

Theorizing Linkages between *Ikigai* (Life Worthiness) and Leisure among Japanese University  
Students: A Mixed Methods Approach

by

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## Abstract

The relationship between leisure and well-being has garnered growing scholarly attention. However, this literature is limited in terms of (a) how well-being is conceptualized and (b) theoretical explanations for *how* exactly leisure impacts well-being. In terms of the former, Western research has shown that well-being not only involves more traditional hedonic aspects—such as life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect—but also, for example, meaning in life and subjective vitality. Non-Western research has further revealed that people in non-Western cultures tend to emphasize these so-called eudaimonic aspects of well-being. *Ikigai*, a Japanese indigenous well-being concept that roughly translates as purpose in life and a life worth living, appears to possess eudaimonic qualities. Although past descriptive studies have identified leisure as a primary source of *ikigai*, this relationship has not been formally studied. Consequently, my dissertation focuses on theorizing the linkages between leisure and *ikigai* among Japanese university students.

To do so, an exploratory mixed method research design was employed. My first study, guided by Corbin and Strauss's (2015) grounded theory methodology, inductively developed a substantive theory of *ikigai* and leisure. Data were collected from 27 students studying at a private Japanese university using photo-elicitation interviews. The resulting theory then informed a statistical model of the relationship between *ikigai* and leisure in my second study. Based on online survey data derived from a national sample of 672 Japanese college students, this quantitative study tested the explanatory power of the theoretical model by using partial least squares structural equation modeling.

Overall, my findings suggest that Japanese university students pursue *ikigai* through three distinct mechanisms: (a) *keiken* or valued experiences, (b) *ibasho* or authentic relationships, and

(c) *houkou-sei* or directionality. In terms of *keiken*, students engaged in enjoyable, effortful, stimulating, or comforting experiences. They also diversified these experience values and achieved a good balance between competing values (e.g., enjoyment vs. effort). Students also needed to disengage from overwhelming experiences. By doing so, students perceived that their daily lives were worth living and full of vibrancy. These behaviours for *keiken* were further conditioned by students' ability to act on opportunities for potentially valuable experiences without hesitation as well as understanding of what value is important in a given life circumstances. With regard to *ibasho*, students engaged in valuable experiences with their close others and shared information on their own experiences with these others. When these interactions happened, students felt that they could be who they really were and that they received genuine care within their close relationships. These interactions were conditioned by shared experience values and trust between students and their close others. Finally, in regard to *houkou-sei*, students associated their present experiences with their past or future in their mind, and strategically chose experiences that were clearly relevant to their past or future. Doing so made students feel that their current lives were leading to their desired future, and were built on their meaningful past. Leisure was found to pertain to each of these three pathways to pursue *ikigai*. Specifically, leisure activity participation, satisfaction with one's leisure life, and positive evaluation of leisure experiences strongly predicted a higher level of *ikigai* perception.

Finally, I discuss my findings in relation to three distinct bodies of knowledge: *ikigai* (e.g., the new *ikigai* theories and measures), leisure (e.g., leisure valuation as a distinct mechanism), and positive psychology (e.g., comparisons between my *ikigai* sub-theories and existing concepts in positive psychology). I also provide practical implications in light of *ikigai* policies (e.g., emphasis on leisure's roles unlike past productivity-centred political discourses),

as well as recreation and mental health services for university students (e.g., leisure education programs based on the four experience values for *keiken*). My dissertation's key limitations include: (a) its focus on the Japanese university student population, (b) potential sample biases, (c) limited time for the qualitative study, and (d) validity and reliability concerns regarding some parts of the quantitative study. For future research, I recommend the application of my *ikigai* theories to different populations (e.g., older adults, non-Japanese), the use longitudinal and interventional designs to test my theories' causality, further validation of my newly developed scales, and examination of multiple life domains to discern what unique roles leisure plays in people's pursuit of *ikigai*.



## **Preface**

This thesis is an original work by Shintaro Kono. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, (a) Project Name “Theorizing Linkages between *Ikigai* and Leisure among Japanese University Students: A Qualitative Approach using Grounded Theory”, (Pro00056332), May 19, 2015, and Project Name “An Online Survey Study of the Relationships between Free-Time Experiences and *Ikigai* among Japanese College Students”, (Pro00066212), June 28, 2016.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate my dissertation to my wife Jingjing Gui. Our relationship is the best thing that came out of the time I spent on my doctoral degree.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude toward abundant support that my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Gordon J. Walker provided throughout my program. As indicated in the Conclusion section of this dissertation, this research journey was the most intellectually challenging experience; without his advice to focus on “one keyword”, I would not have found this topic of leisure and *ikigai*. Moreover, I believe that I was a student difficult to supervise. I got involved in many projects; I had many ideas; but, there is only so much time available in a doctoral program. Dr. Walker guided me with great balance between encouraging me to complete the projects and actualize my ideas and helping me focus on the dissertation studies. Also his feedback was always on time and in detail. I would never forget how we shorted my original 400-page dissertation proposal into 200 pages over several weeks.

I would also like to acknowledge the support from my supervisory committee members: Drs. Yoshitaka Iwasaki, Takahiko Masuda, and Nicholas Holt. I am very fortunate to have such a well-known researcher in each of topics that are important in my dissertation: leisure, well-being, culture, and grounded theory. They intellectually challenged me throughout this dissertation process. Especially, Dr. Holt offered me his expertise and personal experiences in grounded theory, when I felt overwhelmed by the process of theorization.

There are also a few other researchers who supported me in the process of my dissertation research. First, Dr. Eiji Ito from Wakayama University, Japan offered me an opportunity to apply for a grant from a funding agency in Japan. He also provided me with a critical review of new questionnaire items I developed for Study 2 as well as the online survey questionnaire. Second, Dr. Hagi Yumiko from Tokai University, Japan helped me obtaining a research ethics approval to collect data from students at Tokai for Study 1. She also offered me a

room for interviews. I would like to thank the Sasakawa Sports Foundation for providing financial support for my Study 2 (160A3-011). It is not easy to conduct research in non-Canadian contexts while being a student in Canada; many funding opportunities are not available for you from either side of countries. I was very fortunate to have this social and financial support.

It is important to acknowledge support I have received from, and hopefully exchanged with, my friends here at the University of Alberta. Although I cannot name everyone, I would like to recognize Dr. Farhad Moghimehfar, Baikuntha Acharya, Aisulu Abdykadyrova, and Micky Lizmore. These individuals and many others made my time at the University quite enjoyable, despite the severe winters. I was always looking forward to coming to my office because we had such great officemates. Moreover, these people also influenced my thoughts and this dissertation. For instance, I would not have used partial least squares structural equation modeling for my Study 2, if it had not been for Dr. Moghimehfar. When I struggled with understanding why some research participants shared their valued experiences with their family, thinking about people like Baikuntha and Aisulu inspired me with some ideas.

Lastly, I would like to thank support I have received from my family. My parents Fumiko and Akira were always supportive of my study abroad life, although probably they experienced the difficulty in explaining what exactly I was doing to others. They always welcomed me when I returned to Japan. It was great comfort to know there was home in my home country. My family became bigger during my doctoral time, as I married Jingjing Gui. She had provided much emotional support throughout the second half of my degree. An academic life could be sometimes too judgemental (e.g., rejection of papers); it was great to have someone who unconditionally supported me. Besides, she is good at many things I am not good at (e.g., paperwork, logistics). We make a great team.

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## List of Abbreviations

AGFI:	Adjusted goodness of fit index
CFA:	Confirmatory factor analysis
CFI:	Comparative fit index
COGJ:	Cabinet Office, Government of Japan
CRS:	Central Research Services
EFA:	Exploratory factor analysis
ESEM:	Exploratory structural equation modeling
ESM:	Experience sampling method
EWB:	Eudaimonic well-being
GFI:	Goodness of fit index
GT:	Grounded theory
HWB:	Hedonic well-being
LMGS:	Leisure Meanings Gained Scale
LMI:	Leisure Meanings Inventory
LSS:	Leisure Satisfaction Scale
MIL:	Meaning in life
MMR:	Mixed Method Research
NHK/BCRI:	Nihon Housou Kyoukai/Broadcasting Culture Research Institute
PAL:	Paragraphs about Leisure
PANAS:	Positive and Negative Affect Scale
PCA:	Principal component analysis
PEI:	Photo-elicitation interview
PIL:	Purpose in life
QOL:	Quality of life
REP:	Recreation Experience Preference Scales
PLS-SEM:	Partial least squares structural equation modeling
RMSEA:	Root mean square error of approximation
RQ:	Research question
SDT:	Self-determination theory
SEM:	Structural equation modeling or model
SLP:	Serious leisure perspective
SPWB:	Scales for Psychological Well-Being
SRMR:	Standardized root mean square residual
SRQ:	Subordinate research question
SWB:	Subjective well-being
SWLS:	Satisfaction with Life Scale

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Leisure and well-being has garnered increasing attention from both well-being researchers (e.g., Kuykendall, Tay, & Ng, 2015; Newman, Tay, & Diener, 2014) and leisure studies researchers (e.g., Freire, 2013; Mock, Mannell, & Guttentag, 2016; Stebbins, 2015). In terms of the former, for example, Newman et al. (2014) reviewed 363 past studies on leisure and well-being in an attempt to identify underlying mechanisms that link these two constructs. Similarly, Kuykendall et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of 70 quantitative studies on this subject to confirm the positive relationship between leisure-related variables and well-being scores. Their findings indicated that leisure influences well-being as strongly as, if not more strongly than, other known predictors including occupational status, income level, and family relations. In terms of leisure studies researchers, Stebbins (2015) developed and applied a theoretical framework to examine effects of different types of leisure experience on well-being.

In spite of this growing interest, there are some critical issues in the leisure and well-being literatures that remain unaddressed. First, as Iwasaki (2007) pointed out, theoretical explanations of *how* leisure impacts well-being remain underdeveloped. In other words, although there is considerable evidence indicating that leisure does indeed affect well-being (e.g., Kuykendall et al., 2015), our knowledge is limited when it comes to theories explaining *why* this effect exists. Past attempts to address this issue have involved review-based studies that applied either non-leisure theories (e.g., self-determination theory; Newman et al., 2014; Sirgy, Uysal, & Kruger, 2017) or theories focused on a specific type of leisure experience (e.g., serious leisure perspective; Stebbins, 2015). Although such efforts can offer potential explanations by “re-using” existing theories, the application of non-leisure theories to leisure contexts could also lead to leisure’s unique roles in the pursuit of well-being to be understated. Further, the use of

theories about specific aspects of leisure could fail to account for leisure's potential as its entirety. Thus, there is a need to *inductively* theorize the relationship between leisure and well-being without overly relying on the existing literature.

Second, the literature on leisure and well-being appears immature when it comes to the conceptualization of “well-being”. Over the past several decades, well-being has typically been conceptualized as subjective well-being (SWB)<sup>1</sup>, which is composed of two dimensions: affective and cognitive (Diener, 1984; Pavot & Diener, 2013). The affective aspect refers to the predominance of positive emotions over negative emotions (Andrews & Withey, 1976). The cognitive component is usually operationalized as life satisfaction, or the evaluation of life as a whole (Pavot & Diener, 1993, 2008), though it can also be broken down into assessment of different life domains (e.g., leisure, work; Diener, Scollon, & Lucas, 2004). As this conventional approach to well-being emphasizes positivity (whether affectively or cognitively measured) and leaves what constitutes such positivity up to the individual, it has also been called hedonic well-being (HWB; Huta & Waterman, 2014).

Within the Western literature, so-called eudaimonic research has expanded beyond HWB by specifying what it means to live a “good” life (Huta & Waterman, 2014). New well-being concepts falling under this framework include meaning in life (MIL; Martela & Steger, 2016) and subjective vitality (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Recent studies have shown that leisure also pertains to eudaimonic well-being (EWB; e.g., Matteucci & Filep, 2017; Steger et al., 2013). In addition, a series of cross-cultural and non-Western studies have indicated that well-being means different things across nations and cultures (e.g., Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011; Uchida & Kitayama, 2009). Again, a limited number of past studies suggested that leisure

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<sup>1</sup> See page xiii for a complete list of abbreviations used in this dissertation.

is a life domain where people can pursue well-being concepts prevalent in non-Western cultures, such as meaning (Choi, Catapano, & Choi, in press) and peacefulness (Spiers & Walker, 2009). In spite of these suggested relationships, there is no theory that specifically explains how leisure influences eudaimonic and/or culturally-nuanced well-being.

One concept that represents both eudaimonic and culturally-nuanced aspects of well-being is a Japanese word called *ikigai*. Although *ikigai* has been translated as purpose in life (Kamiya, 2004) or a life worth living (Matthews, 1996), theorists appear to agree that the concept is deeply rooted in Japanese culture and language and that there is no exact equivalent in English (e.g., Kamiya, 2004; Wada, 2001b). Preliminary evidence suggests that Japanese people associated eudaimonic characteristics with *ikigai* (e.g., accomplishment, zest) (Kumano, in press). There is abundant evidence that people find leisure—especially hobbies and sports—as a major source of their *ikigai* (e.g., Cabinet Office, Government of Japan [COGJ], 1994; Central Research Service [CRS], 2012). Nonetheless, this relationship between leisure and *ikigai* has never been formally theorized. The purpose of this dissertation is, therefore, to inductively develop a theory of the relationship between leisure and *ikigai*.

Achieving the aforesaid purpose could potentially contribute to the three distinct bodies of knowledge on leisure, *ikigai*, and well-being, as my results could address the gaps in the literature identified above. In addition, my dissertation research could also make three contributions to larger issues. First, its focus on *ikigai* as a Japanese indigenous concept is aligned with the movement to make well-being research and leisure studies less Eurocentric and more culturally diverse (e.g., Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Iwasaki, Nishino, Onda, & Bowling, 2007). Both well-being and leisure scholarships have been criticized for not explicitly examining Western assumptions (e.g., Bacigalupe, 2001; Fox & Klaiber, 2006; Samdahl, 2010;

Walsh, 2001). One solution that has been repeatedly suggested is to use an indigenous concept (e.g., Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Iwasaki et al., 2007). Indeed, one of the founders of positive psychology Christopher Peterson specifically argued:

The notion of *ikigai* is a good reminder to positive psychologists in the United States that our science should not simply be an export business. There are lessons to be learned in all cultures about what makes life worth living, and no language has a monopoly on the vocabulary for describing the good life. (2008, para 3)

Second, my dissertation intentionally engages with both leisure studies and well-being research, or more broadly positive psychology (Gable & Haidt, 2005), which could facilitate what Mock et al. (2016) called the cross-fertilization of these two relevant fields. Doing so could not only generate a more viable theory supported by multiple disciplinary views, but also help cross-disciplinary communication between these fields. The latter is crucial especially for leisure scholars who have experienced limited recognition from other disciplines (e.g., Samdahl & Kelly, 1999; Shaw, 2007). In the case of positive psychology, for instance, there appears to have been a lack of attention to potential contributions from the extant leisure research<sup>2</sup>. For instance, although Newman et al. (2014) cited 169 papers in their comprehensive review study, only 23 were from leisure journals<sup>3</sup> (13.6%). Similarly, only 10 of the 70 articles (14.3%) meta-analyzed by Kuykendall et al. (2015) were published in leisure journals<sup>3</sup>. Although it is possible that the excluded leisure articles did not meet their review criteria, another potential reason is that their search terms, databases, and other search parameters were unconsciously biased. By reviewing

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<sup>2</sup> I owe this realization to Dr. Yoshitaka Iwasaki.

<sup>3</sup> By referring to leisure journals, these numbers exclude books and book chapters on leisure, as well as leisure studies published in non-leisure journals.

the two streams of research and interpreting my findings in light of this cross-disciplinary knowledge, my dissertation is a step toward the better cross-fertilization of these fields.

In addition to these scholarly contributions, my dissertation research could also have important practical implications. This is partially because *ikigai* has been found to be an issue, quite literally, of life or death. Several prospective longitudinal studies have discovered that people who perceived *ikigai* were less likely to die than those who did not (Sone et al., 2008; Tanno et al., 2009; Tomioka, Kurumatani, & Hosoi, 2016). As such, creating a theory of how to foster *ikigai* through leisure could help professionals in many fields (e.g., therapeutic recreation, occupational therapy, campus recreation) provide theory-based services and, as a result, improving both the quantity and quality (i.e., in terms of a worthy life) of their clients. This may be especially true for college students—my dissertation’s target population—as some studies have found that young adults were less likely to perceive *ikigai* (e.g., Kumagai et al., 2008; Kumano, 2008; Nihon Housou Kyoukai Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 2004). Moreover, mental health issues and suicide are also prevalent for this group (e.g., Nishimura, Iwasa, Tanaka, Fujii, & Takayama, 2009; Uchida, 2010). In summary, my proposed research on leisure and *ikigai* could potentially not only contribute to the literature in the aforementioned three substantive areas but also make scholarly and practical contributions at a broader level.

## **1.1 Definitions of Key Terms**

In order to place my dissertation research in proper context, in this section four important key terms are defined: *ikigai*, culture, leisure, and theory and theorization.

### **1.1.1 *Ikigai* defined**

The term *ikigai* first appeared in Japanese dictionaries at the end of the Meiji era (i.e., 1868-1912; Kanda, 2011b). Kanda noted that while early definitions of *ikigai* focused on socially



accepted “outcome” (*kai* or *kou* in Japanese) of one’s life, as time passed its meanings has shifted to refer to perceived value (*neuchi*) of life, zest (*hariai*), and happiness (*shiawase*). These newer meanings seem to encompass both hedonic aspect (e.g., happiness) and eudaimonic aspect (e.g., value, zest) of well-being.

Among academics, *ikigai* has been conceptualized as a socio-psychological phenomenon that consists of two major aspects: *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai* (e.g., Kamiya, 1966/1980; Kumano, 2012). For instance, Kondo (2007) defined *ikigai* perception among university students as a subjective feeling that arises “when they are aware of the value of their existence, are satisfied with a current life, and have motivations as well as when they enjoy their life” (p. 52). Sources of *ikigai* are simply things that evoke *ikigai* perception within people’s mind, including activities (e.g., hobby, work), life events (e.g., marriage), people (e.g., children), and social roles (e.g., being a parent) (Hasegawa, Fujiwara, & Hoshi, 2001). Hasegawa et al. (2001) defined *ikigai* as “a subjective psychological mechanism in which, when asked what one’s *ikigai* is, he or she pictures ‘sources of *ikigai*’ in his or her mind, such as past experiences, present life situations, and aspiration, and integrates various emotions evoked by the sources, such as self-realization, motivations, life satisfaction, vitality, a sense of existence, and a sense of agency” (p. 5). Again, these academic definitions of *ikigai* perception also involve both eudaimonic elements (e.g., existential value, self-realization, vitality, agency) and hedonic components (e.g., life satisfaction, enjoyment).

In this dissertation, I follow this conceptualization of *ikigai* as a multifaceted phenomenon: *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai*. The former is deemed as a subjective evaluation of life that is rooted in the Japanese culture and language system and is characterized by, potentially, a mixture of eudaimonic and hedonic factors.

### 1.1.2 Culture defined

Although culture is not a target construct in this dissertation nor this is a cross-cultural comparison study, it is still important to clarify the meaning of this term given the Japanese context of my dissertation. Reviewing a history of cultural psychology, Triandis (2007) identified three common defining elements of culture: culture as (a) adaptation to physical and social environment, (b) shared practices and meanings, and (c) transmission to others. He considered the following definition as most satisfying: “culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of historically derived and selected ideas and their embodiment in institutions, practices, and artifacts; cultural patterns may, on one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action” (Adams & Markus, 2004, p. 341). This definition of culture illustrates the premise of many culturally informed psychological studies that “culture and psyche make each other up” (Shweder, 1990, p. 24).

There are some variants of culture-related psychological scholarships, such as folk, indigenous, cultural, and cross-cultural psychology (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2011). These different labels reflect how powerful culture is deemed to be as a factor that explains the human psyche within each of the four disciplines. Berry and colleagues identified four levels of the assumed power of culture: (a) extreme relativism, (b) moderate relativism, (c) moderate universalism, and (d) extreme universalism. Relativism refers to the belief that culture is so powerful that most (if not all) psychological processes are unique to certain cultures, whereas universalism suggests that, while acknowledging importance of culture, most (if not all) psychological processes are common to humankind. I situate my dissertation within *moderate relativism*, which holds that “psychological functions and processes are the outcome of interactions between organism and sociocultural contexts” (Berry et al., 2011, p. 8).

The adoption of moderate relativism is consistent with the focus on the Japanese culture and *ikigai* in my dissertation. I believe that culture plays an important role in (re)shaping the human psyche potentially causing qualitative as well as quantitative differences. Although I am open to the possibility that *ikigai* is somewhat applicable to cultures outside of Japan, such cross-cultural applications should wait for a solid understanding of the construct within the original cultural context. Moreover, this stance is also congruent with the use of the qualitative methodology in my first study, which can help understand the phenomenon in a largely inductive manner without imposing Western psychological frameworks.

### **1.1.3 Leisure defined**

Another key term in this dissertation is obviously leisure. Among leisure scholars there seems to be consensus that there is no agreed, once-for-all definition of leisure (e.g., Henderson, 2008; Kleiber, Walker, & Mannell, 2011; Veal, 1992). Kleiber et al. (2011) constructed a typology of four main approaches to defining leisure based on two dimensions: (a) types of leisure phenomena (objective vs. subjective) and (b) definitional vantage points (external vs. internal). Two approaches are adopted in my dissertation: *behavioural*- and *experiential-participant* approaches. By taking the *behavioural* and *experiential* approaches, this research project explores both *objective* and *subjective* aspects of leisure. The former includes two common types of definitions: leisure as time and activity (Henderson, 2008; Veal, 1992). When defined as *time*, leisure is an amount of discretionary time when one is free from obligations, including paid and unpaid work (Brightbill, 1960). Leisure as *activity* refers to a freely engaged activity outside of one's obligations (Dumazedier, 1974).

The subjective aspect of leisure includes leisure as psychological experience and meaning. Two widely accepted, defining elements of leisure *experience* have been perceived

freedom and intrinsic motivation (Neulinger, 1974). This model indicates that people experience the “pure” form of leisure when they choose to participate in an activity freely, and do it for the sake of the activity itself. *Meaning* of leisure refers to the personal significance of leisure within a socio-cultural context (Porter, Iwasaki, & Shank, 2010; Watkins, 2010, 2013). As such, this perspective expands the focus on individuals within the psychological experience perspective, by acknowledging that such subjective experiences are interpreted within a particular socio-cultural context.

The reason why both objective and subjective types of leisure definitions are used in this dissertation is that it is uncertain what aspect of leisure Japanese students will emphasize in relation to their *ikigai*. This is also why the *participant*-centred approach is necessary in this research project. By leaving the definition of leisure to lay people, this approach allows researchers to explore *internal* views of the concept. This is particularly important in the Japanese context of my dissertation as Iwasaki et al. (2007) argued that the uncritical use of Western leisure definitions in non-Western contexts not only undermines the validity of studies, but also reproduces power imbalance in the global leisure scholarship.

In the Japanese culture, there are several leisure-like terms, including *yoka*, *rejaa*, and *yutori*. According to Ito and Walker (2014), “[y]oka is an indigenous Japanese word composed of two Chinese characters: *yo* (meaning ‘left over’ or ‘remaining’) and *ka* (meaning ‘spare time’)” (p. 4). Thus, *yoka* in general denotes free or spare time as opposed to time for obligations, such as paid work or housework (Senuma, 2005; Stewart, Harada, Fujimoto, & Nagazumi, 1996). In contrast, *rejaa* is a phonetic translation of the English word leisure that was introduced into the Japanese vocabulary in the 1950s (Manzenreiter & Horne, 2006). Iwasaki et al. (2007) maintained that neither of these Japanese terms is equivalent to the English word

leisure. Nishino (1997) held that *yutori*—meaning room or leeway—was a third possible leisure-like Japanese term.

Using a free description survey method, Ito and Walker (2014) empirically discerned that *yoka* and *rejaa* had different meanings among Japanese university students. Specifically, *yoka* was associated with leisure as time. Respondents related *rejaa* to leisure as (a) activity, especially active sports, and (b) psychological experience, particularly emotional experience. Their findings also suggested that lay definitions of both *yoka* and *rejaa* differed from lay meanings of the English word leisure provided by Canadian university students. My dissertation adopts, following Ito and Walker’s (2014, p. 16) suggestion, a more generic expression “spare time activity” to avoid connotations that the specific leisure-like Japanese words bring. By doing so, it allows for exploration of multiple aspects of leisure among Japanese college students and their relevance to *ikigai*.

#### **1.1.4 Theory and theorization defined**

As this dissertation is focused on theorization of the relationship between leisure and *ikigai*, theory and the act of theorization need to be defined. To do so, it is first important to note that what theory means drastically different things across paradigms, or a set of philosophical assumptions shared within a group of researchers (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

Pragmatism underlies my dissertation (Kono, in press). Within pragmatism and John Dewey’s version in particular, theory is considered as a means to solving an issue, not only a representation of an external reality (Dewey, 1929, 1938). This view is also known as instrumentalism. Dewey further deemed a quality theory *not* as generalizable beyond particular studies, *but rather* as firmly anchored to a set of particular parameters of a given researcher-phenomenon interaction. Dewey believed that this embeddedness of a theory in a certain context,

rather than unwarranted abstraction, makes a theory strongly explanatory and predictive. He stated: “[Theories] are designations of relations sufficiently stable to allow the occurrence of forecasts of individualized situations ... within limits of specified probability” (Dewey, 1929, pp. 205-206).

This conceptualization of theory fits with the current sequential mixed-methods design, where the first grounded theory study develops a highly contextualized theory. Although the second quantitative study applies the theory to a larger sample, this is *not* to claim for generalizable status of the theory beyond a sample and other important research parameters. Rather by focusing on the Japanese student population, the second study is aimed at examining the extent to which the theory explains *ikigai* perception within this specific group.

At the simplest level, I consider theorization as a process of theory development. Assuming that society is neither static nor certain (Dewey, 1929), theorization is an ever on-going process of investigator’s act of using a particular theory in a given context. Results from individual studies will be reflected in the theory to make it more instrumental in addressing a certain issue. As such, the act of theorization is inherently both inductive (i.e., from the particular to the abstract) and deductive (i.e., from the abstract to the particular). My dissertation, by adopting the mixed-methods design, follows this inductive/deductive or abductive logic of theorization.

## **1.2 Research Purpose and Questions**

The overall purpose of this dissertation is to develop a viable theory that explains how leisure (e.g., time, activity, setting, experience, and meaning) relates to *ikigai* (e.g., *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai*) among Japanese university students. To achieve this overall purpose, two studies were conducted in a sequential manner. Guided by grounded theory

methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), the first *qualitative* study inductively developed a substantive theory of the relationship between *ikigai* and leisure within the focus population. The second quantitative tested this theory by using partial least squares structural equation modeling (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). Thus, the overall research design was mixed method research (MMR; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010b). “Mixing” or integration of qualitative and quantitative components is crucial to a successful MMR study (Nastasi, Hitchcock, & Brown, 2010). To maximize opportunities for this integration, my dissertation follows the traditional monograph format according to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Alberta<sup>4</sup>. This is because in the alternative of the paper-based format, separate studies are presented in a somewhat standalone manner and this could hinder the integration process. Figure 1.1 represents this interactive research process.

My main research questions (RQ) and subordinate research questions (SRQ) are listed below. Notations are used to indicate which study, either qualitative (i.e., QUAL or qual) or quantitative (i.e., QUAN or quan), will address a given S/RQ. The upper-case notation indicates that the corresponding study will fully investigate a given S/RQ, while the lower-case notation suggests its supplemental status.

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<sup>4</sup> In spite of this monograph style, there are two publications generated from this dissertation and/or dissertation proposal. One is a philosophical and methodological paper entitled “From pragmatist discussion to pragmatist projects in leisure research” in *Leisure Sciences* (doi: 10.1080/01490400.2016.1256797). The other paper concerns a mixed method analysis of the relationship between leisure and *ikigai*, entitled “Theorizing leisure’s roles in the pursuit of *ikigai* (life worthiness): A mixed-methods approach” in *Leisure Sciences* (doi: 10.1080/01490400.2017.1356255).

