importantly, fulfills crucial functions related to our individual existence, such as the search for identity and meaning, and to our social existence, as it helps us connect with others and find social meaning in our collective actions.

Hepper et al. (2012) describe nostalgia as a "complex emotion that involves past-oriented cognition and a mixed-affective signature, and is often triggered by encountering a familiar smell, sound, or keepsake, by engaging in conversations, or by feeling lonely. When waxing nostalgic, one remembers, thinks about, reminisces about, or dwells on a memory from one's past—typically a fond, personally meaningful memory such as one's childhood or a close relationship. One often views the memory through rose-tinted glasses, misses that time or person, longs for it, and may even wish to

return to the past. As a result, one typically feels emotional, most often happy but with a sense of loss and longing; other less common feelings include comfort, calm, regret, sadness, pain, or an overall sense of bitter-sweetness.”

Besides showing evidence of nostalgia as a universal experience (Hepper et al., 2014), researches have also found psychological benefits derived from nostalgia. For instance, nostalgia is associated with a stronger sense of belongingness, affiliation or sociality; also nostalgia make people have a sense of higher continuity between their past and their present; people can find their lives more meaningful; and because of nostalgia they can show higher levels of self-esteem and positive mood. This is possible thanks to the specific and core functions that are suggested by Sedikides et al., (2004): (1) enhancement of the self, through identity solidification and augmentation; (2) support of the cultural worldview, through meaning regeneration and sustenance; and (3) bolstering of relational bonds through invigoration of interpersonal connectedness.

The development of a DFR, the *Nikkei* community as a transitional step to their “re”-adjustment to the homeland and their willingness to narrate their past and current experiences suggested the relevance of nostalgia among young Peruvian returnees from Japan. In these three different outcomes and features of the survey, nostalgia plays a significant role. The DFR mechanism operates because they are able to evoke moments and feelings of their past experience and moreover to connect it to their current experience, and the *Nikkei* community through its schools and associations offers them spaces for socialization with peers who have similar background, and also provide them with spaces for the recreation in Peru of scenes of their past life in Japan, by celebrating Japanese holidays, speaking Japanese, eating Japanese food,

in sum practicing Japanese culture in Peru. The good attitude toward our survey, particularly during the interviews, also indicates the returnees’ readiness to evoke and share past experiences.

There is evidence that Peruvian children feel nostalgia about their lives in Japan. Approximately 80 percent said they missed Japan, and when asked why, one of the reasons the respondents gave was not related to Japanese society or culture but their living with their parents or one of them (30 percent), when they were there. Other reasons included, “missing friends,” “speaking Japanese,” and “Japanese food.” Regardless of waxing nostalgic about Japan upon their arrival to Peru, the length of the post-arrival period or the Spanish language proficiency, this research found that there is no statistical evidence of disadjustment at individual, school or society level, by applying a psychological test, TAMAI.

The existential functions of nostalgia have played an evident role in the adaptation process of these returnees. First, nostalgia provides them with a stronger sense of selfhood, and unified self (Sedikides et al., 2004) that was broken into two, pre and post return. By evoking their past lives, returnees could deal with the present as they recovered themselves from the past, and put both, past and present together, in a continuum that has served as a ground for keep building their identity in a difference space and time. Second, nostalgia has given returnees a sense of meaning, mainly due to their identification with the immediate surrounding cultural context, the *Nikkei* community. The practice of new cultural traditions and rituals in Peru, either Peruvian or *Nikkei*, and the continuity in the celebration of Japanese rituals and events even after being back to Peru, has increased their sense of cultural belongingness, while restoring direction (Routledge et al., 2011), position and role, and their belief that their lives have purpose in this

new meaningful cultural context. Third, as nostalgia bring social connectedness (Sedikides et al., 2010), it has bolstered returnees' relational bonds with their peers, other returnees and non-returnees, teachers and staff at school, relatives and family members at home. Building meaningful relationships in the *Nikkei* community is a transitional stage before they have to interact with non-*Nikkei* peers after secondary-school graduation, either at work or at tertiary education institutions.

The discontinuity in the lives of these young Peruvian returnees caused by moving from Japan to Peru, made them value more the past compare to those who did not have similar experience. According to the discontinuity hypothesis, nostalgia is a reaction to discontinuity, is a coping mechanism for dealing with highly uncomfortable psychological states, such as fear, discontent, anxiety, uncertainty, loneliness, and alienation (Sedikides et al., 2004). As it was stated above, one of the functions of nostalgia is to pursue self-continuity by connecting the past and the present, this connection, according to Sedikides et al. (2016), is associated with social connectedness, another main function of nostalgia. Moreover, there is evidence that self-discontinuity, and in particular negative self-discontinuity, is positively associated with and elicits nostalgia, in other words nostalgia fosters self-continuity (Sedikides et al., 2015).

Differently from feeling homesick, which just refers to the past, nostalgia is an emotion that is also connected to a positive future, as it fosters optimism by bolstering social bonds and self-esteem (Cheung et. al., 2013, 2016). In this sense, nostalgia as a self-defense mechanism against unfavorable circumstances and as provider of existential functions (self-continuity, source of meaning and social-connectedness) can be associated with the DFR. More precisely, nostalgia is the link between the left-hand-

side quadrants and the right-hand-side quadrants, in table 2. Nostalgia is like the lapse between reading two frames of a comic strip, physically does not exist but it is a product of our individual and collective imagination; therefore, nostalgia does not have to be constraint to specific and real events in the past, but to those that have meaning in the past and current lives, and that are connected to the future, as nostalgia prompts inspiration, foster motivation forays and intensifies goal pursuit (Stephan et al., 2015). Young Peruvians after their return from Japan formed a DFR that could help them to cope with their home and school lives in Peru, where their economic or material wellbeing has experienced a decrease. If in the future they return to Japan, they will preserve the DFR that could help them cope with their home and school lives in Japan, where they will experience a decline in their moral wellbeing. In Peru, the same DFR scheme is helping them face economic difficulties and transition challenges by providing them with the promise of a better future that is connected to their life experience in Japan.

A practical purpose of the current paper was to raise awareness among parents of returnee children and members of the *Nikkei* community, regarding the beneficial effects of creating spaces, where returnee children can evoke the past. By resorting to their memories, either individually or collectively, they can connect it with the present, whose actions in turn will be driven by motivations of future outcomes. Besides, as nostalgia is a mechanism that allows us to cope with strenuous circumstances, such as the uncertainty of moving from Japan to Peru, frustration due to adjustment difficulties or sadness for being apart from their parents; the environmental conditions for its stimulus should be provided, so they can lead to an immediate positive impact on the returnees' wellbeing.

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