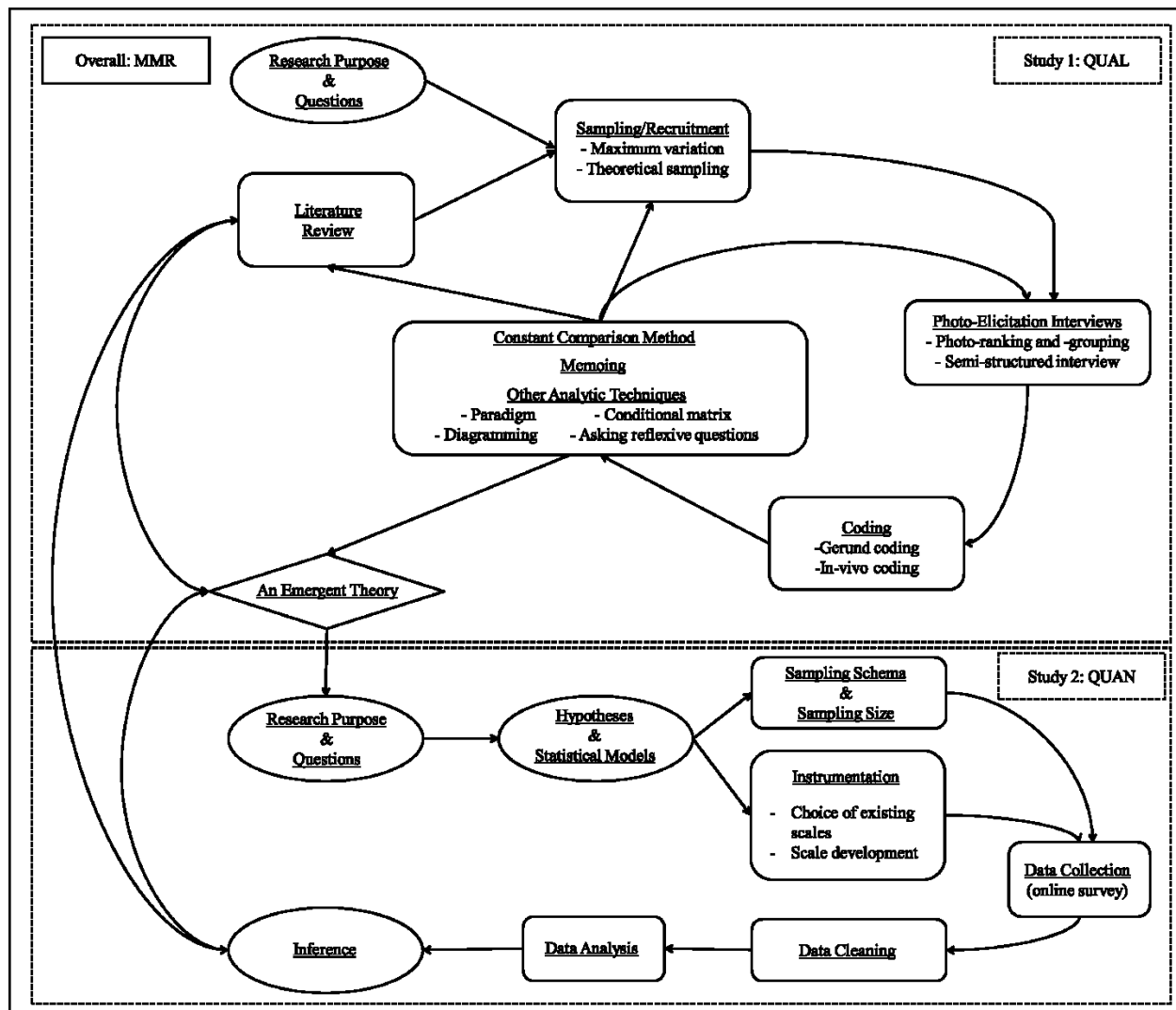


Figure 1.1. A visual representation of this dissertation's mixed methods design.



RQ 1: What consists of *ikigai* perception for Japanese university students? (QUAL/QUAN)

SRQ 1-1: Does *ikigai* perception have a single or multifaceted structure? (QUAL/QUAN)

RQ 2: What forms of leisure (e.g., activity, time, experience), if any, lead to Japanese university students' *ikigai* perception? (QUAL/QUAN)

RQ 3: How important is leisure in terms of explaining Japanese university students' *ikigai* perception relative to other life domains? (QUAN)

RQ 4: How do Japanese university students perceive *ikigai*, or what are the processes that lead to *ikigai* perception? (QUAL/quan)

SRQ 4-1: How does leisure relate to these *ikigai* processes? (QUAL/QUAN)

RQ 5: What precedes the *ikigai* processes? (QUAL/quan)

RQ 6: How well does the emergent theory of *ikigai* explain the relationship between leisure and *ikigai* within a larger sample? (QUAN)

RQ 7: How do different aspects of leisure (e.g., time, activity, experience) relate to the *ikigai* processes and *ikigai* perception? (QUAL/QUAN)

### **1.3 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the overall purpose of my dissertation is to develop a viable theory of the relationship between *ikigai* and leisure within the Japanese university student population. In doing so, this research project could potentially contribute to three distinct bodies of knowledge on leisure, *ikigai*, and well-being. Although the brief review of these lines of research as well as the following in-depth literature review suggests the potential relationship among these constructs, the link has not been formally theorized. In addition to these contributions to the substantive research areas, the focus on *ikigai* in my dissertation can also advance the scholarly movement toward a less Eurocentric, more culturally nuanced understanding of leisure and well-

being (e.g., Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Iwasaki et al., 2007). Moreover, by fully engaging with the literature on both leisure and well-being, this dissertation is a step toward better cross-fertilization between these two lines of research (Mock et al., 2016). Furthermore, my dissertation research could have practical implications by suggesting how one can achieve or help others achieve *ikigai* perception, which was previously found to be related to reduced mortality risk (e.g., Tomioka et al., 2016).

In the literature review chapter that follows, I further elaborate on the linkages among *ikigai*, leisure, and well-being; I identify gaps in the extant literature; and I garner insights that expedite the first grounded theory study by making me sensitive to relevant theoretical issues (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review three research areas that are relevant to my dissertation: *ikigai*, well-being, and leisure. Before doing so, it is important to briefly note an ongoing debate regarding the roles of literature reviews in grounded theory (GT) studies.

### 2.0 “To Read or Not to Read”: An Initial Literature Review in Grounded Theory

As noted above, there is an on-going debate about “if” GT practitioners should conduct a literature review in an early stage of their studies and, if so, “how” this should be done (e.g., Dunne, 2011; McCallin, 2003; McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007; Tummers & Karsten, 2012; Walls, Parahoo, & Fleming, 2010). Glaser (1998), one of the GT founders, argues *against* reviewing the existing literature on a substantive topic beforehand, at least, until the initial data analysis has been completed. Doing so, this camp of GT methodologists insist, could help GT users avoid being preoccupied by extant theoretical frameworks and imposing (or “forcing”) these on the data, rather than letting a theory emerge from the data (Christiansen, 2011; Glaser, 1992). In addition, proponents of Glaserian GT are also concerned about being jargonized and less sensitive to subtle nuances in data, as well as being influenced by hidden agendas and assumptions in previous research. They also point out that the unpredictable nature of GT makes an early attempt to review “substantive” literature itself wasteful, if not impossible (Hickey, 1997).

Conversely, Strauss and Corbin (1990) declare, “We all bring to the inquiry a considerable background in professional and disciplinary literature” (p. 48). The major benefit of an initial review is, Corbin and Strauss (2015) argue, that it heightens GT users’ sensitivity to theoretical possibilities within data. This includes identifying potential sensitizing concepts as “a stepping off point” for an early data collection process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 51). Although

many GT practitioners defy drawing specific hypotheses from the literature, some grounded theorists maintain that an initial review can clarify gaps in the literature, confirm the absence of an identical study, polish a study's research purposes and questions, and sharpen a study's rationale (Dunne, 2011; McCallin, 2003; McGhee et al., 2007). Furthermore, advocates of Straussian GT point out some disadvantages associated with the Glaserian approach (e.g., McCallin, 2003; McGhee et al., 2007). Practically, it is difficult, if not impossible, to not review the substantive literature if a researcher is writing a proposal for granting agencies, committee members, and ethic boards. Philosophically, the delayed review is problematic as it downplays the constructed nature of theory in GT studies (Dunne, 2011).

As I follow the tradition of Corbin and Struass's GT, I conducted an initial literature review on the substantive topics of *ikigai*, leisure, and well-being. It was practically necessary for me to write a literature review for the dissertation committee, research ethic board, and grant agency. As I was not familiar with the academic literature on *ikigai*, reviewing it, I argue retrospectively, enhanced my theoretical sensitivity to this phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). With regard to the leisure literature, I had already become familiar with this body of knowledge through my pre-doctoral studies. As such, I attempted to become transparent about my existing knowledge and critically reflect on it, rather than to hide it. The survey of the well-being literature, I believe, qualifies as the review of a broader body of knowledge (rather than a substantive topic area), which is recommended by GT practitioners (e.g., Dunne, 2011; McCallin, 2003). Also consistent with these recommendations was my effort to keep my review as analytic as possible by (a) focusing on theory and theorization, (b) critiquing the extant literature, and (c) drawing connections among the distinct bodies of knowledge when possible. Moreover, I conducted reflexive memoing to critically examine assumptions embedded in the

reviewed material during the initial literature review process. The literature reviewed herein was revisited throughout this research project, especially the first GT study, to make comparisons between emerging and existing theories.

## **2.1 The *Ikigai* Literature**

In this section, I begin by summarizing review studies of *ikigai* research to provide an overview of this body of knowledge. Next, I review distinct conceptualizations of *ikigai* from two major perspectives—psychological and sociological/anthropological. Lastly, I survey a constellation of empirical studies that identify important predictors of *ikigai* perception, especially among young adults.

### **2.1.1 Review studies of the *ikigai* literature**

This sub-section provides a summary of several review studies in the *ikigai* literature. Kondo (1997) conducted one of the first such reviews, summarizing definitions of *ikigai* developed by 18 separate researchers. His review identified seven recurring themes: *ikigai* as (a) true pleasure, (b) life satisfaction, (c) *hariai* (or zest), (d) meaning in life, (e) goal striving, (f) self-actualization, and (g) something actively pursued.

More recently, Kondo (2007) expanded his previous review of *ikigai* definitions by including approximately 40 *ikigai* studies. He identified five patterns of definitions. The first group of definitions explicitly indicated a correspondence between sources of *ikigai* and social values or common goods (e.g., Y. Takahashi, 2001; Wada 2001a, 2006). This group of definitions excluded certain activities, such as gambling and sleeping in, as sources of *ikigai* because the activities did not appear socially desirable according to the researchers (e.g., Kobayashi, 1989; Naoi, 2004). According to the second group of definitions, *ikigai* is deemed as pleasure to be alive and happiness (e.g., Nagashima, 2002; Sone et al., 2008). Hence, these definitions may not

be able to distinguish *ikigai* from other well-being constructs such as life satisfaction and positive affect (Diener, 1984). The third group of definitions did not limit sources of *ikigai* to socially desirable pursuits, but also included anti-social behaviours in general (e.g., Inoue, 1980, 1988; Motoaki, 1972) and specific deviant activities, such as substance use (Watabe, 2004) and sexual intercourse (Kiyooka, 1972). As per the last two groups of definitions, *ikigai* perception is equated with other psychological concepts, such as self-actualization (e.g., Arai, 1988; Murai, 1981) and purpose in life (e.g., Hirota, 1995; Kamiya, 1966/1980; Kobayashi, 1989; Sato, 1993; Shiraishi, 1993), respectively.

Based on this review, Kondo (2007) criticized the existing *ikigai* definitions—especially ones that fell into the first, fourth, and fifth categories—for being “idealistic” (p. 15). From his view, researchers who adopted these definitions did not answer “what *ikigai* is”, but rather made an ethical claim about “what *ikigai* should be”. Kondo claimed that *ikigai* perception is, by definition, subjective and that as long as one perceives *ikigai*, sources of *ikigai* do not have to conform to dominant social values. Although Kondo’s review and critique are noteworthy, his view of *ikigai* appears over-psychologized and downplays social aspects of *ikigai* phenomenon (e.g., Takahashi & Wada, 2001). Moreover, Kondo failed to recognize that the very act of denying the connection between *ikigai* and social values itself is a value-laden claim about “what *ikigai* should be”.

Kanda (2011a) conducted a systematic review of 156 previous *ikigai* studies that involved adolescents and young adults. He found that most studies relied on the need satisfaction hypothesis Kamiya (1966/1980) had formulated as a mechanism through which sources of *ikigai* impact *ikigai* perception (e.g., Takahashi, 1993; Uehara, 2005). Kanda also noted that some researchers called for exploring lay views of *ikigai* without imposing abstract, expert views (e.g.,

Nishimura, 2005). Of the studies reviewed, 48 referred to some definition of *ikigai* whereas 108 did not mention any definition of *ikigai* at all. Among the former articles, 21 referred to a definition from previous studies or experts (e.g., Horie, 1988; Tsukahara, 1981), 11 briefly mentioned the researcher(s)'s own definition (e.g., Ogura, Sugai, & Ogura, 2008), and six studies provided a definition based on empirical evidence (e.g., Ando, Wada, & Tagusagawa, 1974; Kondo & Kamata, 1998).

Hasegawa et al. (2001) also conducted a review of the *ikigai* literature, although their focus was on older adults. Based on their review, the researchers defined *ikigai* as:

various emotions or senses ... , such as self-actualization, motivation, life satisfaction, motive to live, and a feeling of existence and agency, which occur in one's mind when he or she thinks of his or her sources of *ikigai*, including past experiences, present life events, and future images, to answer the question of "what *ikigai* is for him or her" (p. 5). Their conceptualization was unique in that it explicitly explained the temporal aspect of *ikigai*, which was later crystallized by Kumano (2012). Moreover, they argued that it is possible for one to have sources of *ikigai* but not to perceive *ikigai*, or vice versa. This indicates some level of independence between the two concepts.

Hasegawa, Fujiwara, and Hoshi (2015) expanded the earlier review while adopting a systematic approach. They reviewed 144 articles published between 2000 and 2014 on *ikigai* among older adults. The reviewers identified six articles that addressed the topic of *ikigai* definitions. For example, Hasegawa, Fujiwara, Hoshi, and Shinkai (2003) defined *ikigai* perception as "the feeling that one is alive here and now, and the individual awareness that drives him or her to survive". Hasegawa et al. (2015) also cited Kondo and Kamata's (2003) operational definition of *ikigai* as "the awareness that people find purpose in anything they do in

a daily life and feel motivated for it, and believe in one's value". In terms of research design, Hasegawa et al. (2015) found the majority of studies utilized quantitative methodology ( $n = 77$ ; e.g., cross-sectional survey, longitudinal survey, scale development). The reviewers, however, also noted that most of these studies did not clearly report what instrument they used to measure *ikigai*. The second most widely used design was essay or "personal experience" ( $n = 35$ ), which potentially indicates a lack of academic rigour. Interestingly, the use of qualitative methodology was trailing as only eight such studies were identified.

Shibasaki and Aoki (2011) also conducted a systematic review ( $n = 22$ ) of the *ikigai* literature focusing on older adults. These researchers summarized previous conceptualizations of *ikigai* in this population (e.g., Hasegawa et al., 2003; Kondo & Kamata, 2003; Yokomizo & Tooyama, 2004), and identified four patterns. First, *ikigai* was often equated to meaning and purpose in life as well as a feeling of being alive. Second, *ikigai* was also considered as the subjective perception of life satisfaction and enjoyment. Third, the feelings of *hariai* (or zest) and being useful in one's relationships with others were also often included as part of *ikigai* definitions. Lastly, *ikigai* was linked to the different temporal dimensions (i.e., the past, present, and future).

In summary, these reviews indicate there is a considerable variation in how *ikigai* is conceptualized (Hasegawa et al., 2015; Kanda, 2011a; Kondo, 1997, 2007; Shibasaki & Aoki, 2011). Some reviewers have suggested that this situation may have hindered academic research on *ikigai*, and they have called for greater consensus on what *ikigai* is (Hasegawa et al., 2001). Although this is an exploratory stage of knowledge where qualitative methodology can be extremely useful, reviews also suggested that this mode of inquiry has not been used extensively and there is lack of methodological rigour (Hasegawa et al., 2015).



### **2.1.2 Conceptualizations of *ikigai* across disciplines**

In this subsection, the existing conceptualizations of *ikigai* from the two major disciplinary perspectives—psychology (e.g., Kamiya, 1966/1980; Kumano, 2012) and sociology/anthropology (e.g., Mathews, 1996; Takahashi & Wada, 2001)—are presented.

#### **2.1.2.1 Theorization of *ikigai* from psychological perspectives**

This subsection reviews major theorizations of *ikigai* from a psychological perspective, focusing on two main psychologists in the field, Mieko Kamiya (1966/1980, 2004) and Michiko Kumano (2012). These researchers are “singled out” because they conducted a systematic research project on *ikigai* (not just one study) and their work has rich theoretical implications.

##### **Mieko Kamiya**

Kamiya (1966/1980, 2004) was one of the first researchers to extensively study *ikigai*. She theorized *ikigai* based on her observations as a psychiatrist at an internment camp for leprosy patients as well as a review of studies that examined people suffering from other life transitional events, such as bereavement and the atomic bombs. Kamiya’s first major theoretical contribution is the conceptual distinction between *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai*, which strongly influenced later *ikigai* researchers (e.g., Hasegawa et al., 2001; Kondo, 2007; Kumano, 2012). In terms of *ikigai* perception, Kamiya asserted that one can perceive this when he or she satisfies the following seven types of needs: the need for: (a) life satisfaction, (b) change, (c) a bright future (*mirai-sei*), (d) resonance (*hankyo*), (e) freedom, (f) self-actualization, and (g) meaning and value.

Of these seven needs, Kamiya (2004) viewed life satisfaction as being “the most basic” (p. 54). This need can be met when one feels that his or her life is moving toward a better state or direction. One can satisfy this need not only through extraordinary events, but also everyday

experiences including work. Kamiya speculated that people whose need for life satisfaction is unfulfilled tend to suffer from dissatisfaction and subsequent psychosis; however, they are also likely to explore a deeper form of human existence and gain a stronger level of *ikigai* perception if they successfully meet this need. Kamiya also observed that active people are apt to satisfy this need by “filling up” their lives with many tasks and relationships, while reflective people are inclined to search for sources for life satisfaction in seemingly trivial things in their everyday lives.

According to Kamiya (2004), the need for change becomes salient when one’s life is routinized. It is basic human nature, she argued, to want to avoid stagnation and boredom and instead grow.

Kamiya (2004) contended that one can satisfy the need for a bright future when he or she expects his or her life will unfold in a new direction. This way, one can perceive *ikigai* even after negative life events and in the middle of difficulties as long as he or she sees “a silver lining” in the future. Kamiya noted the importance of setting both short-term achievable goals and long-term ambitious dream to effectively satisfy this need.

Kamiya (2004) associated the need for resonance (*hankyo*) with *hariai* (or zest) and emphasized the imperative to have meaningful interpersonal connections. To satisfy this need, one needs to be treated by others in an accepting manner. Loving and dedicating to significant others is one major mechanism to satisfy this need, too.

Kamiya (2004) related the need for freedom with a feeling of agency and autonomy. The perception of freedom *despite* the existence of some constraints is necessary to satisfy this need. Moreover, Kamiya noted that we sometimes choose *not* to be free in the present for the sake of our freedom in the future, or sacrifice our own freedom for significant others’ freedom; she

argued that doing so is part of freedom, as well.

The need for self-actualization, according to Kamiya (2004), motivates people to achieve their potential and personally grow. This is congruent with the recent conceptualization of eudaimonia (e.g., Huta, 2013; Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Unlike selfishness, self-actualization concerns the development of the core, rather than peripheral, part of one's identity. To satisfy this need, it is necessary for most people to focus resources and talents in one direction whereas others can excel in multiple areas.

Finally, Kamiya (2004) maintained that the need for meaning and value urges people to constantly reflect upon the meaning of their life and to justify the value of their life.

Kamiya (2004) also identified six common characteristics of sources of *ikigai*. First, a source of *ikigai* provides one with *ikigai* perception. Second, it is not necessarily something that has instrumental values. Third, an activity that fosters *ikigai* is autonomous or intrinsically motivated. This indicates the potential of leisure as a source of *ikigai*. Fourth, sources of *ikigai* are unique to individuals. Sources should be consistent with people's identity and allow them to express their true self. This parallels Waterman's (1993b) operationalization of eudaimonia as personal expressiveness. Fifth, sources of *ikigai* construct a value system in one's mind. Sixth, they also create an internal mental world in which one can live freely.

Kamiya (1966/1980, 2004) also made some other theoretically important contributions concerning *ikigai*. She observed that people are less likely to become fully cognizant of their *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai* because they are deeply embedded in their everyday lives. For example, she noted that "there were many people who could not answer when asked, 'what are your sources of *ikigai*?'" (2004, p. 30). However, Kamiya also acknowledged that there are some moments when we consciously (re)appraise the two aspects of *ikigai* in our lives. Kamiya

listed four major questions we tend to ask in such situations: (a) “What am I living for? Or, by whom am I needed?”; (b) “What is a life goal unique to me? Am I doing my best to achieve it?”; (c) “Overall, do I deserve to exist?”; and (d) “In general, is life worth living?” Although older people may face these existential questions more frequently, Kamiya believed that these questions are also asked during adolescence when a person is developing his or her sense of self. She further noted that adults can avoid asking and answering these questions by being occupied with everyday tasks, such as work and parenting.

Whereas Kamiya (1966/1980, 2004) considered *ikigai* perception to be a type of happiness (or *koufuku-kan* in Japanese), she also distinguished *ikigai* from happiness based on the following three propositions. First, *ikigai* perception is more future-oriented than happiness. Even if one is struggling with his or her present life, he or she can still perceive *ikigai* at that moment as long as he or she has hope or a goal in the future. Second, in Kamiya’s view, *ikigai* perception is related to one’s sense of self more strongly than happiness. For example, people feel a greater level of *ikigai* perception when they accomplish something only they can do. Third, *ikigai* perception is associated with one’s values.

Despite her ground-breaking role, a few important limitations of Kamiya’s (1966/1980, 2004) theory of *ikigai* should be noted. Most critically, it remains questionable if her hypotheses about *ikigai* based on leprosy patients are applicable to the general population. She asserted that her patients merely experienced *ikigai* perception, or lack thereof, at extreme levels. Thus, their sense and sources of *ikigai* are qualitatively equivalent to those among the general public. However, this has not been empirically tested. Furthermore, the evidence for her theory was collected more than 50 years ago. Considering the rapid social changes in Japan over the last half century, it is plausible that some tenets of Kamiya’s *ikigai* theory are no longer relevant in

contemporary Japanese society. Consistently, sociologists claimed that sources of *ikigai* change as social values shift (cf. Takahashi & Wada, 2001).

### **Michiko Kumano**

Kumano (2012) is a contemporary psychologist who has both conducted an extensive amount of empirical research on *ikigai* and constructed her own theory of *ikigai*. Building upon Kamiya's (1966/1980) and Seligman's (2002) theories, Kumano's theory illustrates two important dimensions of *ikigai*: situational and temporal. The relevance of these issues was tested and supported by a series of empirical studies, which resulted in the development of a two-dimensional *ikigai* model (Figure 2.1).

In terms of the temporal dimension, Kumano (2012) theorized that *ikigai* perception in the present moments is influenced by sources of *ikigai* people either experienced in the past or foresee experiencing in the future. Two empirical studies were conducted to test this hypothesis.

First, Kumano (2002) examined what sources of *ikigai* female college students identified across the past, present, and future. Their sources of *ikigai*, provided in free descriptions where multiple responses were possible, were coded into five categories: (a) relationship-related (i.e., significant others, family, and children), (b) self-related (i.e., hobby, study, work, and school club activity), (c) positive affect (i.e., enjoyment, satisfaction, and happiness), (d) striving behaviours (i.e., doing favourite things, making an effort, and being committed), and (e) future perspectives (i.e., dream, goal, and hope). A chi-square analysis indicated that respondents tended to report these sources of *ikigai* primarily in the future (82%). About 50% had sources of *ikigai* in the past and present. Most respondents reported one of the following four patterns: (a) 38% found sources of *ikigai* in all the three time points, (b) 18% did not find sources of *ikigai* in the past or present, but foresaw them in the future, (c) 15% did not have sources of *ikigai* in the present, but

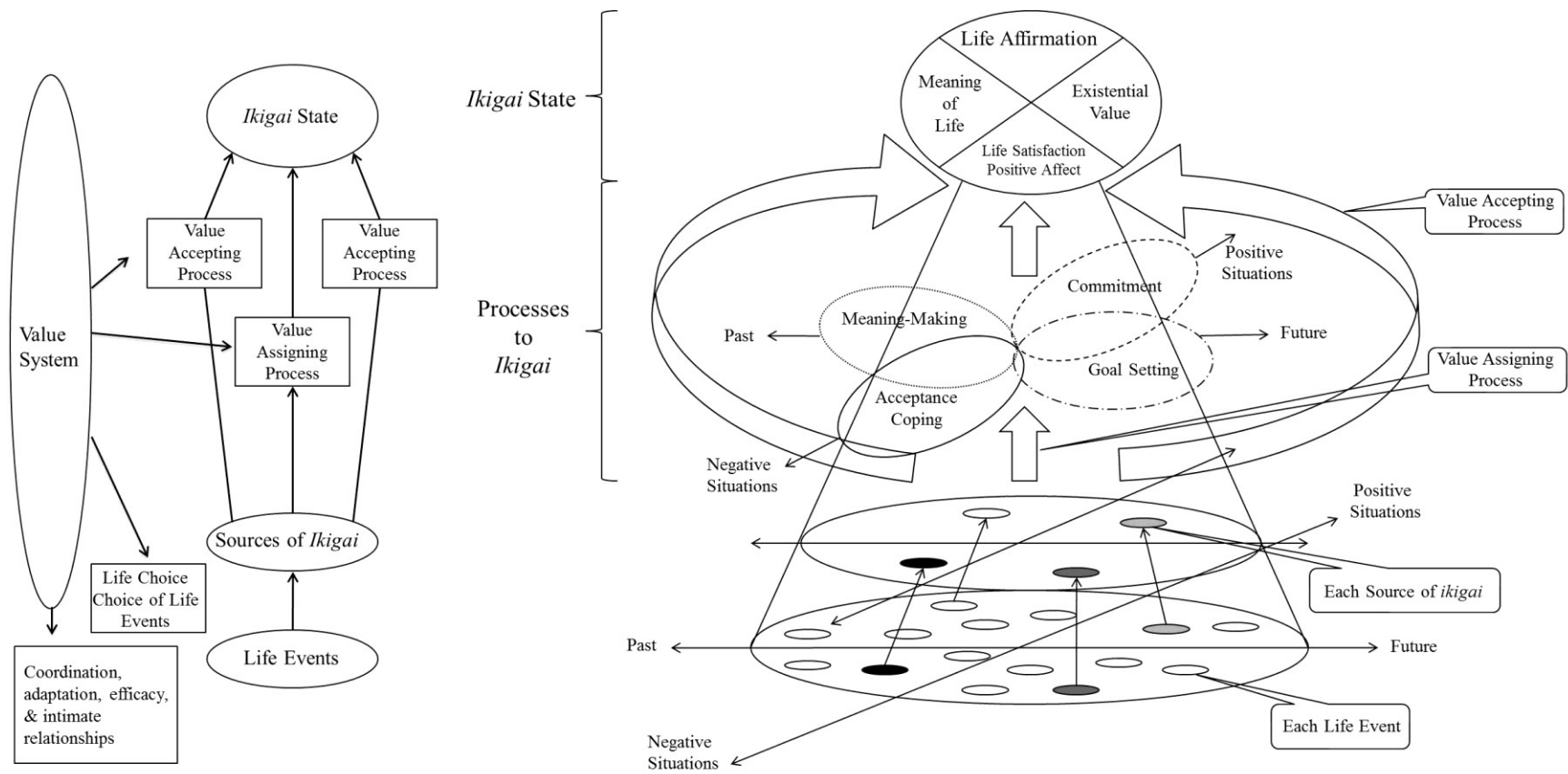


Figure 2.1. An English language version of Kumano's (2012, p. 136) two dimensional *ikigai* model translated by Shintaro Kono. It is reprinted with the publisher's permission.

had had them in the past and expected them in the future, and (d) 12% did not find sources of *ikigai* in any of the three time points.

Second, Kumano (2005) investigated how life events that individuals had experienced in the past and expected in the future affected their *ikigai* perception in the present. She hypothesized that people would feel a stronger level of *ikigai* perception when they expected better life events in their future than what they had experienced in the past. A series of statistical analyses supported this hypothesis.

With regard to the situational dimension, Kumano (2012) theorized that both positive and negative life circumstances are pertinent to both *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai*. Two empirical studies were conducted to test this proposition.

First, Kumano (2010) examined in what situations female college students thought of, felt, and/or desired *ikigai*. Various situations, provided in free descriptions where multiple responses were possible, were coded into three categories of valence: positive, negative, and neutral. A series of statistical analyses discerned certain patterns in which respondents thought of, felt, and/or desired *ikigai* across the three types of valence. In positive situations, there were more respondents who felt *ikigai* than those who thought of or desired it. In neutral situations, there were fewer respondents who felt *ikigai* than those who thought of or desired it. In negative situations, there were far more respondents who thought of or desired *ikigai* than those who felt it. In particular, many respondents thought of (27%) or desired (27%) *ikigai* in situations where they felt negative emotions, such as being worried, depressed, bored, or anxious. They also desired *ikigai* in situations where they experienced negative self-appraisal (8%), including lack of confidence, and had poor standards of life (11%), such as an excessive level of routine.

Second, Kumano (2009) examined how different types of life events as well as stress

coping mechanisms predicted one's *ikigai* perception. *Ikigai* perception was measured by Kumano's (2001, as cited in Kumano, 2012) *ikigai* awareness scale with five dimensions: (a) life affirmation, (b) goal and dream, (c) meaning in life, (d) existential value, and (e) commitment (Kumano, 2006). Four types of life events were measured: positive or negative *and* interpersonal or self-actualizing. A series of multiple regression analyses indicated that different dimensions of *ikigai* perception were predicted by different types of life events. For example, positive interpersonal and negative self-actualizing events predicted life affirmation. However, for instance, goal and dream was predicted by negative interpersonal and positive self-actualizing events.

In addition to these studies of the temporal and situational dimensions, Kumano (2006) investigated the structure of *ikigai* perception and other-related constructs. A total of 177 items were selected from nine psychometrics, including two *ikigai* scales (Kondo & Kamata, 1998; Kumano, 2001, as cited in Kumano, 2012), the Purpose in Life (PIL) scale (Sato, 1993), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), scales for positive and negative affect (Diener & Emmons, 1984), a happiness scale (Ueda, Yoshimori, & Yukura, 1992), the Scales for Psychological Well-Being (SPWB; Ryff, 1989a, b), the Quality of Life (QOL) scale (Yamaoka et al., 1994), and single-item scales of *ikigai*, life satisfaction, and happiness. Data obtained from 601 college students were explored using principal component analysis (PCA). The PCA identified 14 components: (a) life affirmation, (b) goal and dream, (c) existential value, (d) meaning in life, (e) adjustment to environments, (f) close relationships with others, (g) autonomy, (h) commitment, (i) negative affect, (j) personal growth, (k) positive affect, (l) physical health, (m) life enjoyment, and (n) life satisfaction. Kumano (2006), assuming that the items from the two *ikigai* scales and the PIL scale measured *ikigai* perception, identified core,



central, and peripheral factors of *ikigai*: life affirmation as the core, and goal and dream, existential value, meaning in life, commitment, and life satisfaction as central. A follow-up exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the same data provided a three-factor solution. Items measuring the six core and central components in the PCA were loaded by the first factor in the EFA together with autonomy and adjustment to environments items.

Based on these empirical studies, Kumano (2012) proposed the two-dimensional model of *ikigai* (see Figure 2.1). Her model expanded on the two properties of *ikigai*: *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai* (Kamiya, 1966/1980). Kumano identified life affirmation, meaning in life, and existential value as the core parts of *ikigai* perception, and considered life satisfaction and positive affect as peripheral parts. She theorized that sources of *ikigai* are selected from life events based on individuals' capabilities to adjust to events, including adjustments to environment, autonomy, and positive relationships with others. The process of selecting sources of *ikigai* is influenced by one's life choices. Moreover, Kumano added an important concept, processes to *ikigai*, as intervening factors between sources of *ikigai* and *ikigai* perception. Kumano postulated two generic processes: (a) value- (or meaning-) accepting and (b) value- (or meaning-) assigning. Furthermore, Kumano divided the latter into four specific processes depending on valence of life situations (positive or negative) and temporal orientations (past, present, or future). One can perceive *ikigai* through *meaning-making* of past positive and negative events. For positive future events, one can engage in *goal setting*. One can *commit* to positive present events. Finally, one can *accept* or *cope* with negative events in the past and future. All of these processes to *ikigai* are closely related with one's value system.

Kumano (2013) empirically tested this two-dimensional *ikigai* model (Kumano, 2012), using structural equation modeling (SEM). *Ikigai* perception was operationalized as the three

core factors (i.e., life affirmation, meaning in life, and existential value) and life satisfaction. Five processes to *ikigai* were measured: (a) meaning-making of the past, (b) awareness of future goals, (c) absorption in positive situations, (d) acceptance of negative situations, and (e) coping with negative situations. Figure 2.2 represents the models Kumano (2013) tested. A series of SEM analyses were conducted using the total score for *ikigai* perception or each of the four subscale scores as a dependent variable. Resultant model fit indices varied as follows (GFI = .910 to .917; AGFI = .870 to .880; CFI = .941 to .946; RMSEA = .078 to .082). The analysis with the aggregated *ikigai* perception score found all parameters as significant (GFI = .910; AGFI = .870; CFI = .942; RMSEA = .082; see Figure 2.2).

Recently, Kumano (in press) argued that *ikigai* is part of eudaimonic well-being, whereas *shiawase* or happiness in Japanese is closer to hedonic well-being. This argument is based on free description data about “what the difference between feeling *shiawase* and feeling *ikigai* is” collected from 846 Japanese people in their 30s. In terms of feelings, respondents were more likely to associate a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment with *ikigai*, while they related delightful, peaceful, and loving feelings to *shiawase*. *Ikigai* was more frequently associated with actions, especially doing things one enjoys and devoting oneself. With regard to time, *ikigai* was more future oriented and long-term, while *shiawase* was found in fleeting moments in the present. The category of values was exclusively associated with *ikigai*, inclusive of worthiness, zest, meaning and purpose, and existential significance. Another theme that distinguished *ikigai* from *shiawase* was goal pursuit, as all goal-related responses were associated with the former. Japanese respondents tended to view *ikigai* pursuit as a more difficult, effortful, and active process than *shiawase* pursuit, which they deemed as personal, passive, and easy. Although both concepts were related to other people, *ikigai* involved things *for* someone else while *shiawase*

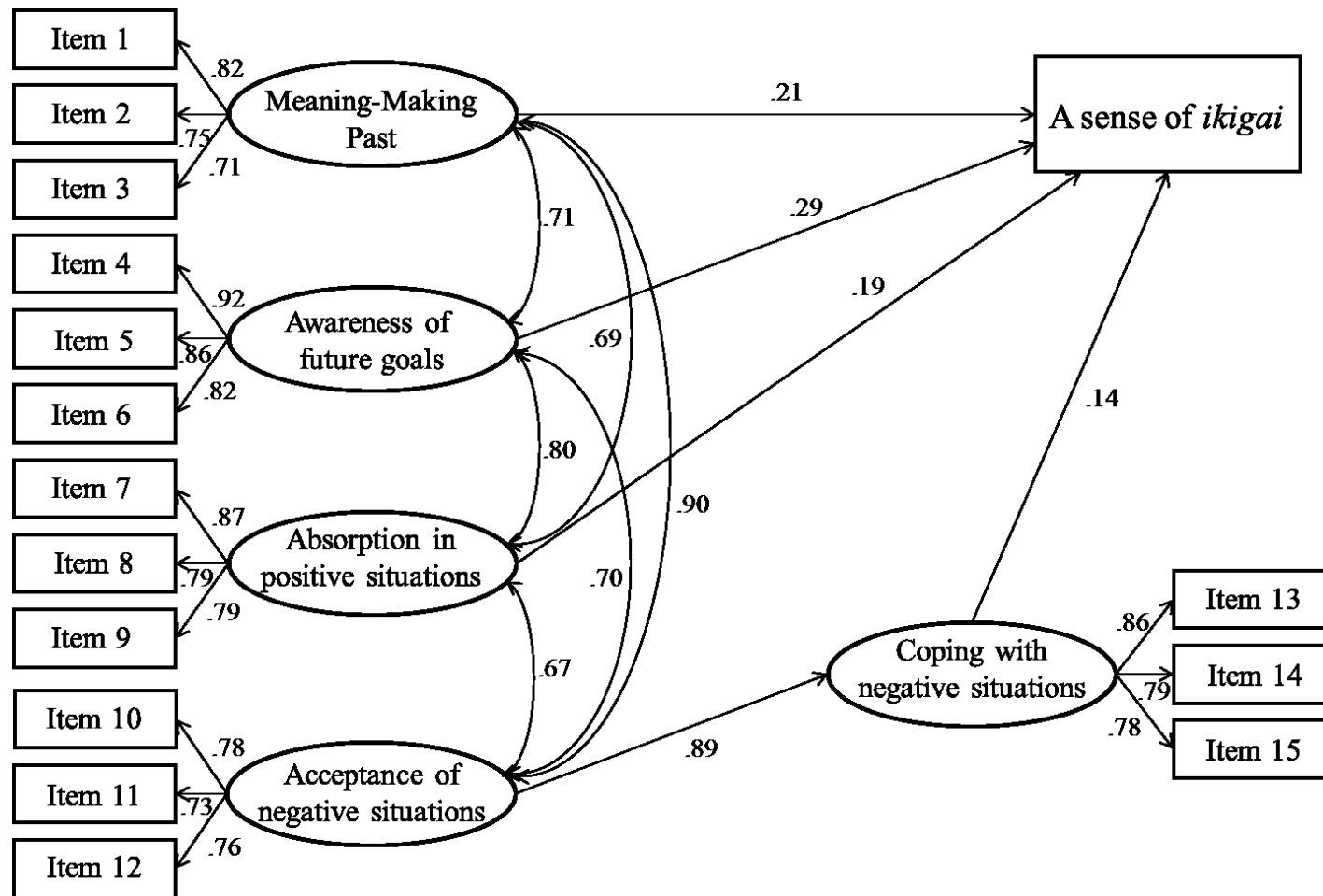


Figure 2.2. An English version of Kumano's (2013) model for SEM analysis translated by Shintaro Kono.

All of the standardized coefficients in this Figure were significant at the confidence level of .01. It is reprinted with the publisher's permission.

was felt *with* others. As such, most of Kumano's (in press) findings indicate that *ikigai* is in line with the characteristics of eudaimonia (e.g., Huta & Waterman, 2014).

Despite Kumano's significant contributions to the study of *ikigai*, there are certain limitations inherent in her studies. For example, in regard to its theoretical contributions, several significant limitations of Kumano's (2012, 2013) *ikigai* model should be noted. First, her conceptualization of *ikigai* perception is questionable because of problematic procedures in the construct structure analysis (Kumano, 2006). At a methodological level, a PCA is sensitive to different scaling of items and non-normal distributions, both of which Kumano (2006) admittedly violated. At a conceptual level, it is unclear why loadings of non-*ikigai* scale items (e.g., the QOL, SWLS, and SPWB) influenced her decisions on which factors are core, central, or peripheral in *ikigai* perception. For example, why is life affirmation the core while goal and dream and existential value are not; even though the latter two loaded on more items from the three *ikigai* scales than the former? The rationale for why Kumano (2012) included positive affect in her theoretical model—the factor Kumano (2006) found non-central—is also unstated. Lacking here too is the rationale behind her decision to situate commitment and goal setting (re-labeled from dream and goal) as processes to *ikigai*, not as dimensions of *ikigai* perception. These factors were derived from the *ikigai* awareness scale (Kumano, 2001, as cited in Kumano, 2012) and the SPWB (Ryff, 1989b), both of which measure psychological outcomes, not processes.

Second, it remains unclear if this model fully explains the *ikigai* phenomenon. This is partially because Kumano's (2013) SEM study failed to report chi-square model fit results. The values of the approximate model fit indices were not particularly high for some of the new scales. In addition, the standardized effects of the *ikigai* processes on the total score were

relatively weak, ranging from .14 to .29. Moreover, it is unknown which process(es) contributes to certain aspects of *ikigai* perception. This is because Kumano could not include a measurement model of perceived *ikigai* in her SEM, presumably because of extremely high levels of inter-factor correlations. Beyond this SEM study, it is doubtful if processes to *ikigai* are limited to the five based on the inappropriate interpretations of Kumano's (2006) PCA. There appears to be the need to inductively explore other processes to *ikigai*. Kumano's model only includes life events as sources of *ikigai*. As such, it may have overlooked other important types of sources of *ikigai*, such as intentional activities (e.g., leisure) and significant relationships (e.g., marriage).

Lastly, some evidence for the two dimensions came from studies with female student samples (Kumano, 2002, 2010). It is possible that this introduced gender bias into the model. Indeed, some of the *ikigai* process scales showed significant gender differences (Kumano, 2013).

In summary, the two prominent *ikigai* psychologists, Kamiya (1966/1980, 2004) and Kumano (2012), made substantial contributions to *ikigai* theorization. In particular, they provided generic yet useful conceptual elements—*ikigai* perception, sources of *ikigai*, and processes to *ikigai*. Kamiya connected *ikigai* with need satisfaction, whereas Kumano crystallized the temporal and situational dimensions of *ikigai*. However, the current review also illustrated that their *ikigai* theories have several substantive limitations. Additionally, as psychologists, their theories do not explain the effects of societal and demographic factors on *ikigai* experience. This issue has been addressed by sociologists and anthropologists of *ikigai*.

#### **2.1.2.2 Theorization of *ikigai* from sociological/anthropological perspectives**

The following subsection reviews theorization of *ikigai* by two groups of sociologists and anthropologists: Wada, Mori, and their colleagues, and Mathews.

##### **Shyuuichi Wada**

As a sociologist, Wada (2001b) contended that SWB (Diener, 1984) did not capture a complex and dynamic process of well-being among Japanese older adults. Specifically, the incremental relation between positive affect and global SWB (i.e., the happier one is, the higher level of SWB he or she perceives) makes it impossible to measure “a multi-layered structure of well-being that includes a feeling of accomplishment that occur when one denies pleasure” (pp. 9-10). Thus, he suggested that *ikigai* is a useful concept to conceptualize the pursuit of well-being in a different way from hedonic pursuit. In regard to processes to *ikigai*, Wada (2006) emphasized the importance of one’s continuous reflective questioning about what fulfills his or her life, and what life fulfillment itself means for him or her. Wada (2001b) argued that *ikigai* is a state where individuals balance between their personal life satisfaction and accomplishments of the common good, rather than pursuing either of them. Thus, from Wada’s (2001b) perspective, it is impossible to have *ikigai* in a completely egocentric manner; it is necessary to obtain validation from others or wider society for one to perceive *ikigai*.

For Wada (2001b), *ikigai* perception paralleled meaning in life. Hence, he theorized *ikigai* by comparing Kamiya’s (1966/1980) theory with Baumeister’s (1991) conceptualization of meaning in life while scrutinizing each of the four needs Baumeister proposed: purpose, value, efficacy, and self-worth (see p. 66). First, Wada observed that Baumeister’s emphasis on purpose is similar to Kamiya’s argument that one has to set a goal in the future and make efforts to achieve it in order to feel *ikigai*. Second, Wada drew a parallel between Baumeister’s need for value and Kamiya’s contention that one perceives the strongest level of *ikigai* when what he or she *wants to* do corresponds to what he or she *should* do. Third, Wada also noted that people may face difficulty in construing a stable value system in a contemporary society where old values (e.g., nationalism, collectivism, familism) have lost their hold, and a variety of alternative values

are available. Fourth, Wada expanded Baumeister's need for self-worth by maintaining that self-worth, and the self-acceptance process to achieve it, is influenced by social institutions (e.g., policy, social welfare systems). Thus, self-worth is inherently social construction.

Wada (2006) expanded his conceptualization of sources of *ikigai* by incorporating Gewirth's (1998) three types of ethical views: personalist, particularist, and universalist. Wada maintained that the type of ethical views one subscribes to significantly influences what he or she finds as a source of *ikigai* and how he or she pursues it. The personalist view underscores the importance of one's own personal growth and dignity and development of one's full capacity. The particularist view accentuates the significance of one's adherence to social values and prioritizes dedication to a collective over personal accomplishment. Lastly, the universalist view holds that everyone should treat each other fairly, accepting his or her different values or interests. Wada also observed that the personalist view has dominated the extant conceptualizations of *ikigai* from the psychological perspective (e.g., Kamiya, 1966/1980) whereas *ikigai* in a pre-modern Japanese society was based on the particularist view (e.g., dying for the nation during the World War II). Future *ikigai* scholarship, Wada maintained, should conceptualize *ikigai* from the universalist view.

### **Shyunta Mori**

Mori (2001), another sociologist, viewed *ikigai* as an everyday lived concept that is construed through social interactions. He identified self-affirmation as the core part of *ikigai*, meaning that it is okay for one to be himself or herself. The feeling of self-affirmation is gained through one's everyday interactions with others. Mori further theorized three dimensions of *ikigai*: (a) social networking, (b) life course, and (c) life values and worldviews. Social networking concerns one's "horizontal" connections (or *yoko-no-tsunagari*) with others who live

within a close social proximity at a given moment. This dimension is characterized by both the quantity and quality of one's interpersonal relationships across various life domains, including family, work, friend, and community. The more relationships one has and the better the quality of these relationships is, the higher level of *ikigai* s/he perceives. The second dimension—life course—pertains to one's “vertical” connections (or *tate-no-tsunagari*), that is, one's relationship with himself or herself across the past, present, and future. It was hypothesized that the higher level of consistency one perceives across time, the higher level of *ikigai* s/he perceives. The third dimension—life values and worldviews—refers to one's religious and spiritual beliefs as well as life goals. Theoretically, whatever the content of views and values are, people who have a clear idea of views and values and make an action toward them tend to perceive a greater level of *ikigai*.

### **Gordon Mathews**

Mathews (1996), an American anthropologist who lived in Japan, provided culturally and methodologically unique insights into *ikigai*. He conducted multi-wave in-depth interviews about *ikigai* with 104 Japanese and American people. He used the term *ikigai* with the former group while asking the latter group about their “most important” relationship, activity, pursuit, or dream. Mathews identified several major sources of *ikigai* including paid work, family, past, future (or dream), creative activities, and belief/religion. He further found two different processes through which the interviewees perceive *ikigai* from these sources: self-realization and commitment. Mathews also developed the following theory of *ikigai*:

As the products of culturally and personally shaped fate, selves strategically formulate and interpret their *ikigai* from an array of cultural conceptions, negotiate these *ikigai* as channeled by their society's institutional structures so as to attain and maintain a sense of



the personal significance of their lives. (p. 207)

The following paragraphs unpack what he meant by this theory while using examples from his interviews to clarify certain points.

At the most abstract level, Mathews (1996) observed that many interviewees' choice of self-realization or commitment as a process to *ikigai* was conditioned by cultural differences between Japan and the U.S., namely collectivism and individualism, respectively. At this level, cultures were often taken for granted and people living in a given culture were not even cognizant of its influences on their sources of and processes to *ikigai* (Mathews, 2001). For example, some Japanese male interviewees expressed a strong sense of commitment to their companies while Japanese women tended to talk about their dedication to their family members, especially children. On the contrary, for some American interviewees, their family did not suffice as a source of *ikigai*. Rather, it was their career that provided a sufficient level of personal recognition from a wider society, which in turn led to self-realization. Although some interviewees expressed views of *ikigai* deviant from the dominant society's (i.e., self-realization for Japanese and commitment for Americans), Mathews (1996) observed that these interviewees were notably "vocal" in defending their views of *ikigai* because they faced conflicts with others who did not agree with their views.

Mathews (1996) also contended that we are not always passive recipients of cultural messages, but active consumers of culture who construct our views of *ikigai* based on available information in a given society. Neither Japanese nor American interviewees perfectly conformed to the dominant view of *ikigai* in their culture. Rather, their views were somewhere in the middle of the continuum between self-realization and commitment. The interviewees often attempted to justify and normalize their sources of and processes to *ikigai* by referring to things beyond

themselves, including social normativity and higher existence (e.g., God).

At the most individual level, Mathews (1996) held that we negotiate our sources of and processes to *ikigai* with people with whom we interact on a daily basis, including family members, friends, and members of a certain subculture. For example, many female interviewees from both cultures mentioned arguments with their spouse regarding their roles and responsibilities in their family. Some American women felt frustrated about being under-valued as housewives and confronted their spouse who focused on a professional career. Some Japanese men who wished to resign from their job were afraid of conflicts with their wife who expected their husband's role to be a breadwinner. Mathews noted that these negotiations concerning *ikigai* became evident when people with different views of *ikigai* encounter one another in daily interactions.

Lastly, Mathews (1996) declared that all sources of *ikigai* were “unstable”. For example, work and family (especially children) could not serve as a source of *ikigai* for one's entire life because eventually he or she has to experience retirement (or unemployment) and “empty nest” syndrome (or bereavement). Similarly, religion and creative activities involve uncertainty. Mathews found that most interviewees were aware of this instability of their sources of *ikigai*. Whereas they looked for meanings of life that could transcend their individual existence through, for example, their religious beliefs, they were cognizant that such views were not necessarily generalizable to a wider society, but rather were unique to themselves. Mathews attributed this tension between an urge for greater meanings of life and awareness of inherent uncertainty and instability of any meanings to a modern society where various lifestyles and beliefs exist and values are relativized. However, the interviewees also knew that they could not totally negate the possibility that there was some ultimate meaning of life. This slight possibility allowed them to

construe their own micro meaning system and sources of *ikigai*, which Mathews referred to as the “late modern pragmatism” (p. 253).

### **Yuuetsu Takahashi**

Based on findings from international, comparative studies (Mathews, 2001; Mori et al., 2001), Y. Takahashi (2001) noted a cultural difference in processes to *ikigai* between Western and East Asian countries. Whereas Western interviewees stressed the importance of independence in living a meaningful life, their East Asian counterparts highlighted the significance of belonging, especially in terms of their family. Although Western interviewees too mentioned family as a source of *ikigai*, family for them often meant their individual and independent relationship with their spouses. On the contrary, East Asian individuals considered their close, often interdependent, relationships with their offspring as their source of *ikigai*. Thus, even though “family” was the most frequently mentioned source of *ikigai* across studied countries, the underlying mechanisms through which people perceived *ikigai* from this source may differ across the cultures.

Y. Takahashi (2001) also suggested that the ways Japanese people perceived *ikigai* may have shifted from commitment to self-realization, that is, from a collectivistic to an individualistic mechanism. He maintained that rather than abandoning group-related processes altogether, Japanese people started to rely on associational groups that consisted of solidarity among independent individuals, as opposed to collectivistic groups where dependence among members was presupposed.

Although the theorization of *ikigai* from sociological and anthropological perspectives compensated for the dominant psychological view of *ikigai*, it should be noted that most of these theses were not empirically tested. As the researchers based their arguments on qualitative

evidence in cross-cultural contexts (e.g., Mathews, 1996; Y. Takahashi, 2001), we need to carefully examine how valid their findings were with regard to language equivalence. Finally, if their contention that *ikigai*, especially sources of *ikigai*, are highly socially constructed is in fact accurate, then it follows that their decades-old findings might no longer be relevant to contemporary society (e.g., Mathews, 1996; Mori et al., 2001).

### **2.1.3 Existing empirical *ikigai* research among young adults**

This subsection provides a review of previous studies that examined (a) prevalence of *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai* in Japanese society, and (b) influences of personal and social factors on *ikigai* in the general public and young adult population. It also describes a collection of studies that examined leisure-like activities as sources of *ikigai* among young adults.

#### **2.1.3.1 Prevalence of *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai***

A few nation-wide studies in Japan have examined (a) how prevalent *ikigai* perception was among Japanese people, and/or (b) what major sources of *ikigai* were. One such study was a survey conducted by Nihon Housou Kyoukai Broadcasting Culture Research Institute (NHK/BCRI) every five years since 1973. In 2004, the agency reported that over the three decades from 1973 to 2003, the percentages of respondents who had *ikigai* hovered around 70% (ranging from 67.4% to 72.1%; 69.7% in 2003).

The Cabinet Office, Government of Japan (COGJ; 1994) surveyed a representative sample of 7,608 people, with 81.8% answering affirmatively to the following question: “Do you usually have something you can call *ikigai* or *hariai* [worth] in your life?” Among these respondents ( $n = 6,220$ ), 38.7% identified family and children as their primary source of *ikigai*, followed by hobbies and sports (24.4%), and work (23.4%). Using this and another large dataset

(a total sample size of 10,048), Arimoto and Kazama (1997) found that family and children as a source of *ikigai* positively predicted *ikigai* perception among both men and women. However, work as a source of *ikigai* did so only among women. In its 1997 survey, COGJ asked the following question: “About your work and leisure, which one of the followings is the closest to your way of thinking?” The largest number of respondents chose “committing to both work and leisure” (47.1%), followed by “enjoying leisure more than work” (17.5%), “committing to work more than to leisure” (15.7%), “finding *ikigai* in leisure, not in work” (8.0%), and “fully committing to work to seek *ikigai*” (6.4%).

Central Research Services (CRS; 2012) reported that among 1,357 respondents, 76.3% answered that they had (a source or perception of) *ikigai* whereas 7.5% did not. Among those in their 20s ( $n = 124$ ), the numbers were similar; 77.4% had *ikigai* while 4.8% did not. Among those who had *ikigai* ( $n = 1,036$ ), 30.5% found work as their primary source of *ikigai*, 43.0% considered non-work as the source of *ikigai*, and 22.7% found *ikigai* both in their work and non-work life domains. Moreover, the majority of respondents identified hobby and leisure as a source of *ikigai* (51.2%), followed by family and pet (49.5%), work and study (34.3%), interactions with friends (32.6%), work out (19.7%), and social work (11.6%). Of all the respondents, 47.5% wanted to “pursue their hobby further or find a new hobby” to perceive a greater level of *ikigai*, followed by “actively interact with friends” (38.8%), “increase communications with their family and pet” (37.4%), “commit to work or study” (27.9%), “actively engage in social work like volunteer activity” (13.9%), and “go to lectures, classes, and school” (11.9%).

A few studies have also examined *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai* within the young adult population. For example, Nishizako and Sakagami (2004a) asked 369 college

students in Kagoshima prefecture when they perceived *ikigai*. The largest proportion of respondents did so when they were “with their significant others and friends” (35.8%), followed by “when engaging in sports and hobbies” (22.5%), “when doing what they liked alone without being bothered by others” (13.6%), “when doing things that contribute to society” (6.2%), and “when they were with family” (6.0%). Takeshige (1985) asked 269 university students in Kagawa whether they perceived *ikigai* in work (i.e., housework or schoolwork) and/or leisure (*yoka*). He found that 44.8% perceived *ikigai* in their leisure as much as in their work, and 38.9% perceived a greater level of *ikigai* in their leisure than in their work.

Some studies also examined leisure (*yoka* or *rejaa*) as a source of *ikigai* for young adults. Based on a series of studies with young female workers (Kumazawa, 2005, 2006a, b), Kumazawa (2007) reported that leisure was most frequently reported as a source of *ikigai* (71.0%) compared to family (22.6%) and work (6.5%). Kamiya and Sudo (1980) found that, among 224 young workers, the most frequently mentioned source of *ikigai* was “being with friends” (16.1%), followed by “being with a significant other” (11.1%), and “hobbies and sports” (9.8%). It is noteworthy here that 29.0% did not know if they had a source of *ikigai*. Fujiwara (1972) reported results from a secondary analysis of a large-scale survey composed of 8,231 college students. Of the 5,669 male respondents, the three most frequently reported sources of *ikigai* were (a) “being committed to sports or hobbies” (50.8%), (b) “being with friends” (41.6%), and (c) “focusing on study” (26.5%). A similar pattern was found with the 2,562 female respondents (i.e., 46.3%, 44.3%, and 28.5%, respectively).

Okamura, Komazaki, Omura, and Hanazawa (1974) discovered that Japanese adolescents and young workers perceived *ikigai* primarily through participation in sports and hobbies, and socialization with their friends. Tabei et al. (1982) reported that among 288 respondents from

colleges, junior colleges, and high schools, the most frequently mentioned source of *ikigai* was school club activities (or *bukatsu*), followed by social interactions, school life, hobbies and recreation, romantic relationship, volunteer activities, and sleeping and eating. They further found that 75% of college students, 50% of junior college students, and 45% of high school students perceived *ikigai*.

In summary, it appears that approximately 70 to 80% of Japanese people perceive some level of *ikigai* (e.g., COGJ, 1994; NHK/BCRI, 2004). This percentage range seems similar for young adults (e.g., CRS, 2012; Tabei et al., 1982). The sources of *ikigai* that recurrently emerged across the studies included family, health, work, friendship, and hobbies and sports (e.g., Arimoto & Kazama, 1997; COGJ, 1994, 1997; CRS, 2012; NHK/BCRI, 2004). People perceived *ikigai* through their leisure-like activities as frequently as, if not more frequently than, their work (e.g., CRS, 2012; Nishizako & Sakagami, 2004a; Takeshige, 1985). The studies of young adults often identified leisure-like activities as the most important source of *ikigai* for this age group (Fujiwara, 1972; Kamiya & Sudo, 1980; Kumazawa, 2007; Okamura et al., 1974; Tabei et al., 1982).

Some limitations of the reviewed studies should also be noted. First, virtually all employed a categorical scale (e.g., yes, no, or don't know) (e.g., COGJ, 1994; CRS, 2012; NHK/BCRI, 2004). As such, their findings were highly descriptive (e.g., frequency) rather than inferential, with Arimoto and Kazama's (1997) study being an exception. Conceptually, the ways *ikigai* items were phrased in these survey studies often did not distinguish *ikigai* perception from sources of *ikigai*. In addition, the use of single-item scales did not allow the researchers to examine the multifaceted nature of perceived *ikigai* or the complex relationships between sub-dimensions and different sources of *ikigai*. With regard to the studies of young adults, they often

utilized less rigorous sampling methods (i.e., convenient sampling) and relatively small sample sizes (e.g., only dozens in Kumazawa, 2007). Moreover, the use of broad categories, such as *yoka* and *rejaa* (e.g., Kumazawa, 2007; Takeshige, 1985), did not provide insight into what unique effect specific types of leisure activities might have on *ikigai* perception. It also remains unknown what aspects of leisure (e.g., frequency of activity participation, quality of experience, and perceived benefits) are important factors in predicting *ikigai* perception. Furthermore, a knowledge gap exists in terms of the extent to which leisure can statistically predict a greater level of *ikigai* perception. Also underexplored is whether the positive effects of leisure on *ikigai* remain significant after controlling for other sources of *ikigai* as well as demographic factors. Finally, the reviewed studies were largely atheoretical and, therefore, the underlying mechanisms of the relationship between leisure and *ikigai* remain largely unexplained.

#### **2.1.3.2 The influences of social and personal factors on *ikigai***

This subsection reviews previous studies that explored the effects of social and personal factors on *ikigai*. One important factor related to *ikigai* is age. NHK/BCRI (2004), for example, found that younger respondents were less likely to perceive *ikigai* than their older counterparts (e.g., 65% among 16 to 19 years old and 57% among 20 to 24 years old, vs. 78% among 70 years old and older). Similarly, Kumagai et al. (2008) ascertained that older male respondents (i.e., 60 years old or older) perceived a significantly higher level of *ikigai* compared to their young (i.e., 20 to 39 years old) and middle-aged (i.e., 40 to 59 years old) counterparts.

Some studies that have employed multi-item *ikigai* scales provide a more detailed picture of such age differences. For instance, Itagaki and Watanabe (2000) reported that young adults (i.e., 24 years old or younger) were less likely to perceive *ikigai* compared with older adults (i.e., 65 years old or above). Specifically, older adults were much more likely to feel “their life would



be worthy even if they died on that day” and “wish they could repeat the same life” than their younger counterparts. Young adults were also apt to “wonder why they were living at all” compared with their older counterparts. Using the *ikigai* awareness scale (Kumano, 2001, as cited in Kumano, 2012), Kumano (2008) observed significant age group differences in four of the five sub-dimensions: life affirmation, existential value, meaning in life, and commitment. Older adults reported higher scores in the four sub-dimensions than their middle-aged and college student counterparts. It is noteworthy that their scores did not significantly differ in terms of the dream and goal sub-dimension. Using the PIL scale (Sato, 1993), the PIL research team (1993) found that their adult respondents showed a higher overall score than student respondents. Compared to adults, college students tended to feel bored, purposeless or meaningless, irresponsible, lack of control in life, and less prepared for death. However, the students scored higher in “having goals and plans in the future” and “living an exciting life”.

Previous empirical studies also examined the effect of gender on *ikigai* perception. For example, Itagaki and Watanabe (2000) found that men reported a greater level of *ikigai* perception than women. Among their college student respondents, the PIL research team (1993) did not find a significant gender difference in the total scores, although there were some significant item-wise gender differences. Using the PIL scale (Sato, 1993), Oishi, Yasukawa, Nigorikawa, and Iida (2007) found that female college students reported a higher total score than male students. Conversely, two studies (Fukuda & Terasaki, 2009; Shibahara, 2010), where Kondo and Kamata’s (1998) *ikigai* perception scale was used, showed no significant gender difference between male and female college students.

In contrast to these inconclusive results in terms of *ikigai* perception, studies that examined gender’s effect on sources of *ikigai* have exhibited more consistent findings. For

example, Nishizako and Sakagami (2004b) discovered that female students were more likely to report “being with their significant others or friends” as their source of *ikigai* (45.0%) compared with their male counterparts (22.5%). On the other hand, male students were more likely to report “engagement in sports and hobbies” as their source of *ikigai* than female students. Consistently, Itagaki and Watanabe (2000) found that women were more likely to identify social support as a source of *ikigai* than men. Based on a random sample of 4,737 older workers in Osaka, Shirai et al. (2006) found that socioeconomic factors (e.g., income) and work related activities predicted men’s *ikigai* perception; in contrast, the presence of a spouse significantly predicted women’s *ikigai* perception. Arimoto and Kazama (1997) discerned that family as a source of *ikigai* predicted an increased level of *ikigai* perception among both men and women after controlling for other predictors (i.e., work, study, hobby, friends, and volunteer). However, work predicted a greater level of *ikigai* perception only for women.

Previous studies have also investigated the influence of personal factors on *ikigai* among young adults. Several studies examined the effects of interpersonal relationships. For example, Kumano (2008) found that, for college students, acceptance by others and interactions with others positively predicted their total *ikigai* score, whereas rejection from others negatively predicted this score. In another study of college students, Yamato and Kawamura (2007) discovered that being introverted and defensive negatively correlated with *ikigai* perception. Additionally, they discerned that being oneself and accepting others positively correlated with some *ikigai* perception sub-dimensions. Finally, Fukuda and Terasaki (2009) found a medium-size negative correlation between *taijin-kyofu-shyo* (i.e., a culture-specific interpersonal relation disorder) and the total *ikigai* score ( $r = -.55$ ) in a sample of students.

Another important personal factor is self-evaluation. For instance, Fukunaga and

Tagashira (2004) investigated how the gap between ideal and actual self predicted one's *ikigai* perception, using Kondo and Kamata's (1998) scale. They found that college students who had a smaller gap tended to have a higher level of *ikigai* perception than those with a larger gap. This pattern was more salient in terms of the sub-dimension of satisfaction with the current life compared to existential value and motivation. In another study of college students, Shibahara (2010) ascertained that *ikigai* perception was negatively correlated with a feeling of inferiority ( $r = -.49$ ), and correlated positively with a feeling of superiority ( $r = .51$ ). More specifically, inferiority in the personal talent domain negatively predicted *ikigai* perception whereas superiority in the social domain positively predicted the target outcome.

Yamashita (2011) explored a factor especially important for the college student population: anxiety related to employment. An analysis of data from college students that all three dimensions of employment anxiety (i.e., job hunting, work place, and work aptitude anxieties) were negatively correlated with total PIL scores.

In summary, the previous studies consistently showed that older people perceived a greater level of *ikigai* than young adults (e.g., Kumagai et al., 2008; NHK/BCRI, 2004). However, the studies with multi-dimensional scales suggested that young adults are better off in terms of the future-related aspect of *ikigai* (e.g., dream, goal) than older adults (Kumano, 2008; the PIL research team, 1993). Findings regarding the effects of gender on *ikigai* perception were inconclusive (e.g., Fukuda & Terasaki, 2009; Itagaki & Watanabe, 2000; Oishi et al., 2007). The research on sources of *ikigai* across gender groups indicated that: (a) men tended to find activities, such as hobbies and sports, to be their sources of *ikigai*; and (b) women tended to identify their relationships with family and friends as their sources of *ikigai* (e.g., Itagaki & Watanabe; Nishizako & Sakagami, 2004b). With regard to personal factors, interpersonal

relationship (e.g., Fukuda & Terasaki; Yamato & Kawamura, 2007) and self-evaluation (e.g., Fukunaga & Tagashira, 2004; Shibahara, 2010) were both found to be important predictors of *ikigai* perception for young adults.

## **2.2 The Well-Being Literature**

Some of *ikigai* theorists reviewed above have related *ikigai* with the Western notion of well-being, both in terms of similarities (e.g., Kamiya, 1966/1980; Kumano, 2012) and differences (Wada, 2001b). Thus, this section reviews the pertinent well-being literature. First, I review the literature on hedonic well-being (HWB). Second, I provide a brief review of an important debate concerning whether HWB is distinct from so-called eudaimonic well-being (EWB). Third, I review the emerging body of knowledge on EWB, focusing on several eminent theorists. Last, I also report on a few important insights from cultural psychology, as *ikigai* is deeply rooted in Japanese culture.

### **2.2.1 Theoretical frameworks in the hedonic well-being research**

This sub-section provides an overview of extant theoretical frameworks in the HWB research. This traditional line of research on well-being or subjective well-being (SWB; e.g., Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh et al., 1999; Pavot & Diener, 2013) has focused on an endpoint outcome (e.g., happiness) within the broader arena of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The first major theoretical contribution from the HWB research concerns the discovery of SWB's multidimensionality (e.g., Andrews & Withey, 1976; Veenhoven, 1984). Empirical studies found that positive and negative affect—the two affective aspects of SWB—were somewhat independently experienced (e.g., Bradburn, 1969; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Thus, once the cognitive aspect is included, there is now general consensus that SWB consists of

three main components, namely life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect (Diener, 1984) (i.e., the “tripartite theory”; Arthaud-Day, Rode, Mooney, & Near, 2005, p. 449). More recent research has also further divided the cognitive aspect into global life satisfaction and domain-specific life satisfaction (e.g., work, leisure, or family; Diener et al., 2004).

At the most general level, the HWB research can be divided into two major theoretical orientations: top-down and bottom-up (Pavot & Diener, 2013; Schimmack, 2008). The *top-down approach* holds that “some underlying process (or processes) tend(s) to predispose an individual to experiencing an overall affective tone that exerts a ubiquitous effect on the evaluation of life as a whole” (Pavot & Diener, 2013, p. 136). These underlying mechanisms include genes (e.g., Tellegen et al., 1988), personality traits (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1980), and cognitive dispositions (e.g., Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Recent biogenetic research has identified chromosomes that were correlated with a level of SWB (e.g., Baselmans et al., 2017; Okbay et al., 2016), as well as a potential genetic variation that correlate with SWB (e.g., De Neve, Christakis, Fowler, & Frey, 2012). Conversely, the *bottom-up approach*, according to Pavot and Diener, posits that “an individual’s overall experience of SWB represents a summation of the ongoing positive and negative events and emotions that the individual experiences on a moment-to-moment and day-to-day basis” (p. 136). Life events that can influence one’s level of SWB include negative events, such as unemployment, divorce, and bereavement (Lucas, 2005; Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2004), as well as positive events, such as marriage (Argyle & Martin, 1991).

There is an ongoing debate on which theoretical approach—top-down or bottom-up—better explains variation in SWB (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Headey, Veenhoven, & Wearing, 1991). Existing evidence appears inconsistent (see Lucas, 2004). For example, Heller, Watson, and Ilies’s (2004) meta-analysis did not provide support for an overall top-down model. However, it

did bolster a personality-based top-down model for predicting life satisfaction. A review by Schimmack (2008) found evidence for summative effects of changes in domain-specific satisfaction on global satisfaction, but not for top-down influences on global life satisfaction. However, the robust effects of personality traits on the affective aspect of SWB were confirmed.

The HWB literature has consistently discerned the temporal stability of individuals' levels of overall SWB indicators using a longitudinal design (e.g., Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996; Magnus, Diener, Fujita, & Pavot, 1993). This type of evidence favours the top-down approach over the bottom-up model. A conventional explanation for this stability was "*hedonic treadmill*" (Brickman & Campbell, 1971); this thesis holds that positive and negative impacts of life events on one's affective state diminish as time passes, so one's SWB level returns to his or her affective "neutral" point. However, this traditional theory contradicts the finding that national averages of overall SWB scores for most countries were beyond the centre of given scales (Diener & Diener, 1996). More critically, past studies also revealed persistent differences in both cognitive and affective SWB levels across individuals and nations (Diener, Kahneman, & Helliwell, 2010; Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006). Hence, the hedonic treadmill theory has been replaced by the "*set-point*" theory (Headey, 2008), which posits that individuals have their own set-point for SWB that is not necessarily the neutral point, and is largely determined by their personality traits. However, evidence is still conflicting in that some individuals have a more stable set-point than others (Headey, 2008; Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2003).

Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005) proposed that genetic and circumstantial factors explain approximately 50% and 10% of variance of one's happiness, respectively. They also argued that the remaining 40% can be actively pursued through happiness-enhancing intentional activities, such as exercising. However, some evidence suggests genetics may explain

less than 50% of the variance (Headey, 2008). Recent genetic research suggests that the role of genetics is around 33% and this figure is about variance *across* individuals, not within a single person (De Neve et al., 2012). Moreover, by studying epigenome or the interaction between genome and environment, we are reminded that variance explained by genetics is not fixed (e.g., Baselmans et al., 2017). Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) further maintained that effects of intentional activities on happiness are not transient, but rather sustainable. This assertion has garnered some empirical support (Henricksen & Stephens, 2013; Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Indeed, a few meta-analyses of past positive psychology interventions, involving activities like meditation, journaling, and expressing gratitude, identified small, yet significant effects over time (e.g., Bolier et al., 2013; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). These findings align with the bottom-up approach.

When it comes to specific theories with the bottom-up approach, there are several alternatives. One of them is what Diener and Ryan (2009) called *telic theory*. This theory holds that “individuals achieve happiness when a certain end-point, such as a goal or need, is reached” (p. 394). Under this broad category, two theoretically distinct end points exist: needs and goals. The first group of need-focused telic theories, or *need gratification* theory, assumes that people perceive a higher level of life satisfaction when their psychological needs are satisfied. A sub-theory of self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) called *basic psychological needs theory* (BPNT) posits that satisfaction of the three fundamental needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) through autonomously regulated behaviour improves SWB. However, research on the relationship between SDT and SWB has recently shifted toward EWB, not HWB, as reviewed below (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan et al., 2008).

In contrast to need gratification theories that tend to assume universal needs (e.g., Ryan &

Deci, 2000), goal-related telic theory, like *personal strivings* (Emmons, 1986), concern contextual and learned goals. This group of theories acknowledges the importance of not only goal achievements per se, but also cognitive processes involved in personal strivings, such as an increase in the perceived importance of a given goal pursuit.

Another collection of theories focuses on individuals' cognitive comparisons of their states and situations with different reference points, which in turn affects their perception of SWB. For example, *social comparison theory* holds that individuals use other people as a reference point (e.g., Carp & Carp, 1982; Michalos, 1980). If they assess that their situations are better off than others', they perceive a higher level of SWB, or vice versa. *Adaptation theory* (Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978) predicates that people compare their current situations with their past, and if they perceive the former is better than the latter, they perceive a higher level of SWB. These comparison-related theories using different reference points have been integrated into *Multiple Discrepancy Theory* (Michalos, 1985). This theory proposes that "people compare their present state or situation to multiple standards, such as past experiences, aspirations, other people, or some other benchmarks" (Pavot & Diener, 2013, p. 138).

Another stream of theories in the HWB research specifically focuses on the interpersonal aspect of well-being pursuit. One widely used concept is social support (Lakey, 2013). Social support is both emotional and instrumental support that is often given by one's family, significant others, and friends. Although enacted support is generally unrelated to SWB (Lakey & Cohen, 2000), perceived social support, or the belief that one can obtain support if he or she is in need, is correlated to both cognitive and affective aspects of SWB at the  $r = .20$  to  $.40$  level by college students (e.g., Diener & Fujita, 1995; Lakey, Tardiff, & Drew, 1994; Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005). In terms of *how* social support enhances SWB, the *stress buffer* model has been popular,



which states that enacted support lessens the negative effect of distress of support recipient's well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Empirically, this model lacks in consistent support (e.g., Lakey & Cronin, 2008), while theoretically it is the mitigation of ill-being appears a weak logical explanation for well-being.

A new theoretical framework to explain the relationship between social support and SWB is *relational regulation theory* (RRT; Lakey & Orehek, 2011). It hypothesizes that people pursue well-being through “ordinary, yet affectively consequential conversation and shared activities” (Lakey, 2013, p. 853). As sources of positive affect, RRT identifies “specific other people, activities (e.g., work, sport), ideas (e.g., music, religion), things (e.g., cars, cloths), and animals (e.g., dog, cats)” (Lakey, 2013, p. 854). It is apparent that many of these sources of happiness are congruent with what we call leisure. There is emerging evidence that the relationship between perceived social support and positive affect is explained by ordinary conversations and shared activities (e.g., Lakey, Vander Molen, Fles, & Andrews, 2016; Woods, Lakey, & Sain, 2016). In spite of its potential, RRT appears to be focused on the affective aspect of SWB, which leaves the relationship between social life and HWB under-explained.

Another important theory related to interpersonal aspect of SWB is *capitalization*, or the process through which people share their positive life events with others (Gable & Reis, 2010). Doing so amplifies the positive effect of positive life events—above and beyond their original impacts—both affectively and cognitively. Capitalization has been found to positively correlate with positive affect and life satisfaction (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004), happiness (Demir, Doğan, & Procsal, 2013), and increased intimacy among dyads (Otto, Laurenceau, Siegel, & Belcher, 2015).

So far, we have reviewed the theories concerning personal and interpersonal factors

within the broader bottom-up framework. Additionally, there are two influential theories that are based on positive emotions, part of HWB in itself. The first is Fredrickson's (2001, 2013) *broaden-and-build theory*. The theory holds that "certain discrete positive emotions—including joy, interest, contentment, pride, and love... all share the ability to broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources, to social and psychological resources" (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 219). As such, experiencing positive emotions lead to further positive thoughts and behaviours. This theory addresses a pitfall of telic theories (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Emmons, 1986), namely, what happens after one's needs are met or goals are achieved? Moreover, Fredrickson's focus on positive emotions is pertinent to leisure given the established relationship between leisure and positive affect (e.g., Hills & Argyle, 1998; Mitas, Qian, Yarnal, & Kerstetter, 2011). Thus, the broaden-and-build theory provides an explanation for an upward spiral-like phenomenon where individuals do not cease activities that satisfied their basic needs or helped them accomplish their goals, but rather continue to pursue them. Such activities produce positive emotions that broaden their thought-action repertoires, build their personal resources, and lead to an even higher level of SWB.

The other important theory is Bryant and Veroff's (2007) *savouring*. This is a cognitive and/or experiential process in which individuals prolong and intensify positive experiences or shift gears to such a process. According to the researchers, 10 common types of processes to facilitate (or impede) savouring include: (a) sharing with others, (b) memory building, (c) self-congratulation, (d) comparing, (e) sensory-perceptual sharpening, (f) absorption, (g) behavioural expression, (h) temporal awareness, (i) counting blessings, and (j) kill-joy thinking. This theory appears highly pertinent to leisure because one of three conditions for savouring is "freedom

from social and esteem needs” (Bryant & Veroff, 2007, p. 13). It makes an intuitive sense that some savouring processes (e.g., sharing pleasant experiences with friends) are likely to occur during leisure time when one is relatively free from his or her obligations. This theory can greatly expand leisure’s potential to influence SWB because leisure time and activity can serve as opportunities to savour positive experiences that occurred (or will occur) in non-leisure domains (e.g., work).

In summary, the HWB research has produced many theories regarding why people have different levels of affective and cognitive well-being (Pavot & Diener, 2013). Although a fair amount of variance is explained by genetics (e.g., Tellegen et al., 1988) and personality traits (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1980), there remains considerable room for intentional activities to also influence HWB (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). The latter mechanism seems more relevant to my dissertation, as leisure is a life domain where we can engage in such activities to boost our happiness. The reviewed theories identify both personal factors (e.g., needs satisfaction and goal strivings; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Emmons, 1986) and interpersonal factors (e.g., social support and capitalization; Gable & Reis, 2010; Lakey, 2013). Moreover, positive emotions and what we do with them appear to make a difference in HWB (e.g., Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Fredrickson, 2001). As indicated above, each of these theories has its relevance to leisure.

### **2.2.2 Is hedonic well-being distinct of eudaimonic well-being?**

Before reviewing theories in the eudaimonic well-being research, it is first necessary to address whether HWB and EWB are in fact discrete. Proponents of EWB have argued, mostly from a theoretical perspective, that these two states are distinct of each other (e.g., Delle Fave & Bassi, 2009; Keyes & Annas, 2009; Ryan & Huta, 2009; Waterman, 2008). Opponents have capitalized on empirical findings that report indicators of HWB and EWB are highly correlated

with each other especially when latent variables are used and unique variance are taken into account (e.g., Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & King, 2009; Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008).

With regard to the latter perspective, for example, Keyes, Shmotkin, and Ryff (2002) found a correlation of .84 between the tripartite model of HWB or SWB (Diener, 1984) and psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989a, b) among a nationally representative sample of middle-aged adults. In the same population, Gallagher, Lopez, and Preacher (2009) identified a correlation of .78 between the same variables. These researchers also reported a correlation of .92 among American college students. Linley, Maltby, Wood, Osborne, and Hurling (2009) replicated a correlation of .76 among adults in the U.K. Using a different scale of the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (Lamers, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, ten Klooster, & Keyes, 2011), Fredrickson et al. (2013) discerned a correlation of .79 between weekly hedonic and eudaimonic states. Recently, within a sample of 7,617 people from 109 countries, Disabato, Goodman, Kashdan, Short, and Jarden (2016) discovered a correlation of .96 between the tripartite model of HWB and psychological well-being.

Regardless of this mounting evidence *against* EWB advocates, there are two important arguments presented to support the importance in distinguishing EWB from HWB. First, conceptually, Huta and Waterman (2014) noted that hedonia and eudaimonia have been operationalized at different levels by different eudaimonic scholars. These different levels involve *orientation* (i.e., “orientations, values, motives, and goals” or “the ‘why’ of behavior”), *behaviours* (i.e., “behavioral content and activity characteristics” or “the ‘what’ of behavior”), *experiences* (i.e., “subjective experiences, emotions, and cognitive appraisals”), and *functioning* (i.e., “indices of positive psychological functioning, mental health, and flourishing”) (p. 1431). In their review, the correlation between eudaimonia and hedonia ranged from -.30 to .80

depending on which level of operationalization, and measurement, was used. Specifically, the high correlation ( $r = .50$  to  $.80$ ) is limited to the experience-based definitions and measures.

Even defining and measuring well-being at the experience level, the said studies may have overestimated the correlation between EWB and HWB due to the statistical approach they adopted: confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In the CFA paradigm, each measurement item is assigned on one latent factor unless cross-loadings are theoretically suggested and modelled. As such, CFA restricts most cross-loadings, if not all, to zero, which is highly unlikely in empirical, social sciences (Marsh, Morin, Parker, & Kaur, 2014). In so doing, all correlations between items across latent variables are expressed through the latent correlations and lead to their overestimation. Joshanloo (2016) used an alternative approach—exploratory structural equation modeling (ESEM)—to re-examine the correlation between the tripartite model of HWB and psychological well-being with the same sample as Gallagher et al.'s (2009). Joshanloo discovered two subscales of psychological well-being (i.e., environmental mastery and self-acceptance) had substantive cross-loadings with HWB (.56 and .48, respectively). The latent correlation of .82 within the CFA context was reduced to .60, using ESEM. This leaves 64 percent of the total variance in HWB and EWB unexplained by the correlation. Attenuated latent correlations between HWB and EWB have been replicated in many large-scale samples, including Iranians, Spanish, Dutch, Italians, Serbians, and New Zealanders (Joshanloo, Bobowik, & Basabe, 2016; Joshanloo, Capone, Petrillo, & Caso, 2017; Joshanloo, Jose, & Kielpikowski, in press; Joshanloo, & Jovanović, in press; Joshanloo, & Lamers, 2016; Joshanloo, & Niknam, in press). Thus, it strongly suggests that EWB and HWB are indeed distinct constructs.

Clearly, the debate regarding whether HWB and EWB are distinct is ongoing and new evidence continues to emerge. However, my review suggests that there are both conceptual and

empirical grounds (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Joshanloo, 2016) to assume that EWB is sufficiently discrete. Moreover, as *ikigai* theorists conceptualized the experience of *ikigai* as more eudaimonic than hedonic (e.g., Kamiya, 1966/1980; Kumano, 2012) and there is preliminary evidence to support this (Kumano, in press), I now turn to the EWB literature and several key theorists.

### **2.2.3 Theoretical frameworks in the eudaimonic well-being research**

Recently, the four-dimensional SWB structure (i.e., global satisfaction, domain-specific satisfaction, and positive and negative affect) has been challenged by so-called “eudaimonist” researchers (Huta & Waterman, 2014). This group has proposed various alternative well-being outcome constructs, such as vitality (Ryan & Frederick, 1997), personal expressiveness (Waterman, 1993b), meaning in life (Steger, 2009), and psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989b). Huta and Waterman (2014) conducted a comprehensive review of research projects within the broader eudaimonia literature. The following review, as such, focuses on three major researchers whose research provides theoretical insight into *mechanisms* through which people pursue eudaimonic well-being or EWB. This includes: Alan Waterman, Richard Ryan and colleagues, Martin Seligman, Roy Baumeister, and Jack Bauer and associates.

#### **Alan S. Waterman**

Alan Waterman was arguably one of the first researchers who seriously studied the concept of eudaimonia in contemporary psychology (Waterman, 1981). Based on contemporary philosophers’ work (e.g., Norton, 1976), Waterman (2008) defined eudaimonia as “a consequence of ‘living in truth to one’s daimon’ or ‘true self’” (pp. 235-236). Waterman and colleagues called the state in which people act to explore their best potentials and use these potentials to live a purposeful life as personal expressiveness (Waterman, 1993b; Waterman,

Schwartz, & Conti, 2008; Waterman et al., 2010). It should be noted that according to Huta and Waterman's (2014) typology of EWB research, personal expressiveness falls under the experience category. Waterman (1993a) argued that individuals pursue EWB via self-realization, which requires one to identify his or her full potentialities and make efforts to achieve them. More specifically, Waterman (1993b) theorized that EWB can be achieved through activities where individuals can perceive (a) a high level of engagement, (b) a high level of identification, (c) an intense feeling of being alive, (d) a strong sense of fulfillment, (e) a sense of mission, and (f) a feeling of being an authentic self.

One of unique theoretical contributions Waterman has made is related to his explicitness about his philosophical understanding of eudaimonia, whereas other eudaimonist researchers tend to merely cite Aristotle's classic work. The latter practice was critiqued by Kashdan et al. (2008). Waterman (2008) has identified four points where his theory of eudaimonia deviates from Aristotle's view. First, Waterman clarified that his project is focused on subjective (psychological) experiences as an outcome of eudaimonic living (i.e., personal expressiveness), whereas Aristotle viewed a eudaimonic life as the "objectively" or universally good way of living. Second, although Aristotle argued that one's eudaimonia can be evaluated only after his or her death, Waterman's theory concerns a state of eudaimonia at a given moment in one's life. One can be aware of how personally expressive he or she is, and adjust his or her conduct. Third, whereas Aristotle strictly held that eudaimonia could only be achieved through contemplation, Waterman maintained that other pathways were possible, including both behavioural and cognitive efforts to develop one's personal skills and talents. Fourth, although Aristotle assumed that non-slave adult males could pursue eudaimonia in the context of ancient Greek poleis, Waterman extended this to individuals of all genders and classes, and at any life stage.

Waterman (2008) conceptually differentiated EWB from HWB as follows: “[w]hereas hedonia will arise from getting those things a person wants from *any* source, eudaimonia will be experienced only in connection with a limited set of specific sources, such as activities associated with self-realization and expressions of virtue” (p. 237, emphasis in original). In other words, Waterman argued that eudaimonia is *source-specific* well-being, which parallels the theoretical linkage between *ikigai* perception and sources of *ikigai* (e.g., Kamiya, 2004; Kumano, 2012). Furthermore, Waterman contended that “eudaimonia is a sufficient, but not a necessary, condition for hedonic happiness; there will be many activities that give rise to hedonia but not eudaimonia” (p. 237). This means that whereas eudaimonic living entails hedonic happiness (e.g., pleasant emotions), hedonic living does not guarantee eudaimonic outcomes (e.g., personal expressiveness). Thus, for Waterman, it is theoretically unlikely for one to experience a EWB component but not a HWB element from a certain activity. Waterman (1993b) empirically supported this thesis.

### **Richard M. Ryan and Colleagues**

Richard Ryan and his colleagues (Ryan, Curren, & Deci, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan et al., 2008) employed self-determination theory (SDT) to theorize eudaimonia. Ryan et al. (2008) conceptualized eudaimonia as “a way of living that is focused on what is *intrinsically worthwhile* to human beings” (p. 123, emphasis added). As such, this view of eudaimonia is in the behaviour category of Huta and Waterman’s (2014) typology. By “intrinsically worthwhile”, Ryan and colleagues (2008) referred to first-order values that (a) are “not reducible to other values” and (b) do “not exist for the sake of another value” (p. 148). Thus, human actions can be divided into two types: intrinsic aspirations based on first-order values *or* extrinsic aspirations without an inherent value and for the sake of something else (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, 1993). For



example, Kasser and Ryan (1996) found that financial success, attractive appearance, and social recognition (extrinsic aspirations) co-varied together, while self-acceptance, affiliation, community contribution, and physical health (intrinsic aspirations) co-varied together.

Evidence exists that people who emphasize intrinsic aspirations over extrinsic ones are more likely to perceive a higher level of well-being and better functioning across life domains (e.g., Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci, 2009; Sebire, Standage, & Vansteenkiste, 2009). For instance, Kasser and Ryan (1996) found that intrinsic aspirations predicted a higher level of subjective vitality and self-actualization and a lower level of physical symptoms and depression. Evidence further suggests either no positive relationship between extrinsic aspirations and well-being/functioning (Kasser & Ryan, 2001; Ryan et al., 1999), or even a negative relationship (Niemiec et al., 2009; van Hiel & Vansteenkiste, 2009). SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) explains the different effects of intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations on well-being by referring to satisfaction of three basic needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It is when people strive for and achieve intrinsic goals that they can strongly satisfy the three basic needs. In a longitudinal study, Niemiec et al. empirically supported this mediational role of basic needs satisfaction within the relationship between intrinsic aspiration achievements and improved well-being.

From the SDT perspective, Ryan et al. (2008) maintained that effects of goal achievements on well-being depend *not only on* the contents, or “what”, of goals, *but also* on the extent to which one’s behaviour is autonomously regulated, or “why” behind actions. According to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000), the degree to which one’s behaviour is autonomously regulated or self-determined ranges from *external* (i.e., the least autonomous), to *introjected*, to *identified*, to *integrated*, and to *intrinsic* (i.e., the most autonomous). This continuum of

behavioural regulation has been empirically supported (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vallerand, 1997). Evidence indicates that the more autonomously regulated one's goal pursuits and achievements are, the more likely they lead to a higher level of well-being (e.g., Chirkov & Ryan, 2001; Hayamizu, 1997; Nix, Ryan, Manly, & Deci, 1999).

Recently, Ryan et al. (2013) proposed that mindfulness—"receptive attention to present experience" (p. 68)—was an important mediator of the relationship among intrinsically motivated behaviour, autonomy satisfaction, and enhanced well-being. This proposition was based on empirical findings that (a) mindfulness co-varied with autonomy as well as well-being indicators (Brown & Ryan, 2003), and (b) mindful people tended to emphasize intrinsic aspirations over extrinsic ones (Brown & Kasser, 2005). Ryan et al. (2008) argued that "[o]ne cannot be following one's true self and not be autonomous" and "nor can one be eudaimonic and unreflexive" (p. 158). Thus, Ryan and colleagues believed that eudaimonic living requires us to exercise both of our mindfulness to present experiences and retrospective reflections upon meaning and value of our lives.

Lastly, Ryan and colleagues have made a series of theoretically important observations concerning the relationship between hedonia and eudaimonia. First, as per Waterman (1993b, 2008), Ryan noted that people who actively pursue eudaimonic livings do not only experience EWB outcomes, such as vitality and meaning in life, but also HWB outcomes, such as pleasure and relaxation (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan et al., 2008). Second, congruent with Waterman (2008), Ryan and Deci called for an investigation into the effects of different *sources* of well-being on different states of well-being: namely, HWB and EWB. Ryan and Deci further maintained that "well-being is probably best conceived as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes aspects of both the hedonic and eudaimonic conceptions of well-being" (p. 148). This

assertion was based on factor analyses of multiple well-being indicators (Compton, Smith, Cornish, & Qualls, 1996; McGregor & Little, 1998) as well as inductive examination of lay views of a good life (King & Napa, 1998). As such, Ryan and associates believed that HWB and EWB are distinctive, yet related aspects of overall well-being, and that these different well-being states are related to distinct sources of well-being.

### **Martin Seligman**

One of the most influential figures in the well-being research, as well as the broader field of positive psychology, is Martin Seligman (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). As his research focus shifted from learned helplessness (Seligman, 1972) to learned optimism (Seligman, 2011), the heart of Seligman's research and well-being theory became centred on the concept of human character. Seligman and colleagues developed a classification scheme called the Values in Action (VIA; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) that identified the following virtuous traits: wisdom (e.g., creativity, curiosity, judgment, perspective), courage (e.g., bravery, honesty, zest, perseverance), humanity (e.g., love, kindness), justice (e.g., fairness, leadership), temperance (e.g., forgiveness, humility, prudence), and transcendence (e.g., gratitude, hope, humour) (Niemiec, 2013). In the VIA framework, character strengths are conceptualized as “substantially stable, universal personality traits that manifest through thinking (cognition), feeling (affect), willing (conation or volition), and action (behavior)”; they are also “morally valued and are beneficial to oneself and others” (Niemiec, 2013, p. 13).

The VIA inventory has been used in many countries and different demographic groups. Findings suggest that despite some level of difference in priority, these characters and strengths are common across these social boundaries (e.g., Linley et al., 2007; Park & Peterson, 2006;

Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006). Given my focus is on the Japanese college student population and *ikigai*, Shimai, Otake, Park, Peterson, and Seligman's (2006) cross-cultural study of young adults between the U.S. and Japan is of particular relevance. Among Japanese young adults, strongly correlated with happiness were: gratitude, curiosity, hope, and zest.

In an earlier monograph on his comprehensive view of well-being or *authentic happiness*, Seligman (2002) identified three mechanisms through which this state can be reached: pleasure, engagement, and meaning (see also Seligman, 2011, p. 11). In line with the HWB research, by pleasure Seligman meant the pursuit of positive emotions, as well as avoidance of negative emotions. He equated engagement with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow, or the optimal experience in which one goes through complete absorption into an activity and feels a distorted sense of time. In terms of meaning, Seligman appears to construe it as the belonging and connection to things that one believes are larger than self. Peterson, Ruch, Beermann, Oark, and Seligman (2007) empirically explored the relationship between the VIA characters and the three pathways to authentic happiness. The correlations between the VIA characters and pleasure were relatively small to minimal in their size (i.e.,  $r = .36$  with humour as the largest). In contrast, medium-size correlations (i.e.,  $r = .40$  or larger) were found between: engagement and zest, curiosity, hope, perseverance, and bravery; as well as meaning and religiousness, gratitude, hope, zest, curiosity, perseverance, love, bravery, and leadership.

In his later book on *flourishing*, Seligman (2011) revealed the entirety of his revised theory of well-being. In this revised view, Seligman distanced his ideas from the HWB research by noting that one of major inadequacies of the earlier authentic happiness theory resided in its focus on life satisfaction as the ultimate goal. Doing so, however, over-emphasized the role of pleasure as momentary mood impacts people's responses to life satisfaction measures (see Oishi,

2009). In his theory, Seligman deemed flourishing as the central target of well-being research, as well as positive psychology overall. By flourishing, Seligman appeared to draw on Huppert and So's (2013) framework: To flourish, one must achieve all three of positive emotions, engagement/interest, and meaning/purpose, as well as three out of six additional features: self-esteem, optimism, resilience, vitality, self-determination, and positive relationships.

In addition, Seligman (2011) adds two more pathways to the existing three: positive relationships and achievement. As such, he called his new model PERMA (i.e., positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement). Recently, measures of these distinctive mechanisms have been developed and tested (e.g., Butler & Kern, 2016; Kern, Waters, Adler, & White, 2015).

Regardless of the comprehensiveness of the PERMA model, the above review reveals one apparent, important problem with Seligman's theory (2002, 2011). That is, Seligman (2011) still confounds the mechanisms through which one pursues well-being with the consequences of doing so. Thus, it remains unclear whether PERMA represents the former or the latter.

### **Roy Baumeister**

Within the broader EWB area, Roy Baumeister (Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002) has extensively discussed meaning in life. For Baumeister and Vohs, "[t]he essence of meaning is connection" (p. 608) and "meaning of life is therefore an imposition of a stable conception onto a changing biological process" (p. 609). They theorized that human beings desire stability in an ever-changing life and that meaning-making is a process by which they achieve it. Baumeister and Vohs further identified two different levels of meaning: low and high. Low levels of meanings are concrete and immediate, whereas high levels of meanings are abstract and long-term. For example, a daily work-out can serve as a means to vent distress at a

low level of meaning, while it can be part of one's long-term pursuit for better physical health and accomplishment at a high level of meaning. These researchers described a phenomenon called "shifting down and up" in which people transfer their focus from one level of meaning to the other. Baumeister and Vohs held that people "shift down" and concentrate on the low level of meanings when they face difficulties, which can facilitate problem-solving. When not facing any difficulties, people tend to "shift up" and look at the high level of meanings, which can lead to positive affect and life satisfaction.

Baumeister (1991) maintained that it is necessary to satisfy four needs to achieve meaning in life: purpose, value, efficacy, and self-worth. First, the need for *purpose* is to "see one's activities as oriented toward purpose" and "to interpret one's current activities in relation to future" (p. 32). He further differentiated intrinsic purposes, or fulfillments, from extrinsic purposes, or goals, which appears congruent with Ryan et al.'s (2008) discussion around first-order aspirations. Second, the need for *value* "refers to people's motivation to feel that their actions are right and good and justifiable" (Baumeister, 1991, p. 36). Here, Baumeister focused on value bases that are "capable of justifying other things without needing further justification itself" (p. 40). Again, this appears to parallel Ryan et al.'s concept of first-order values. Third, the need for *efficacy* concerns a belief that one "ha[s] some control over events" in his or her life and a feeling that "one is making difference" to achieve goals and realize values (p. 41). Fourth, the need for *self-worth* involves "some claim on respect—both self-respect and the respect of others" (p. 44).

Baumeister and Vohs (2002) maintained that the more of these needs people satisfy, the more likely they perceive their lives as meaningful. Moreover, they contended that "people's lives usually draw meaning from *multiple sources*, including family and love, work, religion, and

various personal projects” (p. 611, emphasis added). This observation of *sources* of well-being appears congruent with both other eudaimonist theorists (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 2008) and *ikigai* theorists (e.g., Kamiya, 2004; Kumano, 2012). Furthermore, Baumeister and Vohs identified two benefits of having diverse sources for satisfying one’s needs: It (a) makes individuals more resistant to and resilient from meaninglessness and (b) reduces pressure on each source to meet all four needs.

Baumeister and Vohs (2002) proposed that it was relatively easy to satisfy three of the four needs in modern Western societies: the needs for purpose, efficacy, and self-worth. For example, a career in a modern corporation provides a worker with a series of new purposes, although they may not be intrinsic fulfillments. Similarly, in terms of efficacy and self-worth, Baumeister and Vohs named various contemporary pursuits that allow people to satisfy these needs, including work, family, hobbies, and volunteering. On the other hand, it may be difficult to satisfy the need for value in a modern society where there is no consensus about values. This problem is referred to as “the value gap—a severe shortage of firm bases for distinguishing right from wrong, for justifying and legitimizing actions, and for guiding individual moral choices” (Baumeister, 1991, p. 365). A similar issue has been noted by some *ikigai* theorists as well (e.g., Mathews, 1996; Wada, 2001b).

Baumeister and Vohs (2002) further stated that, in regard to the relationships between happiness (HWB) and meaning in life, “meaning is necessary but not sufficient for happiness” (p. 612). Thus, “[m]eaning is a pre-requisite for happiness, but there also are other necessary ingredients” (p. 612). Unlike Waterman’s (1993b, 2008) and Ryan et al.’s (2008) contentions about the relationship between eudaimonia and hedonia, Baumeister and Vohs believed that while meaning of life *could* lead to happiness, it is *not* a sufficient condition for happiness.

## Jack Bauer and Colleagues

Jack Bauer and his colleagues added an important dimension to the theoretical discussion on EWB: time and development. In part this is important because of the fact “that eudaimonia develops is hardly debated” (Bauer, 2016, p. 147); and that such development over time is also often noted in the *ikigai* literature (e.g., Kumano, 2012; Mori, 2001). Bauer and colleagues have investigated how EWB grows over time by using the concept called eudaimonic growth, or “the humanistic development of personhood, focusing on the cultivation of qualities such as wisdom, virtue, love, and non-egoistic meaningfulness” (Bauer, Park, Montoya, & Wayment, 2015, p. 187). Clearly, this list of eudaimonic qualities mirrors the characters and strengths represented in the VIA inventory (Niemiec, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). However, Bauer’s (2016) emphasis is concerned with the facts that (a) these characters are nurtured over time, and (b) the nurturing process takes time. As such, not taking time into account oversimplifies the pursuit of EWB.

Bauer and his associates have conducted a series of studies and identified some dimensions of eudaimonic growth (Bauer, 2016). For example, Bauer and McAdams (2010) separated intellectual growth goals from socioemotional growth goals. The former places an emphasis on “the importance of heightening one’s knowledge ..., pursuing conceptual exploration and learning, and understanding the self and others better” (p. 762). In contrast, the latter involves “a deepening of life experiences, greater vitality ..., building personally meaningful skills, cultivating personally meaningful relationships, and making contributions to society and future generations” (pp. 762-763). Socioemotional-growth goals were positively correlated to HWB measures among college students; these goals predicted HWB in three years much better than HWB at the moment. Intellectual growth goals, on the contrary, correlated



positively to ego development, meaning that those with this type of growth goals were better at perspective taking and less defensive.

Bauer et al. (2015) distinguished *experiential* growth motivation, or “motives for a general, diffuse sense of personally meaningful growth”, from *reflective* growth motivation, or the urge to develop “characteristics like wisdom and psychosocial maturity” (p. 187). Thus, the former is general betterment of oneself while the latter is more specifically eudaimonic.

Although at the zero-order level both types of growth motivation were positively correlated to HWB and EWB measures (i.e., SWLS and psychological well-being, respectively), the effect of reflective growth motivation became non-significant in the multiple regression context.

However, reflective growth motive positively predicted generativity (i.e., concerns about and fostering of future generation’s well-being) and self-actualization along with experiential growth motive.

Although focusing on EWB development over time, Bauer and colleagues have also used a unique methodology: narrative-based research. For instance, Bauer, McAdams, and Sakaeda (2005) analyzed autobiographical data on high, low, and turning points in life. They focused on two types of memory themes: integrated and intrinsic. The former concerned “learning, integrating, or otherwise coming to a new or deeper understanding about the self or others”; the latter involved “personal growth, meaningful relationships, and contributing to society” (p. 207). Intrinsic memories across the time points were positively related to both HWB and EWB measures more strongly than integrated memories. The latter type of memories was more strongly associated with ego development than the former. Within similar autobiographical data, Bauer, Schwab, and McAdams (2011) discovered that those who narrative their life stories with the optimal growth theme—both intellectual and experiential growth goals—were more likely to

score higher on ego development and to report a higher level of EWB.

In summary, the reviewed eudaimonist theorists have challenged the conventional, hedonic way in which well-being had been conceptualized and expanded the idea of what well-being feels like (e.g., Seligman, 2011; Waterman et al., 2010). They have also identified distinct mechanisms through which people pursue this broader state of well-being (e.g., Baumeister, 1991; Ryan et al., 2008). This focus on the pursuit of well-being, eudaimonia in the context of EWB, appears analogous to the discussion on processes to *ikigai* (e.g., Kumano, 2012; Mathews, 1996). Also similar is how both EWB and *ikigai* scholars have focused on the concept of sources of well-being (e.g., Kamiya, 2004; Waterman, 2008). Moreover, eudaimonist theorists have explored the temporal dimension of well-being development (e.g., Bauer, 2016; Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013). As such, this review adds supports to the contention that *ikigai* is different from HWB (e.g., Mori, 2001b) and that it is closer to EWB (e.g., Kamiya, 2004; Kumano, 2012, in press).

#### **2.2.4 Implications to SWB research from cultural perspectives**

Given the Japanese context of this dissertation, this section of my literature review garners insights from cross-cultural and non-Western studies on SWB. Relevant theoretical implications are categorized into two major topics: (a) a mixture of positivity and negativity in happiness and (b) independent and interdependent aspects of happiness.

##### **2.2.4.1 Mixture of positivity and negativity in happiness**

Previous cross-cultural studies found that although the correlation between positive and negative affect was *negative* if at all significant among North Americans, this association was weaker or even positive among East Asians including Japanese (e.g., Bagozzi, Wong, & Yi, 1999; Schimmack, Oishi, & Diener, 2002). This cultural difference was replicated in an

experience sampling method (ESM) study conducted by Scollon, Diener, Oishi, and Biswas-Diener (2005) at the between-individual level, although the correlation was negative across cultures at the within-individual level. Another cultural difference in affective experiences concerns the phenomenon called the co-occurrence of positive and negative affect (e.g., Leu, Wang, & Koo, 2011; Miyamoto, Uchida, & Ellsworth, 2010). Both North Americans and East Asians experience a mixture of positive and negative affect in negative situations; however, East Asians were more likely to perceive mixed feelings in positive situations.

One explanation for these cultural differences is dialecticism (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). From a Chinese, Taoist perspective, Peng, Spencer-Rodgers, and Nian (2006) observed that dialecticism is characterized by its emphasis on three principles: (a) change (i.e., a belief that things are constantly changing), (b) contradiction (i.e., acceptance of seemingly contrasting things), and (c) holism (i.e., a worldview that all things are related to one another and a harmony among them is the key).

For example, Ji, Nisbett, and Su (2001) found that Chinese students, compared with their American counterparts, tended to choose nonlinear graphs over linear graphs to represent how their happiness level would shift along their life span. This evidence corroborates with the first dialectic principle of change and indicates that East Asians tend to believe well-being too constantly changes. In their study of lay conceptualization of happiness, Uchida and Kitayama (2009) discovered that Japanese students were more likely to associate negative consequences (e.g., making others jealous, deviating one's attention to surroundings) with their views of happiness than their American counterparts. This finding suggests that these Japanese students applied the second principle of dialecticism—contradiction—to their lay theory of well-being, which led them to see the negative sides of positivity. Nisbett, Peng, Choi, and Norenzayan

(2001) maintained that East Asians are apt to adopt holistic cognitive patterns (e.g., experiential knowledge, tolerance for contradictions) while North Americans are inclined to have analytic cognitive patterns (e.g., formal logic, negation of contradictions). This theoretical claim is consistent with the positive correlation between the two opposing affective tones (e.g., Schimmack et al., 2002; Scollon et al., 2005) and the prevalence of mixed emotions among East Asians (e.g., Leu et al., 2011; Miyamoto et al., 2010).

Although the above studies were limited to HWB, it is possible that similar cultural differences, based on the principles of dialecticism, also influence experiences and conceptualization of eudaimonic well-being, including *ikigai*.

#### **2.2.4.2 Independent and interdependent views of happiness**

Self-construal is another potential factor that can influence how Japanese people experience SWB in a culturally unique fashion (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Uchida, Norasakkunkit, & Kitayama, 2004). According to Markus and Kitayama (1991, 2010), self-construal is how one views himself or herself in relation to others. Two major types of self-construal exist: (a) independent and (b) interdependent. North Americans tend to have an independent self-construal, which leads them to seek uniqueness, assertiveness and expressiveness, and promote their own goals. In contrast, East Asians including Japanese are likely to adopt an interdependent self-construal, which predisposes them to fit in a social group, restrain the self, and promote collective goals. Similarly, Triandis (1995) developed the concepts of individualism and collectivism that are analogous to independent and interdependent self-construal, respectively. It is possible that people from different cultures may view and experience happiness differently based on the type self-construal they internalize (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2015).

Consistent with this expectation, previous cross-cultural studies found that self-esteem did *not* explain one's level of HWB in collectivistic cultures (e.g., Japan) as much as it did in individualistic cultures (e.g., the U.S.) (e.g., Diener & Diener, 1995; Inglehart, Foa, Peterson, & Welzel, 2008; Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997). In a collectivistic culture (e.g., Japan), social support predicted the SWB level even after controlling for self-esteem (Uchida, Kitayama, Mesquita, Reyes, & Morling, 2008). Kitayama, Mesquita, and Karasawa (2006) found that socially engaging emotions (e.g., respect, guilt) were correlated with Japanese SWB, whereas socially disengaging emotions (e.g., pride, anger) were correlated with American SWB. Oishi and Diener (2001) discerned that striving for independent goals (i.e., pursuits of enjoyment) positively predicted the SWB level of European American students, but not that of Asian American students; the opposite pattern was observed for pursuits of interdependent goals (i.e., striving to please their parents and friends). Given the possibility that existing SWB scales (e.g., Diener et al., 1985) favour independent views, scales were developed to capture interdependent views of SWB (Hitokoto & Uchida, 2015; Lu & Gilmour, 2006). These studies discovered that on these scales, East Asians scored as high as or even higher than their North American counterparts.

In summary, the cultural psychology literature suggests that, compared with their Western counterparts, people from East Asian cultures including Japan may have different views of well-being and actually experience it differently based on their dialectic worldview and interdependent self-construal. Interestingly, *ikigai* researchers identified similar factors as important elements in Japanese people's experience of *ikigai*: the complex relationship between positivity and negativity in people's lay theory of *ikigai* (e.g., Kamiya, 2004; Kumano, 2012; Wada, 2001b) and interdependent processes to seek *ikigai* (e.g., Mathews, 1996; Y. Takahashi,

2001).

## **2.3 The Leisure Literature**

This section reviews the existing literature on leisure. First, the review presents several distinct views to conceptualize leisure from both Western and non-Western perspectives. Second, the review offers an overview of major theoretical frameworks that explain the relationship between leisure and SWB (especially HWB). Finally, the review showcases a collection of evidence concerning the association between leisure and SWB.

### **2.3.1 Key views of leisure**

This subsection reviews various views of leisure, or what we mean by leisure, from both Western and non-Western perspectives. It is worth reiterating that the definition of leisure employed in this dissertation was presented in the introductory chapter (see p. 8).

#### **2.3.1.1 Western views of leisure**

In the Western leisure literature, Kleiber et al. (2011) summarized different approaches to defining and measuring leisure, using a two-by-two matrix based on the type of leisure phenomena and the definitional vantage point. In terms of leisure phenomena, two types are identified: objective/behavioural (i.e., leisure as certain types of activities, settings, and time) and subjective/experiential (i.e., leisure as psychological experiences and meanings). In regard to vantage points, the two types identified are: external/observer-centred and internal/participant-centred. Some previous Western studies have investigated gaps between internal and external views of leisure. For example, in her time diaries study of married couples, Shaw (1984) found that 14% of activities externally defined as leisure were considered as non-leisure by participants while 29% of activities internally defined as leisure were regarded as non-leisure by the researcher. Using the same dataset, Shaw (1985) suggested that the factors that most strongly

influenced internal views of leisure were enjoyment, relaxation, freedom to choose, a lack of evaluation by self or others, and intrinsic motivation.

As stated in the chapter one (see p. 8), both behavioural and experiential participant approaches were employed in my dissertation. This focus on the internal view was particularly important given the non-Western research context of this inquiry. Simply, the expert definition of leisure based on Western research may not apply to leisure phenomena in non-Western cultures, including Japanese. Thus, the following sub-section further reviews the existing knowledge on views of leisure from non-Western perspectives.

### **2.3.1.2 Non-Western or cross-cultural views of leisure**

This sub-section provides a review of previous commentaries and studies on different views of leisure across nations and cultures. Chick (1998), an anthropologist of leisure, suggested that three major Western conceptualizations of leisure—leisure as free time, unobligated activity, and subjective experience—are applicable to non-Western cultures. Moreover, he claimed that leisure phenomenon exist in all cultures despite differences in (or even a lack of) terms for leisure. McDonald and McAvoy (1997) observed that in Native American cultures, people tend to “see leisure as inseparable from a host of other concerns and interests” (p. 151) in contrast to Euro-American culture where life is compartmentalized into leisure, work, and other domains. The researchers argued that *both* similarities *and* differences exist in conceptualizations of leisure between lay indigenous people and Western leisure experts.

There are also several more recent commentaries. In contrast to Chick’s (1998) downplaying of linguistic differences, Fox and Klaiber (2006) examined the term “leisure” in English and its etymological roots in a highly detailed manner. They claimed that “[m]uch has happened elsewhere [outside of Euro-North America] in the world, and the histories of leisures

have been distorted by not taking seriously other perspectives, values, cultures, and regions of the world” (p. 423). Fox and Klaiber called for more thorough investigation of multi-faced nature of “leisures” around the world, with particular consideration regarding languages that correspond to the phenomena. Liu, Yeh, Chick, and Zinn (2008) also conducted an etymological analysis of a Chinese term comparable to the English word leisure, *xiu xian*. They noted changes in the meaning of this term over the long history of China, and “different shades” of its meaning today. Similar to the English term leisure, *xiu xian* can connote discretionary time, idleness, respectable social status, spiritual state, and state of being.

Iwasaki et al. (2007), a group of leisure scholars having both Japanese and Western backgrounds, maintained that there is no Japanese term perfectly equivalent to the English word leisure. For example, the phonetic translation of English leisure, *rejaa*, according to them, has connotative associations with consumptive activities (e.g., traveling, visiting a theme park) and overshadows cultural and traditional activities (e.g., watching *kabuki*). Another Japanese term, *yutori* (i.e., elbow room or breathing space), is not a perfect equivalence of English leisure, either. The researchers argued that in a global context, the “potential mismatch [between external and internal definitions of leisure] is likely to be magnified because of personal, social, cultural, historical, and political differences across the cultural boundaries” (p. 114). Moreover, Iwasaki and colleagues asserted that the uncritical use of the term leisure can lead to ethnocentric or Eurocentric research practice, imposing Western views onto non-Western phenomena. Doing so, they argued, can potentially (re)produce power imbalance between Western and non-Western leisure scholarships.

There are also empirical studies on this topic. Using the ESM, Walker and Wang (2009) found gaps between internal and external views of leisure with their Chinese Canadian



participants. Specifically, 25% of activities externally and expertly defined as leisure were regarded as non-leisure by their participants. Strikingly, 57% of activities internally defined as leisure were categorized as non-leisure by the researchers. These discrepancies appear to be much larger than those found in Shaw's (1984) study, in which the Euro-Canadian scholar studied mostly Euro-Canadian respondents. Walker and Wang's analysis also suggested that whereas intrinsic motivation, a lack of pride and effort, and closeness with co-participants strongly influenced participants' internal views of leisure (or non-leisure), perceived freedom did *not* show a strong effect (albeit significant). These findings indicate that gaps between internal and external views of leisure may be magnified in cross-cultural contexts, especially when researchers employ Western views to study non-Western individuals.

Ito and Walker (2014) invented a method called the Leisure Ten Statement Test, which allowed them to explore internal views of leisure in cross-cultural contexts (i.e., Japan and Canada). Japanese respondents were asked to provide 10 sentences to define *yoka* and *rejaa* while Canadian respondents were asked for their definitions of English leisure. A priori coding based on the Western leisure literature (e.g., Fast & Frederick, 2004; Henderson, 2008; Kleiber et al., 2011) was performed to identify the frequency of different types of lay leisure definitions. A series of statistical analyses showed that internal views of the leisure-related terms differed from one another *not only* across the cultures, *but also* within the Japanese language between *rejaa* and *yoka*. For example, *yoka* emphasized the temporal aspect of leisure as free time, exhibited negative nuances (e.g., uselessness), invoked less emotion, indicated freedom of choice, and had health-related connotations. *Rejaa* suggested activeness and associated with settings and money. Their respondents seldom mentioned perceived freedom and intrinsic motivation, arguably the two most dominant external defining elements of leisure in the West (e.g., Neulinger, 1974),

which again indicates a discrepancy between internal and external views of leisure especially in cross-cultural contexts.

In summary, the reviewed commentaries and evidence suggest that substantial discrepancies may exist between internal lay and external expert views of leisure in non-Western or cross-cultural settings (e.g., McDonald & McAvoy, 1997; Walker & Wang, 2009). Therefore, it is important to carefully select which leisure-related terms are used in a given research context (Ito & Walker, 2014). This is so *not only* to gain a more accurate understanding, *but also* not to (re)produce potential power imbalance within global leisure scholarship (Fox & Klaiber, 2006; Iwasaki et al., 2007).

### **2.3.2 Theoretical frameworks to linking leisure and subjective well-being**

This subsection first reviews two traditional theoretical frameworks—leisure satisfaction and benefits of leisure—that have been employed to examine the relationship between leisure and SWB. Next, it describes emerging frameworks of the serious leisure perspective and leisure-based meaning-making. Lastly, a collection of other theoretical commentaries on the topic is presented.

#### **2.3.2.1 Leisure satisfaction**

Beard and Ragheb's (1980) conceptualization of, and instrument for measuring (i.e., the Leisure Satisfaction Scale, or LSS), leisure satisfaction has guided numerous well-being studies. Consistent with domain-specific life satisfaction in the HWB research (Diener et al., 2004), Beard and Ragheb defined leisure satisfaction as “the degree to which one is presently content or pleased with his/her general leisure experiences and situations” (p. 22). The LSS consists of six dimensions: (a) psychological, (b) educational, (c) social, (d) relaxation, (e) physiological, and (f) aesthetic.

Using the LSS, a series of studies were conducted to discern the relationship among leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, and life satisfaction (e.g., Ragheb, 1980, 1989, 1993; Ragheb & Griffith, 1982; Ragheb & Tate, 1993; Riddick, 1985). These studies' findings consistently indicated points that (a) there are positive correlations among these variables and (b) controlling for the effect of one another, the links stayed significant, especially the ones between leisure participation and leisure satisfaction and between leisure satisfaction and life satisfaction. Sneegas' (1986) path analysis supported this role of leisure satisfaction in partially mediating the association between leisure participation and life satisfaction. Brown and Frankel (1993) tested a similar model focusing on physical activity participation. They replicated this mediated relationship, and also discovered gender differences in the degree of mediation, that is, full mediation among men and partial mediation among women.

Recently, two groups of psychologists strengthened theoretical grounds of this empirically driven line of research on leisure satisfaction. First, Newman et al. (2014) conducted a systematic review of the literature on leisure and HWB. Their review identified five psychological mechanisms through which leisure time and participation lead to leisure satisfaction: (a) detachment-relaxation, (b) autonomy, (c) mastery, (d) meaning, and (e) affiliation (or DRAMMA). The direction of causality here—leisure participation causing leisure satisfaction—is consistent with the bottom-up approach in the HWB research (Diener, 1984). It is noteworthy that these researchers did *not* include leisure experience in their model because of the difficulty in operationalizing and measuring such phenomenon without being confounded with the psychological mechanisms. For example, perceived freedom as a leisure experience can be conflated with a greater sense of control as an outcome of leisure. Recently, Walker and Kono (in press) tested part of the DRAMMA model, focusing on autonomy, mastery, and affiliation.

Among Canadian workers, they found evidence that (a) autonomy, mastery, and affiliation satisfaction during leisure positively impacted leisure satisfaction, (b) which in turn exerted a positive effect on global life satisfaction.

Second, Kuykendall et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of the relationships between leisure and HWB. They found a small but significant correlation between leisure participation and EWB ( $r = .26$ ), which is comparable to or greater than effects of other life domains (e.g.,  $r = .11$  for occupational status [Haring, Stock, & Okun, 1984a];  $r = .35$  for self-rated health [Okun, Stock, Haring, & Witter, 1984];  $r = .17$  for income [Haring et al., 1984];  $r = .14$  for marital status [Haring-Hidore, Stock, Okun, & Witter, 1985]). Furthermore, their analysis of longitudinal studies supported both the bottom-up and top-down approaches (Diener, 1984). Their mediation analysis also supported leisure satisfaction as an intervening factor between leisure participation and HWB.

#### **2.3.2.2 Benefits of leisure**

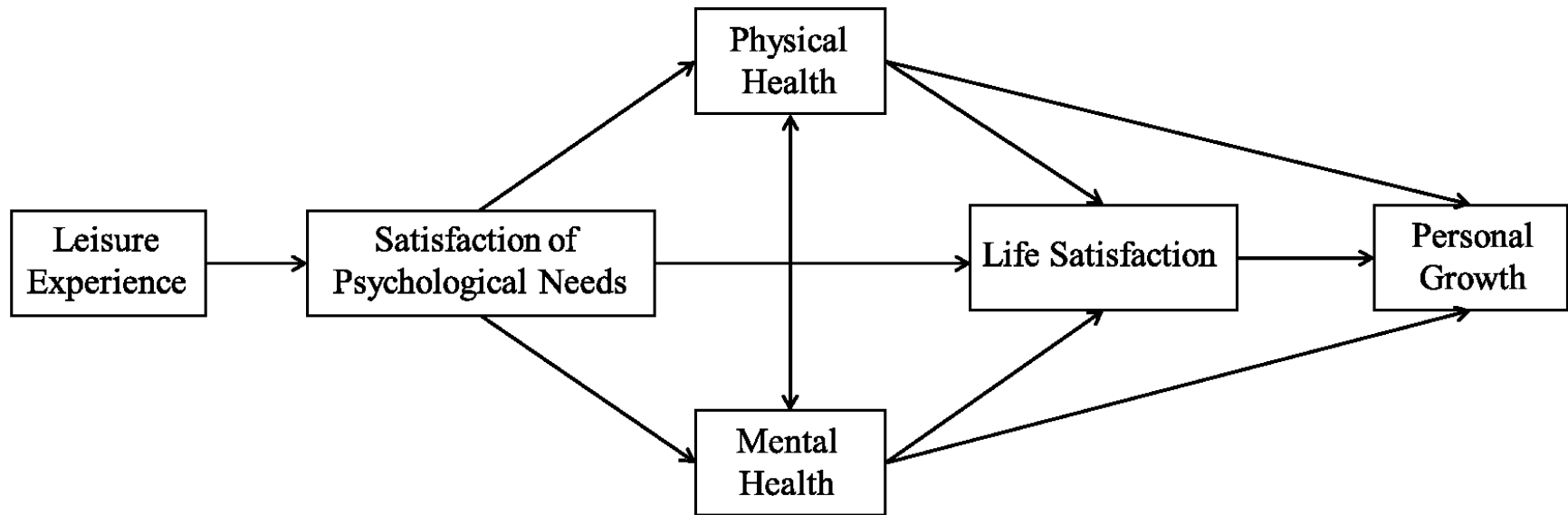
Except for drawing on Newman et al.'s (2014) DRAMMA model, the leisure satisfaction mediation model does not explain “why” leisure participation leads to a greater level of leisure satisfaction (and subsequently to a higher level of life satisfaction). Another dominant theoretical framework, benefits of leisure, does however (Driver, Brown, & Peterson, 1991a; Driver, Tinsley, & Manfreda, 1991; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986). Benefits of leisure are a leisure-induced “change that is viewed to be advantageous—an important in condition, or a gain to an individual, a group, to society, or to another entity” (Driver, Brown, & Peterson, 1991b, p. 4). Tinsley and Tinsley focused on psychological benefits from leisure activity and experience, coupling them with need gratification theory. Major tenets of their theory were that: (a) individuals have inherent needs; (b) such needs can be met by their leisure participation and experience; and (c)

some needs can be satisfied only through leisure, not other pursuits. Their model (Figure 2.3) identified leisure experience as an explanatory variable, life satisfaction as an outcome variable, and satisfaction of psychological needs (or leisure benefits) as an intervening variable.

Building upon Maslow's (1970) need hierarchy, Tinsley and Tinsley (1986) further posited that: (a) there are three states of leisure-based need satisfaction—leisure deficit, sufficiency, and enrichment—which are divided by two threshold points—maintenance and growth points; (b) the different states of leisure-based need satisfaction lead to different levels of life satisfaction; and (c) personal growth is possible only when individuals surpass their growth threshold (Figure 2.4). According to this model, people exceed their growth threshold and start leisure enrichment when their needs for survival, safety, and belonging are met. Under such circumstances, people can allocate their resources (e.g., time, energy) to leisure activities through which they can satisfy needs for self-esteem and self-actualization. In doing so, they become more aware of which aspects of self they want to develop further; this awareness leads to personal growth. It should be noted that self-actualization has a strong eudaimonic characteristic (e.g., Bauer, 2016; Waterman, 2008). As such, the leisure benefits theory may also extend the relevance of leisure, beyond HWB, to EWB. Tinsley and Tinsley also held that personal growth inherently brings some levels of distress and unpleasant emotions. Thus, it is interesting to note that they implied the highest level of life satisfaction or HWB may not be experienced in the stage of leisure enrichment, but rather in leisure sufficiency (see Figure 2.4).

Unlike the psychologists who avoided the subjective aspect of leisure experience (e.g., Newman et al., 2014), Tinsley and Tinsley (1986) embraced it in their model while conceptually distinguishing leisure activity from leisure experience as it follows:

Leisure experience occurs when individuals (a) believe they are engaged in an activity for



*Figure 2.3.* Tinsley and Tinsley's (1986, p. 20) model of causal effects of leisure experience.  
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# Satisfaction of Psychological Needs

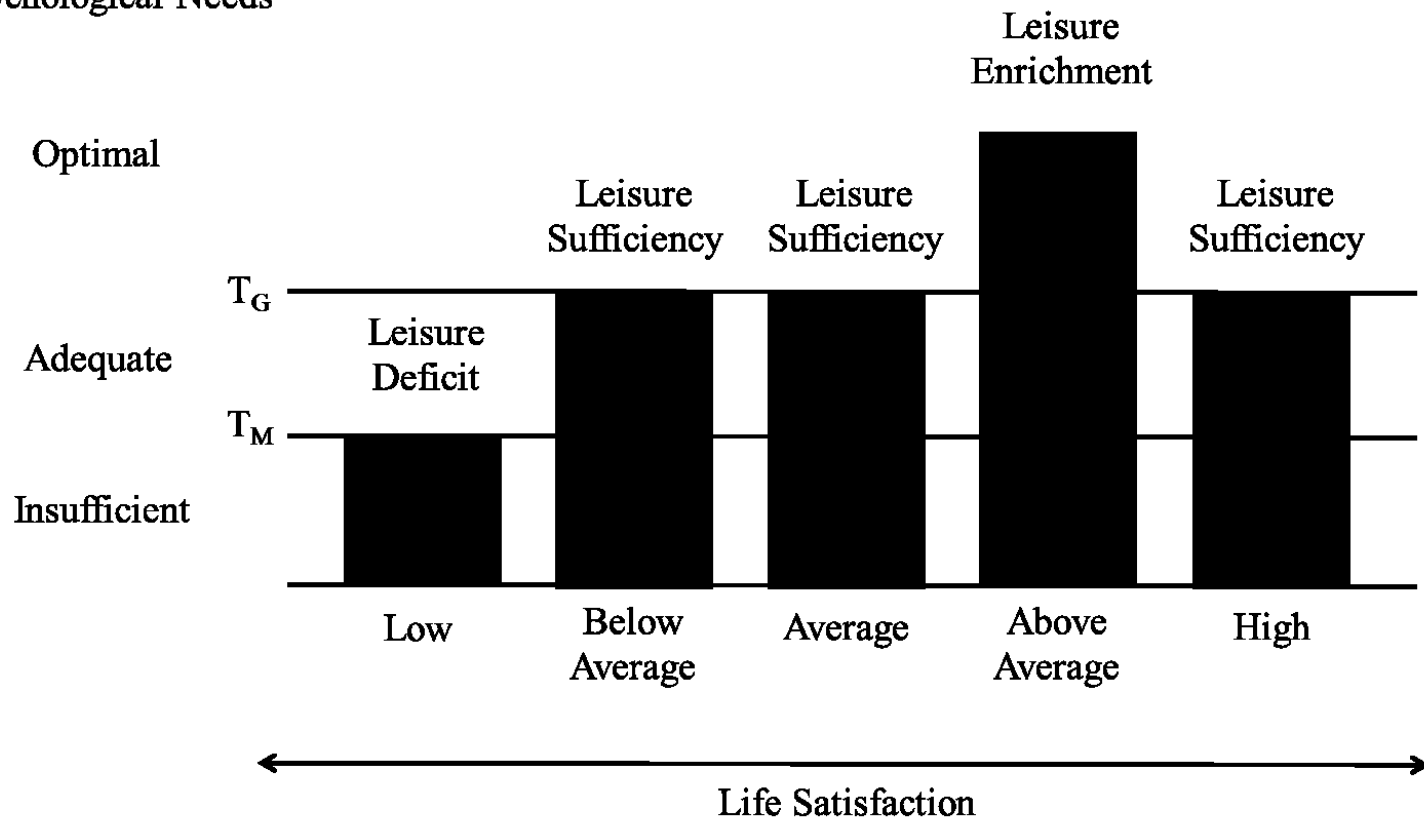


Figure 2.4. Tinsley and Tinsley's (1986, p. 24) model of the relationship of psychological need satisfaction to life satisfaction. It is reprinted with the publisher's permission.

personal reasons rather than as a result of external coercion, (b) are engaged in the activity to obtain benefits intrinsic to participation in the activity, (c) experience a facilitative level of arousal, and (d) exert a disciplined effort to fulfill their potential through engagement in the activity. Because the perception of freedom of choice is a necessary condition for the individual to experience leisure, leisure experience will most commonly occur while participating in a leisure activity. (pp. 38-39)

These researchers called for greater research on whether mere participation in leisure activity is sufficient for need satisfaction, or subjective experiences of leisure with perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and some levels of arousal and efforts are necessary. However, it appears that this question remains unanswered (Rodríguez, 2011).

### **2.3.2.3 The serious leisure perspective**

The serious leisure perspective (SLP) developed Robert Stebbins (1992, 2007) has a long history within leisure studies. The SLP is “a theoretic framework that synthesizes three main forms of leisure” (Stebbins, 2013, p. 9), namely, serious, casual, and project-based leisure. However, its application as a means to explain the relationship between leisure and well-being is rather recent (Stebbins, 2013, 2015, 2016).

The SLP’s central focus is on serious leisure, that is, “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling for the participant to find a [leisure] career there acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (Stebbins, 2015, p. 14; Stebbins, 1982). Casual leisure, in contrast, is defined as “immediately intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training” (p. 28; Stebbins, 1997). Project-based leisure refers to “short-term, reasonably complicated, one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative



undertaking carried out in free time” (Stebbins, 2013, p. 340; Stebbins, 2005). Stebbins’s (2015, 2016) central premise is that: (a) different types of leisure experiences have distinct rewards, such as self-actualization for serious leisure and rejuvenation for casual leisure; and (b) pursuing the different leisure experiences and accompanying rewards leads to “an optimal leisure lifestyle” wherein participants achieve a higher level of well-being. Although the SLP covers a wide range of leisure experiences and indicates their unique roles in well-being pursuit, this hypothesis about the optimal leisure lifestyle has not been tested.

In terms of EWB, Stebbins (2013, 2016) is clear that it is serious leisure that impacts this specific type of well-being. For example, citing Waterman’s (1993b) eudaimonic identity theory, Stebbins (2016) claimed:

It is during their serious pursuits that leisure participants are eudaimonic, are living according to the daimon. The casual leisure activities, which are hedonic ..., have a dramatically different appeal. ... Project-based leisure is also eudaimonic but significantly more weakly so than the serious pursuits. (p. 497)

With regard to the relationship between serious leisure and EWB, Stebbins’ central thesis is that from serious pursuits, one receives various rewards that are consistent with his or her goals and values and often outweigh costs of the pursuit, which in turn leads to a greater level of well-being (Stebbins, 1992, 2007). This is because serious pursuits can provide “opportunities for exercise of personal agency, finding self-fulfillment, and developing and maintaining valued interpersonal relationships” (Stebbins, 2013, p. 9). The rewards from serious leisure include both personal outcomes, such as self-actualization, self-expression, and financial return, and social consequences, including social attraction, group accomplishment, and contribution to a group.

There is some evidence that supports the relationship between serious leisure and well-

being. For example, Heo, Stebbins, Kim, and Lee (2013) found that among Senior Olympic Games participants, those who indicated serious commitment to the games reported a higher level of life satisfaction as well as self-rated physical and mental health, than those with low commitment. Pi, Lin, Chen, Chiu, and Chen (2014) examined the relationship between serious leisure, volunteer motivation, and HWB among volunteers of the 2010 Taipei International Flora Exposition. Using SEM, the researchers discerned that the extent to which volunteers were serious about the event positively predicted their HWB level. Finally, Liu and Yu's (2015) study of Chinese college students who belonged to student art groups showed that those serious about their art activities perceived a higher level of leisure satisfaction across all six sub-dimensions (Beard & Ragheb, 1980) compared with their non-serious counterparts. This group difference applied to students' comprehensive assessment of their life quality, including a sense of achievement and community. Arguably these measures are better aligned with EWB than HWB, and as such Liu and Yu's evidence supports Stebbins's (2013, 2016) argument that serious leisure fosters EWB.

#### **2.3.2.4 Leisure-based meaning-making**

Meaning-making through leisure (Iwasaki, 2017; Porter et al., 2010) is an emergent conceptual framework regarding the positive effects of leisure on well-being. Iwasaki, Messina, Shank, and Coyle (2015) defined meaning-making as "a process by which a person derives meaning(s) from an activity" (p. 539), wherein meaning refers to "a socially and contextually grounded psychological/emotional experience that holds inner significance for an individual" (Porter et al., 2010, p. 172). This contextual nature of meaning-making process makes it distinct from the benefits approach, with the latter concerned with leisure-induced changes that are generally regarded as positive in society (Driver et al., 1991b). Iwasaki (2007) argued that

meaning-making through leisure may be globally applicable more than benefits of leisure, as the latter may be rooted in Western individualism. Iwasaki (2017) also distinguished meaning-making through leisure from meanings of leisure (e.g., Schulz & Watkins, 2007); the latter concerns how people define or perceive leisure whereas the former focuses on how leisure makes people's life meaningful.

Porter et al. (2010) conducted a comprehensive literature review on leisure-related meaning-making processes (e.g., Donald & Havighurst, 1959; Iwasaki, 2007; Iwasaki, MacKay, Mactavish, Ristock, & Barlett, 2006; Ragheb, 1996; Unger & Kernan, 1983). They identified five recurring themes: (a) connection and belonging, (b) identity, (c) freedom and autonomy, (d) control and power, and (e) competence and mastery. Furthermore, they specified three outcomes of leisure-based meaning-making processes: (a) positive emotions, (b) positive thoughts and actions (i.e., optimism, hope, creativity, and strength), and (c) human growth and development. Although the first outcome is akin to HWB (Diener, 1984), the latter two are more consistent with EWB. In particular, the list of positive thoughts and actions resemble the VIA inventory (e.g., Niemiec, 2013). The concept of human growth and development echoes the identity theory within the eudaimonic research (e.g., Bauer, 2016; Waterman & Schwartz, 2013). Within a small sample of adults with Type 2 diabetes, Porter, Shank, and Iwasaki (2012) identified medium- to large-size, positive correlations among the five themes of meaning-making and the three outcomes.

Recently, Iwasaki and his associates provided initial evidence for the positive relationship between leisure meaning-making and well-being (e.g., Iwasaki, Coyle, Shank, Messina, & Porter, 2013; Iwasaki et al., 2014). They employed the Leisure Meanings Gained Scale (LMGS; Porter, 2009) to measure the aforesaid five meaning-making themes (Porter et al., 2010). Among

racially diverse individuals with mental illness, Iwasaki et al. (2014) reported that LGMS scores strongly correlated with leisure satisfaction ( $r = .79$ ), perceived active living ( $r = .61$ ), and subjective recovery from mental illness ( $r = .75$ ).

Iwasaki et al. (2015) invited part of the sample for the above quantitative study into a qualitative study. Their analysis of in-depth interviews indicated that various types of leisure activities promoted participants to construe meanings of (a) enjoyment and peacefulness, (b) focus and control, (c) social and spiritual connection, (d) self-discovery, and (e) a sense of strength. The researchers integrated these themes into the core theme of leisure as “inspiration toward an engaged life” (p. 548) at personal, social, and spiritual levels. It should be noted here that engagement is more broadly defined than Seligman’s (2011) reference to the same term, with the latter meaning flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Having said this, this list of meanings made through leisure mirrors topics frequently discussed in the EWB literature, such as connection (e.g., Baumeister, 1991) and strengths (e.g., Niemiec, 2013). As such, leisure-based meaning-making may be another theoretical framework that signals the relevance of leisure to eudaimonia.

#### **2.3.2.5 Other theoretical commentaries on leisure and well-being**

This subsection reviews various theoretical commentaries on the subject of leisure and SWB. First, a sociologist of happiness, Veenhoven (2003) identified two dimensions of leisure as predictors of SWB: attitude to leisure and leisure behaviour. At an individual level, Veenhoven found that attitude to leisure—the perceived importance of leisure—predicted happiness more strongly than attitudes to other life domains (e.g., job, religion, and health) in two large datasets. At a national level, the researcher showed a general pattern that a level of happiness was higher within countries where leisure time was considered important. In terms of leisure behaviour,

Veenhoven revealed that participation in active and social leisure activities was associated with a higher level of happiness.

Second, Lloyd and Auld (2002) critiqued previous studies on leisure and well-being for only using a “person-centred” approach; that is, leisure was usually measured in terms of participation or satisfaction, both of which concern individual experiences. To address this issue, these researchers proposed a “place-centred” dimension of leisure that was further divided into two aspects: objective (i.e., categories of leisure spaces: natural, man-made, or cultural) and subjective (i.e., participants’ subjective satisfaction with a leisure place and perceived quality). In an Australian study, Lloyd and Auld found that only the person-centred measures, namely leisure participation and satisfaction, predicted subjective quality of life after controlling for other predictors. When demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, and income) were controlled for, leisure satisfaction remained significant, but leisure participation became non-significant. The model with both person- and place-centred dimensions of leisure explained 14% of the total variance in perceived quality of life.

Rodríguez (2011) discussed how each of three dominant definitions of leisure—leisure as time, activity, and experience—relates to SWB. First, the effect of leisure time on SWB depends on whether economic or psychological approach is employed. An economic approach to leisure time as leftover after obligatory activities often found minimal or even non-significant effects of leisure on SWB (e.g., Hagerty et al., 2001). Rodríguez noted three assumptions common to this approach that (a) a person does one thing at a time, (b) obligation is not distinguished from commitment, and (c) time is spent in a consistent manner. A psychological approach, using the ESM, led Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter (2003) to discover that people were generally happier in their leisure time than in work or maintenance time.

With regard to leisure as activity, Rodríguez (2011) observed a general pattern: The more frequently people participated in leisure activities, the more likely they reported a higher level of SWB (e.g., Kelly, Steinkamp, & Kelly, 1987; Lloyd & Auld, 2002; Nimrod, 2007). This finding is partially consistent with activity theory (Lemon, Bengston, & Peterson, 1972; Rodríguez, Látková, & Sun, 2008). Commonly adopted in studies of older adults, this theory postulates that frequent involvement in activities, especially informal social activities, allow participants to form meaningful relationships, which in turn leads to greater well-being (Burnett-Wolle & Godbey, 2007). Like Veenhoven (2003), previous studies also found that certain types of leisure activities, especially physical and social, correlated with SWB more strongly than other types, such as sedentary or online activities (e.g., Ragheb & Griffith, 1982). However, the amount of variance in SWB that leisure activities explained was minimal (e.g., Rodríguez et al., 2008) or even non-significant (e.g., Michalos & Zumbo, 2003). Rodríguez proposed three possible reasons for this weak evidence: (a) failure to include potential mediators and moderators, (b) presumed incremental, linear positive effects (i.e., the more frequently one participated, the happier s/he would be), and (c) the use of factor analytic techniques that could have eliminated activity-specific benefits. Finally, Rodríguez stated that there was a paucity of research on leisure as experience and SWB.

Rodríguez et al. (2008) tested two theories that explain the positive effects of leisure on SWB—need and activity theory. Need theory, according to the researchers, holds that “individuals participated in various [leisure] activities to fulfill needs that went unmet in other areas of an individual’s life” (p. 166). Satisfaction of five needs (i.e., physical fitness, social, autonomy, family togetherness, and skill development needs) positively correlated with life satisfaction (i.e.,  $r = .33$  to  $.40$ ). With activity theory, participation in four of 11 leisure activities

significantly correlated with life satisfaction:  $r = -.14$  for computer games,  $r = .09$  for visiting friends/relatives,  $r = .26$  for jogging/walking for exercise, and  $r = .13$  for weight lifting. Controlling for each other, participation in computer games and jogging/walking *and* satisfaction of physical fitness, social, autonomy, and family togetherness needs remained significant predictors of life satisfaction. Whereas satisfaction of the four needs accounted for 28% of variance in the outcome variable, participation in the two types of leisure activities explained only four percent in total. Thus, in their study, need theory had a greater explanatory ability than activity theory.

To summarize, four major theoretical frameworks were reviewed that help explain the relationship between leisure and well-being: the mediation model with leisure satisfaction (Beard & Ragheb, 1980; Kuykendall et al., 2015), benefits of leisure (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986), the serious leisure perspective (Stebbins, 2013, 2015), and leisure-based meaning-making (Iwasaki, 2017; Porter et al., 2010). In particular, the last three theoretical frameworks indicated that leisure might pertain to the pursuit of EWB, not only HWB. Other studies on leisure and well-being, albeit focusing on HWB, suggested that subjective aspects of leisure, such as attitude and needs satisfaction, predicted a level of well-being among participants more strongly than objective dimensions, including time and activity participation (e.g., Lloyd & Auld, 2002; Rodríguez et al., 2008; Veenhoven, 2003).

### **2.3.3 Empirical findings on leisure and well-being**

This subsection describes a collection of empirical findings on leisure and well-being, mostly HWB. For the sake of parsimony and relevance, it focuses on studies either in non-Western and cross-cultural contexts or on nation-wide and international scales. Also review in the end is emerging evidence on leisure and EWB.

### 2.3.3.1 Non-Western and cross-cultural studies

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between leisure and SWB in non-Western or cross-cultural contexts. For instance, in Japanese contexts, Sahashi (2009, 2010) examined the relationship among leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, and leisure orientations (i.e., cognitive and behavioural tendencies toward leisure time and activities). A group of participants who showed the most positive orientations toward leisure reported a higher level of leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, and HWB than other groups. Among Japanese adults, Yamaguchi, Tohi, and Takami (1996) tested Brown and Frankel's (1993) models in which leisure activity participation predicted life satisfaction both directly and indirectly through leisure satisfaction. First, they found that the models explained more variance in life satisfaction within their Japanese sample than in Brown and Frankel's Canadian sample (i.e.,  $R^2 = .217$  to  $.567$  vs.  $R^2 = .197$  and  $.222$ ). Whereas the activity participation's direct effect on life satisfaction was non-significant, the indirect effect via leisure satisfaction was significant. Finally, the effects of leisure satisfaction on life satisfaction seemed stronger in their Japanese sample than in Brown and Frankel's ( $b^* = .37$  to  $.76$  vs.  $b^* = .39$  and  $.35$ ). These findings indicated that the mediation model with leisure satisfaction may be more pertinent to Japanese people.

Although there are not many studies in Japan, there are several other studies conducted in Chinese contexts. For example, Lu and Argyle (1994) found positive correlations among serious leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, and happiness. Casual leisure activities, such as watching TV, had smaller correlations with the domain-specific and global HWB indicators. Lu and Argyle (1993) found that the more frequently people watched TV, the more likely they perceived a lower level of leisure satisfaction and happiness. However, watching soap operas was an exception. The researchers explained this finding by pointing out that following regular



TV shows may require commitment and thus, resemble serious leisure. Among Taiwanese college students, Lu and Hu (2005) found that happiness positively correlated with leisure participation ( $r = .14$ ), especially hobbies, sports, and indoor activities, as well as with leisure satisfaction ( $r = .50$ ). In a hierarchical regression model, leisure participation significantly predicted leisure satisfaction ( $b^* = .21$ ) and resulted in a significant increase in explained variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ), after controlling for sex and personality traits. In another model predicting happiness, the effect of leisure participation became non-significant, but leisure satisfaction remained significant ( $b^* = .31$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ), while controlling for sex, personality traits, leisure participation, and academic and financial satisfaction. This model explained 44% of the total variance in happiness.

Walker and colleagues conducted a series of studies on leisure and well-being in cross-cultural contexts. Spiers and Walker (2009) investigated how leisure satisfaction influenced happiness, peacefulness, and perceived quality of life similarly or differently between British and Chinese Canadians. Although levels of happiness and peacefulness did not significantly differ between the cultural groups, significant differences emerged in two of the six LSS subscales (Beard & Ragheb, 1980): relaxation and physiological. For both subscales, British Canadians showed a higher level of satisfaction than their Chinese Canadian counterparts. In a series of multiple regression analyses, leisure satisfaction was the only significant predictor of both happiness and peacefulness controlling for sex and ethnicity ( $b^* = .41$  and  $.31$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .05$  and  $.03$ , respectively).

Based on samples of Japanese, Chinese, and Canadian students, Ito, Walker, Liu, and Mitas (2017) explored the relationship among four sub-dimensions of the LSS (i.e., psychological, physiological, social, and aesthetic; Beard & Ragheb, 1980), two types of

happiness, and perceived quality of life. Among Japanese, satisfaction with the physiological aspect of a leisure life was positively correlated to happiness (both personal and family), standard of living, personal health, and personal safety. Satisfaction with the aesthetic dimension positively predicted achievement in life, personal relationships, community connectedness, future security, and spirituality/religion. It is important to note that these dependent variables are akin to EWB. The social subscale score was positively correlated with personal relationships. Lastly, satisfaction with the psychological aspect of a leisure life did not predict any of the happiness or quality of life indicators among Japanese students. The researchers speculated that this surprising null-finding might have been because, in Japan, leisure was not yet seen as a life domain where one can improve various psychological qualities, such as self-efficacy and self-esteem.

Walker, Halpenny, Spiers, and Deng (2011) conducted a longitudinal study with Chinese-Canadian immigrants, collecting data at three time points with a six-month interval. A cross-legged SEM was employed to disentangle the relationship between leisure participation and leisure satisfaction. Two models were tested, each of which represented either the bottom-up or top-down approach in the HWB literature (Diener, 1984). The bottom-up model was supported by the data, where leisure participation at Time 1 predicted leisure satisfaction at Time 2 ( $b^* = .44$ ,  $R^2 = .38$ ). However, the model fit chi-square was significant, which requires us to interpret the results carefully ( $\chi^2(39) = 80.856$ ,  $p < .000$ , CFI = .948, RMSEA = .086, SRMR = .057). Walker and Ito (2017) also conducted a longitudinal study with Chinese Canadians, collecting data five times over a two-year period of time. Their hierarchical linear modeling results indicated that leisure satisfaction significantly and positively predicted happiness and life satisfaction. This longitudinal evidence also adds credence to the bottom-up framework.

In summary, positive associations among leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, and global well-being were replicated in non-Western and cross-cultural settings (e.g., Lu & Hu, 2005; Spiers & Walker, 2009), including Japan (Sahashi, 2009, 2010). Walker and colleagues' longitudinal studies provided strong support for the bottom-up effect within a leisure domain (Walker et al., 2011; Walker & Ito, 2017). Also suggested was leisure's potential relevance to EWB (Ito et al., 2017).

### **2.3.3.2 National and international studies**

Several studies of leisure and well-being have been conducted at a national or international level. For example, Boelhouwer (2002) reported that in a large dataset from the Statistics Netherlands, happiness positively but minimally correlated with leisure-related items: diversity of hobby activities ( $r = .13$ ), diversity of non-domestic entertainment activities ( $r = .20$ ), volunteer work ( $r = .08$ ), frequency of sport participation per week ( $r = .13$ ), number of different sports participation ( $r = .19$ ), recent vacation ( $r = .21$ ), and vacation abroad ( $r = .16$ ). In a study of 4,000 Croatian people, Brajsa-Zganec, Merkas, and Sverko (2011) found that three types of leisure activities (i.e., social, cultural, and family) explained 3.6 to 11.4% of variance in HWB. The leisure activities explained more variance among young women (9.1%) than among young men (3.6%). Using a dataset from the Victorian Quality of Life panel study in Australia, Headey (1993) reported that life satisfaction correlated positively and moderately with leisure satisfaction ( $r = .48$ ). Leisure skills did not have a significant effect on life satisfaction when controlling for effects of personal resources (e.g., family support, job skills, and health) and demographic variables.

A few recent studies were conducted with international samples, including Japanese. For instance, Liang, Yamashita, and Brown (2013) used the 2006 AsiaBarometer data from Mainland

China ( $n = 2,000$ ), Japan ( $n = 1,003$ ), and South Korea ( $n = 1,023$ ), to gain insights into the relationship between leisure satisfaction and happiness. The researchers discovered, surprisingly, that leisure satisfaction significantly predicted happiness only in South Korea, but *not* in China or Japan, after controlling for a number of other predictors such as demographic and other life domain satisfaction variables. Using a dataset from the International Social Survey Program in 2007 (i.e., approximately 48,000 respondents from 33 countries), Wang and Wong (2014) examined the relationship between happiness and leisure time, leisure activity participation, leisure-related beliefs, and leisure skills. In line with past Western studies (e.g., Rodríguez et al., 2008), they found that an amount of discretionary time was a non-significant predictor of happiness. Wang and Wong also discerned, however, that (a) participation in seven of 13 leisure activities, (b) beliefs in leisure's roles in self-fulfillment and social interaction, and (c) leisure-based skill development and networking significantly predicted the outcome variable. This remained so even after controlling for effects of numerous personal, demographic, and national economic variables. Among leisure participation, shopping, reading books, attending cultural events, being with relatives, listening to music, and playing sports/visiting a gym had positive effects on happiness, while Internet surfing negatively affected happiness.

To summarize, the reviewed large-scale national and international studies consistently showed, after controlling for a variety of variables, leisure-related factors had significant albeit small positive effects on HWB (e.g., Boelhouwer, 2002; Brajsa-Zganec et al., 2011; Wang & Wong, 2014).

#### **2.3.3.3 Emerging evidence on leisure and eudaimonic well-being**

Although limited in number, there are several noteworthy emerging findings regarding the relationship between leisure and EWB. First, Delle Fave et al. (2011) conducted a mixed-

method survey study of what “happiness” meant and how it was experienced across seven countries (Australia, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and South Africa;  $N = 666$ ). When qualitative data on lay definitions of happiness were coded into nine different life domains, leisure ranked at the bottom, indicating the weakest relevance. In terms of quantitative data, neither happiness nor meaningfulness in a leisure life predicted a level of overall life satisfaction. Using the same dataset, Delle Fave, Brdar, Wissing, and Vella-Brodrick (2013) found that only 72 participants (12.5%) identified leisure as a source of meaning in their lives, while family and work were named by 559 and 295 people, respectively.

Several other studies have employed other, non-questionnaire survey, methods, with many of these finding a stronger relationship between leisure and EWB. For example, Kopperud and Vittersø (2008) employed the day reconstruction method to examine hedonic and eudaimonic feelings during a workday. Among five measure activities (i.e., commute, maintenance, core work, break, and leisure), leisure was the domain where workers reported the second highest level of pleasure as well as engagement (operationalized as interest and challenge). In two time diary studies, Steger, Kashdan, and Oishi (2008) found that eudaimonic activities including volunteering—potentially either serious or project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2015)—positively and significantly predicted meaning in life, life satisfaction, and positive affect at the day level. Doing eudaimonic activities on a given day also significantly predicted a higher level of meaning in life on the next day. It is fair to note that Steger et al.’s list of hedonic activities were predominantly leisurely (e.g., watching TV, listening to music, attending a sport event) and these behaviours did *not* predict either EWB or HWB. Choi et al. (in press) conducted an ESM study composed of 603 Korean adults. Among various daily activities reported over two to four weeks, highly predictive of daily meaning (i.e., EWB) were praying/worshiping, taking a

trip, exercising, playing a game (inversely), and volunteering. These activities can be regarded as leisure.

In addition to the above quantitative studies, there have been a few studies that took a more qualitative approach to investigate the relationship between leisure and EWB. For instance, Steger et al. (2013) asked student participants to “take photos of the things that make [their] life feel meaningful” (p. 534). An inductive coding analysis of these photographic data identified hobby/leisure as the second prevalent source of meaning in life, mentioned by 70.9% of participants. Descriptions of pictures indicated that hobby and leisure offered an opportunity for self-expression, learning, enjoyment, passion, and relaxation, among others. Also noteworthy was that Steger et al.’s comprehensive review of the literature on sources of meaning in life identified some other studies that also specified leisure as a major source of meaning (e.g., Fegg, Kramer, L’hoste, & Borasio, 2008; Prager, Savaya, & Bar-Tur, 2000). Using grounded theory, Matteucci and Filep (2017) performed a full-fledged qualitative study of eudaimonic experiences among tourists who participated in flamenco workshops in Spain. Based on in-depth interviews with 20 dancers, the researchers discerned that the challenging, authentic flamenco environment facilitated participants’ self-learning and self-actualization processes.

In conclusion, the reviewed emerging findings indicate that leisure may be an important part of the pursuit of EWB (e.g., Matteucci & Filep, 2017; Steger et al., 2013). Perhaps, this is especially so when people reflect on particular leisure activities (e.g., Choi et al., in press) and leisure experiences (e.g., Matteucci & Filep, 2017), than when they are asked to think of a leisure life domain as a whole (e.g., Delle Fave et al., 2013).

## **2.4 Summary of the Literature Review**

This review of three distinct bodies of knowledge—*ikigai*, well-being, and leisure—

suggests that these three topics are clearly intertwined with each other. Leisure has been identified as a life domain that plays an important role in the pursuit of well-being (e.g., Kuykendall et al., 2015; Newman et al., 2014), including its eudaimonic sub-component (e.g., Matteucci & Filep, 2017; Steger et al., 2013). The way that sources of *ikigai* have been conceptualized (e.g., Kamiya, 2004) resemble some of key defining characteristics of leisure (e.g., intrinsic motivation, perceived freedom; Kleiber et al., 2011). A number of survey studies reported that leisure is a primary source of *ikigai* (e.g., COGJ, 1994; CRS, 2012). The processes to *ikigai* pursuit identified in the literature (e.g., meaning-making, commitment; Kumano, 2012; Mathews, 1996) have been also recognized by leisure scholars (e.g., Iwasaki, 2017; Stebbins, 2015). The *ikigai* literature suggests that *ikigai* perception is closer to EWB, rather than HWB (e.g., Kamiya, 2004; Kumano, in press; Wada, 2001b).

What is especially noteworthy is that virtually none of the previous studies have focused on leisure and *ikigai*, especially from the perspective of EWB. The study of leisure and *ikigai* is not merely another project to “fulfill a gap in the literature because there is a gap”. We should be reminded that the absence of *ikigai* predicted the significantly higher mortality ratio (e.g., Sone et al., 2008; Tanno et al., 2009), especially among those who also lacked hobbies (Tomioka et al., 2016). Thus, attempts to understand why and how leisure fosters *ikigai* address an important social issue. Moreover, young adults—the target population in my dissertation—generally report a lower level of *ikigai* (e.g., NHK/BCRI, 2004), as well as tend to suffer mental health issues and die from suicide (e.g., Nishimura et al., 2009; Uchida, 2010). Lastly, the study of *ikigai* from the perspective of EWB can also serve as a step toward a more culturally balanced positive psychology (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Peterson, 2008). Thus, my dissertation work can also contribute to the liberation of positive psychology and the EWB research specifically

from ethnocentric assumptions.



### **Chapter 3: Qualitative Study**

The purpose of this first qualitative study was to inductively develop a substantive theory of *ikigai* and leisure among Japanese university students. To this end, Corbin and Strauss's (2015) variant of grounded theory (GT) was employed as a guiding methodology.

#### **3.1 Method**

##### **3.1.1 Participant recruitment**

From June to August, 2015, Japanese undergraduate students were recruited from a private university in the Kanto region in Japan. Students had to have owned a smartphone for at least one year to ensure they had an opportunity to capture different types of *ikigai* experiences (e.g., winter sport as a hobby and travel during a vacation time). The university had a large student population (i.e., approximately 25,000 students) who came from different parts of the country often through the “affiliated high school” or *fuzoku* system. The institution also had a high level of academic diversity as it was comprised of nine colleges and dozens of departments. Thus, in addition to accessibility, this student and academic diversity influenced my choice of the sampling site.

Theoretical sampling, a major tenet of GT (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), guided the participant recruitment strategy. At an earlier stage, to ensure diversity, I targeted a range of students in terms of their gender, academic year, and academic major. In practice, I asked course instructors in different disciplines (e.g., foreign languages, social sciences, and sports management) and for different years (e.g., introductory courses and senior seminar courses) to allow me to come into their class and briefly explain about this research. Sometimes, I was asked to provide a guest lecture or presentation, which seemed to help building trust with potential participants and make it easier for them to approach me afterwards about research participation.

The collected data, as described below, were analyzed immediately and findings informed the succeeding sampling decisions. For example, I recruited students who belonged to student groups, such as varsity sport teams or cultural clubs. This was because all 10 *ikigai* photographs provided by one earlier interviewee were related to her varsity experiences; in contrast with other students who emphasized the importance of having a wide range of experiences. Such unique groups of students were often recruited through snowball sampling (Patton, 2002). Specifically, I either asked previous participants to introduce me to students who met these additional criteria or I asked professors to pinpoint students and give them my contact information. In addition, I recruited students who reported either a high or low level of *ikigai* to test the applicability of an emerging theory. This sampling was possible by obtaining pre-interview survey information (and research consent) from a group of students and asking those who exhibited these characteristics to also be involved in the PEI stage.

I ceased collecting data when the concurrent analysis indicated that new information no longer adding substantial insights to the emerging theory. This point of theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) was regularly monitored and ultimately determined by (a) creating a different NVivo 10 file after each of the later PEI and/or analysis (a total of 24 files were made) and (b) comparing coding schemata as well as memos and diagrams across different NVivo files. Having said this, I concur with Holt's (2016) observation that "theoretical saturation remains a relative concept – a theory is never completely and irrefutably saturated" (p. 30). My approach was more consistent with Dey's (2007) idea of "theoretical adequacy" (p. 189). Specifically, given the MMR nature of this study and my pragmatist commitment (Kono, in press), I was looking for a theory substantive enough to guide the subsequent quantitative study.

The final sample was composed of 27 students (14 females; mean age of 20.26). This

sample size is comparable to the existing rules of thumb in the context of GT (e.g., Creswell, 2005; Morse, 2000) and evidence-based norm (e.g., Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Mason, 2010).

### **3.1.2 Data collection**

Participant-driven PEI was employed as the main data collection method so that students could provide concrete accounts on the rather abstract topic of *ikigai* (Tinkler, 2013). First, potential participants were asked to fill out a short survey that included questions about their demographic background, *ikigai* level, and leisure participation. Second, those invited to participate in the main study were given several days to: (a) choose a maximum of 10 photographs, taken by their smartphone, that they thought were related to their *ikigai*; (b) make a caption for each picture; and (c) provide brief descriptions (e.g., where and when the photos were taken). These activities facilitated participants' reflections on their *ikigai*. Third, a semi-structured interview (i.e., the average length of 106 minutes) was conducted in Japanese with each student, using the printed photographs and accompanying information (Figure 3.1). Each photograph was numbered, and I referred to numbers so that it would be clear what section of the transcripts referred to a particular picture. Interviewees were asked, for example: "Could you tell me about this photograph?" and "What in this photograph makes you feel *ikigai*?" (see Appendix A for the entire list of interview questions prepared in advance). Interviewees were not specifically asked about leisure until their initial accounts were exhausted. Additionally, photographs were grouped and ranked by participants to help them recognize abstract patterns (e.g., certain types of activities as sources of *ikigai*).

Participants received 3,000 JPY (roughly 30 CAD) in compensation. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed into Japanese by multiple professionals. This allowed for prompt,



*Figure 3.1.* A photo-elicitation interview scene.

concurrent data analysis and thus more focused subsequent data collection. Another technique that facilitated the simultaneous data collection and analysis process during this relatively limited time span was the use of research journals. After each PEI, I spent a few hours on writing down my initial observations, and specifically how information from the latest PEI fits, or does not fit, with the existing data and ongoing analysis. In total, three research journals, 243 pictures, and 1,293 pages of transcripts were collected. All data, including pre-interview surveys, photographs, and transcripts, were managed using NVivo 10.

### **3.1.3 Data analysis**

Data analysis was guided by Corbin and Strauss's (2015) variant of GT techniques. Immediately after each of my early interviews was transcribed, I read the entire transcripts and corresponding observation notes a few times. Then, I looked for "natural breaks" in the transcripts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 87; often a few lines or a paragraph) and labelled them with my initial interpretations. This practice is often called open coding through which GT users "open up" text data to possible meanings, concepts, and eventually a theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As Corbin and Strauss described this stage of analysis as "generative ... much like brainstorming" (p. 69), I attempted to code as many meanings as possible.

As more, and more focused, data were collected, I started to employ axial coding or coding around an emerging category: a conceptual block defined by its essence (i.e., property) and variations (i.e., dimensions) (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Specifically, I capitalized on Corbin and Strauss's analytical technique called "paradigm", which helps analysts identify key (inter)actions that protagonists are making to address an issue, as well as their conditions and consequences (pp. 156-160). In this study's context, the paradigm allowed me to focus on how students pursued *ikigai*, and what preceded and followed such (inter)actions. This technique

greatly shaped the resultant *ikigai* theory, and particularly its three sub-theories.

To expedite axial coding, I employed gerund or process coding (Saldona, 2013) through which analysts pay particular attention to (inter)actions within data by using gerunds (i.e., -ing) instead of nouns. Doing so specifically helped me detect the key (inter)actions within each *ikigai* sub-theory. Also axial coding is the act of relating categories in a theoretical meaningful, causal manner (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 124). Similar codes were grouped into more abstract categories using NVivo 10's coding function, while sub-dimensions of these categories were identified within codes and coded data. Moreover, my reflections and theorization of interrelationships among categories were documented in and facilitated by memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It was through this memo-writing process that I developed meaningful theories or “logical stories” based on conceptual blocks such as codes and categories. Memos were written throughout this analysis process.

In these memos, I also heuristically engaged with a number of analytical techniques suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2015, pp. 90-101). For instance, I constantly asked reflexive, simple questions about a category of interest. Doing so helped me identify the essence or property of a particular category and its variations or dimensions, while making it easier for me to take the informants' perspectives as I lived a college student's life in a different time and context. Another technique I often used was “thinking about the various meanings of a word” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pp. 96-97). When I was unsure of what interviewees meant by a certain word or phrase but it was clearly important to them, I brainstormed its' possible meanings. This method was helpful as the Japanese language has a number of words or phrases that are phonetically the same yet have different meanings.

I also capitalized on constant comparisons: “the analytic process of comparing different

pieces of data against each other for similarities and differences” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 85). The use of NVivo 10 made it easy to compare pieces of data labelled with a certain code, or similar codes, within and across transcripts. Another concept that aided my analysis was “the conditional/consequential matrix” or simply “matrix” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 163), which made me attentive to contextual factors that surrounded students’ (inter)actions related to their *ikigai*. Specifically, the use of matrix led to discovering layers of social, cultural, political, and economic macro-factors beyond individual issues. Lastly, I created and revised a number of diagrams throughout the analysis to visualize key categories and an overall theory. This process helped me think abstractly and theoretically: transitioning from describing data to explaining a phenomenon with data.

As my analysis matured, I proceeded to what Corbin and Strauss (2015) termed “theoretical integration” or the act of “linking categories around a central or core category to form theory” (p. 187). To do so, I sorted past memos across different theoretical categories, reviewed these memos, and wrote summary memos, in which I intentionally avoided referring to data, but tried to speak in terms of categories and their relationships. Further, I created comprehensive diagrams that captured all key categories. Through this process, I identified the core category of the present *ikigai* theory: *keiken* or valued experiences. I then ensured consistency within the categories and logical flow among related categories, filled in gaps in premature categories and relationships using existing or new data, and trimmed out unnecessary parts. Eventually, this analysis resulted in a total of 496 codes and 136 memos.

It is important to note that all coding was conducted in English, which allowed me to use gerunds in coding. Memos were also written in English, which made it possible to share some memos with my supervisor Dr. Gordon Walker, who did not speak the Japanese language.

Hence, the use of English had important analytical benefits. Yet, I was also aware that doing so had some methodological issues, such as missing nuances of the original Japanese and mis-translating/-interpreting data. To prevent these problems, I also adopted in-vivo coding in which analysts use “the actual words of research participants” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 85; Saldana, 2013).

#### **3.1.4 Trustworthiness**

Two main ways to evaluate GT studies involve: (a) the assessment of the process in which GT is implemented; and (b) the assessment of outcome theories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

In terms of the former procedural evaluation, I believe that the above descriptions meet most of the 16 criteria Corbin and Strauss (2015, pp. 350-351) proposed, except for a few points that are addressed below. In terms of (theoretical) sensitivity or “the ability to carefully listen and respect both participants and the data they provide” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 77), I will leave this to the readers to judge based on my descriptions of the following results. Whereas the overview of memo writing process and outcomes was provided above, I uploaded selected memos (written in English) to my researcher website (<http://www.shintarokono.com>) so that readers could “peek” at my analysis process. Doing so, I believe, increased the transparency of my GT study (cf. Hutchinson, Johnson, & Breckon, 2011). Furthermore, a few memos were randomly audited by my supervisor, Dr. Gordon Walker, every week (i.e., 20 memos in total) during the data collection time to monitor the quality of data interpretation and analysis. It is worth reiterating that the recruitment of students with unique college experiences (e.g., varsity) and with a low level of *ikigai* was a form of inspecting negative cases, as well. Finally, a resultant theory was shared with all participants approximately one year later, and 12 of them member-checked it by providing both quantitative and qualitative feedback on the theory (see



Appendix B for the member-check questions). For instance, they were asked to: (a) think of any past situation where they engaged in each of theoretically *ikigai*-inducing (inter)actions (i.e., core and major categories), or imagine if they did not have actual experience; and (b) rate how worthy their lives were or would have been in such situations. Qualitatively, they were asked to give advice to an imaginary friend who lacked in each of the *ikigai*-inducing (inter)actions. This process helped further explore the conditions of these (inter)actions, which were less developed categories in the original data and analyses. Such information contributed to finalizing my theory and greatly influenced the transition to the subsequent quantitative study (e.g., in terms of which conditions should be focused on).

With regard to the evaluation of outcome theories, I describe the following results while flagging some keywords Corbin and Strauss (2015, pp. 351-352) used in their list of 17 criteria (e.g., core category, context, process). This being said, I believe that the quality of theories cannot be proclaimed as it should be determined in relation to the extant literature as well as future research. Moreover, the value of resultant GT or any research outcomes is relative to the context to which readers apply the current theory. Lastly, this MMR project has the second quantitative phase to examine the applicability of the present GT to a larger, more heterogeneous sample of Japanese college students. Hence, the results of the quantitative phase will provide evidence for readers to evaluate the present GT.

### **3.2 Results**

Figure 3.2 is an overview diagram of the grounded theory (GT) of *ikigai* among Japanese university students. This model is strongly influenced by Corbin and Strauss's (2015) notion of "paradigm" that helped me identify conditions, (inter)actions, and consequences and thus produce an explanation with strong causal implications. Another feature of this model is that it is

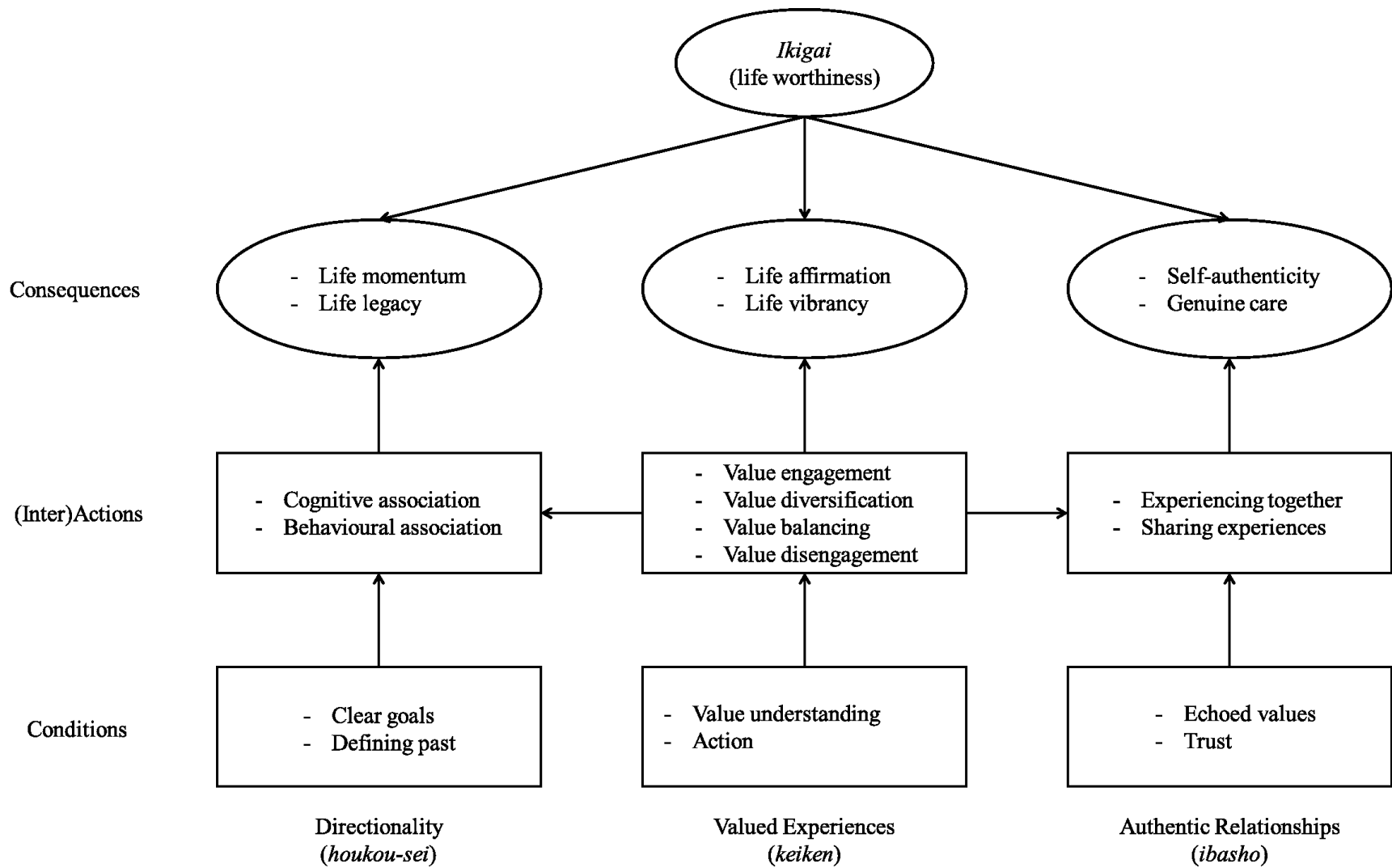


Figure 3.2. An overview diagram of an *ikigai* grounded theory among Japanese university students.

composed of three distinct sub-theories: (a) *keiken* or valued experiences, (b) *ibasho* or authentic relationships, and (c) *houkou-sei* or directionality. The following paragraphs offer a brief summary of each sub-theory and its components before I explain them in detail in the later subsections.

The first sub-theory of *keiken* or valued experiences addresses life worthiness based on students' current important experiences. Students particularly valued four types of experience characteristics: enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and comfort. As such, engaging with one of these experience values—i.e., value engagement—was a key action for students to improve their perception of *ikigai*. Students also engaged in multiple experience values—i.e., value diversification—which resulted in synergistic effects of different experiences on their perceived *ikigai* and prevented them from losing all valuable experiences at once. My informants also engaged in value balancing, or an act of finding a balance between competing experience values (e.g., enjoyment vs. effort), which positively affected their *ikigai* perception. Finally, students needed to disengage from overwhelming, mostly effortful experiences—i.e., value disengagement—so that they could maintain a high level of *ikigai* perception. The *keiken* sub-theory also identifies two types of *ikigai* perceptions. First, students felt that their daily lives were worth living, or what I call life affirmation, based on their evaluation of experience values they engaged in. Second, students also perceived that their daily lives were full of energy and motivation, or life vibrancy, as their motivation toward individual experiences carried over to their daily lives in general. The four *keiken*-related actions were conditioned by two factors: action or students' ability to act on opportunities for potentially valuable experiences without hesitation and value understanding that signifies knowledge of what value(s) is important in a given life circumstances.

*Ibasho*, or authentic relationships, is students' close interpersonal relationships evolving around their valued experiences. Two types of *ibasho* were discovered. The first is comradery that are relationships between students and their close others who are also involved in their valued experiences. The second is "family" or the relationship with close others who are not directly involved in students' valued experiences. With their comrades, students engaged in their valued experiences together: experiencing together. With their "family" members, students consulted about issues related to their experiences and obtained support from them: sharing experiences. These *ibasho* interactions led to two perceptions of quality relationships and thus life worthiness. First, students felt that they could be who they really were in their close relationships, which is termed self-authenticity. Second, students also perceived that their close others genuinely cared about them, which is called genuine care. The two *ibasho* interactions were conditioned by two factors. The first condition was shared values between students and their comrades, which facilitated them to engage in mutually valuable experiences. The second condition was trust between students and their "family" members, which allowed them to share their experience issues and discuss private matters.

*Houkou-sei*, or directionality, is a sense of direction in one's life, from the past, to the present, and to the future. It adds temporal dimension to the current theory of *ikigai*. Students engaged in two actions to enhance their directionality. First, cognitive association was their mental efforts to explicitly link their current experiences, self, and life to their past experiences or future goals. Second, behavioural association was to strategically choose current experiences that were clearly relevant to their past or future. These directionality associations resulted in two *ikigai* perceptions. One was life momentum, which was the perception that students' current lives were leading to their desired future. The other was life legacy, which was the perception

that their past had meaningfully contributed to their current lives and selves. The directionality associations were conditioned by two factors: having influential experiences in the past as well as setting clear goals about their future lives.

Among these categories or theoretical elements in a grounded theory, the core category was *keiken* or valued experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). *Ibasho*, and more precisely interactions within these authentic relationships, revolved around valued experiences. Present valued experiences served as the wedges between the past and future in the directionality associations. This core status of *keiken* was signified with two horizontal arrows in Figure 3.2 that connect the three sub-theories together. This interconnection among the three sub-theories was also the reason why I did not choose to report just one of them, but included all three.

One may ask: “where is leisure in this GT?” This is a crucial question as part of the current study’s focus was on leisure and its relationship with an emerging *ikigai* theory. The answer is that leisure resides in each one of the (inter)actions. Some leisure experiences were valued by the participants, shared with their close others, and associated with their past and future, all three of which enhanced their *ikigai* perceptions.

In the following sections, I elaborate on each of the three sub-theories. Under each sub-theory, I first describe what each of valued experiences, authentic relationships, and directionality meant for my informants, and explain a few key variations or “dimensions” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Second, I provide a brief explanation of social, cultural, political, and/or economic contexts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) in which each sub-theory should be understood. Third, I articulate the “paradigm” or causal relationship among conditions, (inter)actions, and consequences of each sub-theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Throughout these explanations, I constantly refer to leisure experiences using relevant interview quotations.

### 3.2.1 The sub-theory of *keiken* or valued experiences

#### 3.2.1.1 What is *keiken*?

In Japanese, the word “*keiken*” denotes experience. However, one of its connotative meanings is a specific type of experience that is valued by participants. Early interviewees used this connotative meaning to describe experiences captured in some of their *ikigai* photographs. For example, the third participant, Sayaka, rated a group of “*keiken*-related” pictures second most important in terms of her *ikigai*. She perceived substantial value within her collection of unique experiences:

I played on the volleyball varsity, worked as a tutor at a private school, traveled a lot, and studied abroad. I think there wouldn’t be many people around the world who did all of this. I feel they are my original experiences. ... [The study abroad program] costed me 500,000 yen. But, I think it was worth it.

When later interviewees were probed about the relevance of *keiken*, virtually all of them identified some of their *ikigai* pictures as being their *keiken*. These experiences ranged from studying for an English exam, to hanging out with friends, to playing a sport on a varsity team, to pursuing one’s hobbies, and to traveling to a foreign country. However, what was consistent across these cases—the key property of *keiken* (Corbin & Strauss, 2015)—was the *personal and social significance* for the students. My interviewees called their experiences as “*ii keiken* (good experience)”, “*kichouna keiken* (valuable experience)”, and “*daijina keiken* (important experience)”. All of these expressions indicated some level of personal significance of the mentioned experiences for my informants. Besides personal significance, social values and norms played a role, too. For instance, Tidus valued experiences related to his hobby—photography—because he received validations from his significant others: “*Keiken*. ...

Photography was the first thing that I like and can tell to anyone. It's partly because my parents praised [my pictures]. It helped me discover something that I don't feel embarrassed by sharing it". Lastly, it is important to emphasize that Tidus's photography, along with travelling and varsity sport in Sayaka's quotation, exemplified valued *leisure* experiences.

In addition to the above defining "property" of *keiken*, Corbin and Strauss's (2015) GT prompted me to explore how this personal and social significance varied across experiences, or the analytic issue called "dimension". My analysis identified four distinct types of experience value: *tanoshimi* or enjoyment, *ganbari* or effort, *shigeki* or stimuli, and *iyashi* or comfort.

### **The value of *tanoshimi* or enjoyment**

Enjoyment, or *tanoshimi* in Japanese, was one dominant type of value that my interviewees associated with their *keiken*. Many *tanoshimi*-related experiences involved their favourite activities, such as sports, music, travels, baking, and even studies in some cases. Thus, the value of enjoyment was, not surprisingly, closely connected to their leisure experiences.

One reason why these enjoyable experiences were valued was their intrinsic attractiveness. In other words, the students found value in pursuing enjoyable experiences in itself. Violet succinctly summarized this point in the context of socializing with her friends: "To me, *ikigai* is basically to feel 'Oh, it's so fun!' And hanging out [with friends] is fun, isn't it? So, I chose this photograph". Also strongly associated with enjoyment were bodily experiences, such as eating, listening to music, exercising, and even napping. The participants simply enjoyed the pleasant sensations these experiences provided. For example, Makoto, a former competitive brass band team member, included a picture taken from a concert he had recently attended. This was because the event reminded him of pleasant musical experiences: "[Music] is really important to me. ... I feel very good or excited about ... transitions in sounds. Like, when I focus

on the transition from the fourth chord to fifth chord or so, I'm like, 'it's so beautiful!' (Laughter)" Thus, one of the reasons enjoyment was valued in relation to *ikigai* was simply its intrinsic attractiveness.

Another important reason why the students valued their enjoyable experiences was because these pursuits allowed them to become absorbed in the present moment. For example, Sayaka went through intense present-focused experiences at a recent concert by her favourite rock band:

I was jumping for three hours. (Laughter) ... I was always "up". ... When I came back to my mind, I wished that the moment would not end. Like, "please don't finish this". And, I don't think we have so many times in our lives when we wish the moment wouldn't go away.

Hence, the rarity of absorptive experiences made enjoyment more valuable. Kanon also found the time she spent on her hobby of photography fly by: "I love airplanes. And I like to go to an airport ... to take pictures. (Laughter) ... The time I spent watching airplanes was so fun that it flew by. So, I thought this might be part of my *ikigai*". Therefore, enjoyable experiences allowed the students to immerse themselves in the present moment, which in turn they found valuable.

### **The value of *ganbari* or effort**

Another value that my participants frequently cited in relation to their *ikigai* was *ganbari*, or effort. Interestingly, they often contrasted this value with enjoyment. For example, Kaze stated: "Well, *ikigai* isn't [only] about enjoyment, but it's everything including difficult and tough things. *Ikigai* is a life where you feel like, 'Let's make an effort'". Not surprisingly, effortful experiences were characterized by their challenging nature. For example, Mizuki, a varsity staff member, chose all 10 *ikigai* photographs related to the athletic aspect of her life. Her



accounts suggested that varsity experiences involved a multitude of challenges, such as completing errand-type work in a timely manner and showing respect to senior members. Nonetheless, these difficulties, and persevering through them, were the very reason why she valued her varsity experiences: “If the varsity team was not so strict and was really casual like a recreational club, I would not have felt *ikigai* probably, and perhaps would have quit it already”. Makoto experienced different levels of challenge in the same activity: studying abroad. His second study abroad experience in the U.K. “was not as impactful as” his first program in Germany. This was because in the latter program he was challenged by high-achieving students from other countries, whereas in the U.K., he stayed with his Japanese friends. Thus, challenge was what made effortful experiences so valuable that students could extract *ikigai* out of them.

However, challenge did not come without a price. It often resulted in negative immediate outcomes such as setbacks, frustration, and stress. For example, Chika valued studying English as one of her effortful experiences, along with related international experiences. However, the studying process forced her to compare herself with other competitive students, and to feel “depressed” sometimes: “All of my friends will go to study abroad programs, and so will I. They are all making efforts toward the programs. I feel that I am not studying as hard as my friends. ... I felt very depressed”. These negative outcomes were mentioned in other effortful experiences, including varsity commitments, serious hobbies, and volunteer work.

In spite of these initial negative outcomes, effortful experiences led to long-term positive outcomes when the students persevered through challenges. Two major consequences repeatedly mentioned in the interviews were accomplishments and self-enhancement. The difference between these two became clear when I employed Corbin and Strauss’s (2015) analytic technique to ask multiple meanings of a word. In this case, a Japanese phrase “*mi-ni-naru*” had

multiple meanings. If the phrase is used with a Chinese character 実—meaning “fruit” in itself, it means fruitfulness and something (e.g., a project) coming to an outcome. This usage indicates that efforts lead to accomplishments. If another Chinese character 身—denoting “body”—is used in the same expression, it means that something becomes part of one’s body, mind, or more generally self. This is often used in the context of learning, and suggests that efforts result in self-enhancement.

The first outcome of effortful experiences, accomplishments, was derived when the students directed their efforts toward external goals and projects. For example, they persisted in completing assignments, preparing for an exam, training for a sport competition, and organizing an event. Yoku engaged in these externally driven efforts through his commitment to a student orientation committee. One of his *ikigai* pictures—captioned as “proof” (Figure 3.3)—showed autographs given by a celebrity guest speaker whom the committee invited to a campus-wide event. This picture was symbolic proof that he successfully organized such a large event: “This [committee] influences all recreational student groups. We sometimes host an event for all students, and invite some celebrities. So, that’s important. I can get feedback from various people, which makes me feel accomplished”. Ayane encountered an opportunity for accomplishments during her study abroad program in Hawaii. This two-month program was designed based on project-based learning in which participants wrestled with increasingly more difficult assignments. Ayane described how accomplished she felt at the end of each module:

[The program] was challenging, but I felt really accomplished. Every Friday, we were forced to make a presentation. We couldn’t often sleep on [Thursday] nights. But, on Friday nights, ... we were like, “Oh, this week is finally over. It’s really TGIF [Thanks God It’s Friday]”. (Laughter)

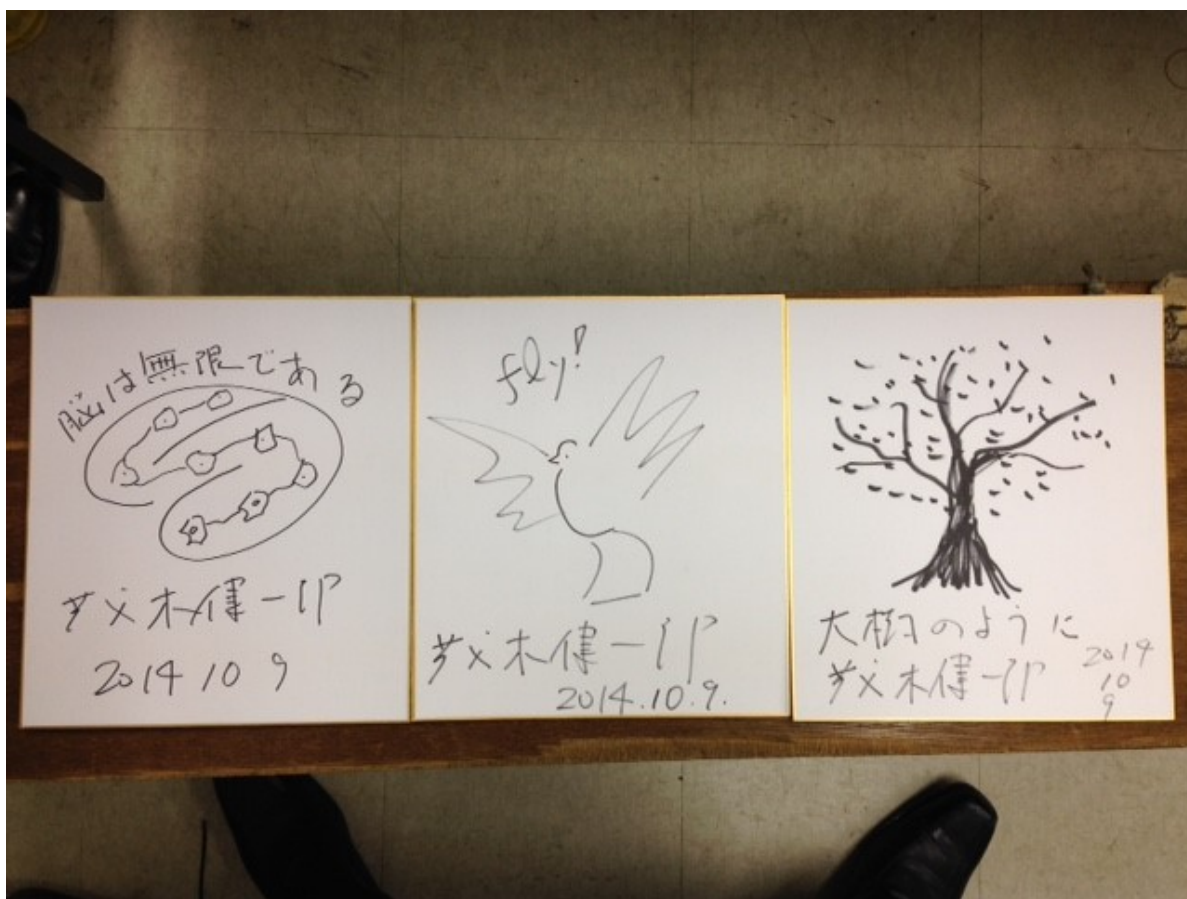


Figure 3.3. One of Yoku's *ikigai* photographs captioned "proof".

The other long-term outcome of effortful experiences—self-enhancement—followed when the interviewees directed their efforts to their internal self and personal growth. For example, Naomi experienced self-enhancement through her varsity soccer commitment. As a member who had no past experience playing the sport, Naomi could not play during any games. This meant that she struggled with directing her efforts to external goals (e.g., making a goal, winning a game). Nonetheless, Naomi valued her varsity experiences because she could redirect her efforts internally: “[What I learned from the varsity] is the never-give-up spirit and the importance of not comparing myself with others, I guess? ... And I have become more sympathetic toward people around me”. Remi also had self-enhancing experiences through her volunteer work as a staff member of a local soccer club. Her job was to schedule practices, communicate with players, and help finance the team. She reflected on resultant personal changes:

Because I work with grown-ups [on the team], it’s like I learned what all of us would have to learn once we graduate from school. ... When I make mistakes, I shouldn’t be just apologetic ... Now I can think of ... how I can recover from the mistake.

Thus, the students’ perception of *ikigai* resulted from their effortful experiences associated with the two major long-term outcomes: accomplishments and self-enhancement.

### **The value of *shigeki* or stimuli**

The third value my student interviewees associated with their experiences was stimuli or *shigeki* in Japanese. These experiences often took place in new environments for the participants, involved unfamiliar activities, allowed them to mingle with new people, and exposed them to novel ideas and perspectives. There were two reasons why the students valued these stimulating experiences, depending on how new a particular experience was.

On the one hand, there were many cases in which the students experienced a level of stimuli just enough to keep their daily lives fresh and exciting. The same phrase—“spicing up”—was used to describe these experiences. For instance, Yu provided many *ikigai* photographs from his past trips. This choice was because he “like[d] seeing different things”, especially “things [he] did not know”. Yu continued: “we only get one life to live. We have to add spices to it”. Similarly, Jotaro selected a few *ikigai* photographs that represented “a little new thing”. One of them was playing survival games<sup>5</sup> that his new college friends introduced to him. For Jotaro, it was not the activity but the importance of trying new things that qualified as his *ikigai*: “Well, it’s not really about survival games. Trying new things leads to stimuli. Doing these ‘go-to’ things is good, too. But, I felt new challenges also become my *ikigai*”. Therefore, a certain level of stimuli on a regular basis helped the students spice up their daily lives.

On the other hand, there were also some instances in which the participants were exposed to very novel ideas and perspectives, which deeply transformed their value systems. Thus, the impacts of these stimulating experiences were far more profound than just spicing up things. For example, Iori captioned her *ikigai* photograph in Figure 3.4 taken in her study abroad program in Singapore as “the best experience in [her] life”. In the following, she explained why this event was so transforming:

I experienced a lot of things that I could not in Japan. ... It’s related to Singaporean culture. There are three major ethnic groups, and their cultures are mixed. ... It’s not just languages [I learned]. ... If I can put it dramatic, [I got] a [new] view of life. ... There

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<sup>5</sup> A survival game is a real-life shooting game in which participants split into two or more teams and shoot opponents with a toy gun and paint bullets. Often, it is played in outdoor areas, such as forests and mountains.

were people who lived with values that I didn't know.



*Figure 3.4. One of Iori's ikigai photographs captioned “the best keiken in life”.*

Likewise, Makoto had a life-changing experience in his first study abroad program in Germany:

I met a lot of German people and those from different countries, which made me realize ... how immature I was. ... That was my wake-up call. ... When I was a freshman, I was taking only easy courses. When I felt lazy, I didn't go to [classes]. ... [The program in] Germany made me realize that's not good. And that's the point where I changed, really.

That's why [the program] was very important experience to me.

As such, extraordinary experiences stimulated my informants so strongly that they substantially changed the students' values and attitudes. My interviewees valued such effects.

### **The value of *iyashi* or comfort**

The fourth and last value my informants associated with their *keiken* was comfort or *iyashi* in Japanese. Comforting experiences usually involved ordinary activities that took place in familiar places and with regular companions. Thus, the value of comfort was often contrasted with that of stimuli. For example, Violet, who emphasized the importance of “doing something new” in terms of her *ikigai*, was asked to imagine a hypothetical situation involving partaking only in stimulating experiences. This question prompted her to realize the significance of ordinary or “stable” experiences as opposed to extraordinary or “unstable” ones: “That [hypothetical situation] wouldn't be good. It would be exhaustive. ... It's no good because it's too much”.

One reason why the students valued comforting experiences was that in these situations they could feel safe and free of judgment. For example, Jotaro described regular reunions with his old friends from his elementary and junior high schools as comforting: “We only do similar things, like go-to stuff. For example, camping. ... Hanging out with them feels like ‘usual’. In a

way, it's relaxing. It's fun, but this is the group where I feel relieved and free of concerns". This quotation indicated that enjoyment and comfort were not the same value, although related. Interestingly, several interviewees included *ikigai* pictures related to their interactions with animals. Aside from the fact that being with animals was simply relaxing, this was because unlike interactions with other people, the students did not have to worry about judgement and conflicts with animals. Shio, for example, cherished time spent with her cats, especially when she felt tired of her studies and part-time job:

[I want to touch cats and get comforted] when I ... have a headache because of studying too much. In terms of my part-time job, ... there are some annoying customers like those who come after we close or people who complain. ... I'm like "Ugh!" ... I wanna feel warm and cozy [by touching cats].

Thus, comforting experiences allowed the students to feel safe and free of everyday concerns.

Another significance of comforting experiences was related to the fact that the students spent an extended period of time with these experiences. Such long-term involvement led them to develop a sense of self around these pursuits. Hence, (re)engaging in these comforting experiences helped the students validate their sense of self. For example, Kakeru felt this way when he played an electronic organ—the activity he had done since he was four years old: "I played [an electronic organ] for a long time. It's something I can do without trying to be more than who I am; it's something where I feel relaxed". Also activities, objects, people, and places associated with long-standing experiences served as valuable constants in their rapidly changing college lives. Kanon captioned the picture of her pet dog (Figure 3.5) as quite literally "*iyashi*". She believed that interactions with this dog were so comforting and valuable because he had been in her life for so long that he was taken for granted:



[My dog] may be more than family. ... It's taken for granted that [the dog] is there. In the



*Figure 3.5.* One of Kanon's *ikigai* photographs captioned "*iyashi*" or comfort.

morning, he comes to wake me up. At night, I sleep with him. I go with him anywhere....

He is like air, I guess? He is always there, cute, comforting.

In this manner, the students also valued long-term, comforting experiences as these experiences helped them secure their sense of self and functioned as something they could count on.

To conclude, *keiken* or valued experiences was defined by its key property (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), personal and social significance. As Corbin and Strauss urged researchers to inspect dimensions or variations in such a property, my analysis identified four types of experience value: enjoyment (*tanoshimi*), effort (*ganbari*), stimuli (*shigeki*), and comfort (*iyashi*). Enjoyable experiences had straightforward intrinsic attractiveness for the students, which also offered them intense absorption into the present moment. Such focus on the here-and-now was not readily available in their busy college lives. When the students persevered through effortful, even temporarily frustrating experiences, they found two major types of long-term outcomes: either accomplishments or self-enhancement, depending on whether their efforts were directed toward external goals or inner self, respectively. Stimulating experiences involving new activities, places, and people helped the interviewees “spice up” their daily lives and keep them exciting; extraordinary experiences, such as encountering very novel ideas, transformed the students’ values and attitudes. Ordinary experiences provided them with spaces where they could feel safe and free of judgments, while some long-standing experiences served as a basis for their identity and a constant amid life changes. As the quotations illustrated, my informants associated their leisure-like experiences with all four values.

#### **3.1.1.2 Why is *keiken* so important?: The matrix of minimum life**

So far, I have explained what *keiken* or valued experiences are and how it varies across the four types of experience values. However, an important question remains: why was *keiken*

important for the students to achieve a life worth living? In other words, what life context(s) gave rise to their belief that valued experiences were an integral part of *ikigai*? To address this, I employed an analytic tool Corbin and Strauss (2015) called “the matrix”. The matrix helps users detect multiple layers of micro, meso, and macro factors—and complex dynamics between them—that influence (inter)actions of protagonists in a given GT.

This analysis made me realize that while my informants recounted how their valued experiences made them feel *ikigai*, they were also aware of the possibility that their lives could become valueless. They often described a life without *keiken*, and thus a worthless life, as “minimum” and “mundane”. This idea of “minimum life” and a fear of it strongly drove the students to pursue potential *keiken* and a life worth living. For example, Yoku related his motivation toward multiple valuable experiences (e.g., student groups, hobbies) with his anxiety about falling into a minimum life situation as he did during high school:

I feel anxious, when I don’t do anything. ... In my high school days, ... I was stumped [about what to do] and did not do anything. Years later, I look back at those days, and think that ... if I did more things back then, they could have led to something.

As such, the idea of minimum life among the students was not merely metaphysical, but often based on their past experiences of it. Masaomi was one of the interviewees who thought they recently went through a minimum state of life. He described his school life before starting some effortful and stimulating experiences: “A life lacks changes. It’s like attend four classes ... every day, come home, kill some time at home, sleep, wake up in the next morning, and do it again. It feels like repeating the same set every week”. Clearly, Masaomi and other students in their minimum state *did* things; however, they did not do what they valued specifically in relation to the four experience values. They were aware that their college live could become easily

routinized, stagnated, and thus less valuable without actively pursuing *keiken*.

My analysis also indicated that the minimum life was not only an individual issue, but also a structural problem as job-hunting systematically reminded the students of this undesirable state. In it, the students were forced to reflect on value of their college lives. Although job-hunting in Japan is unique in many ways, what is pertinent here is that students do not apply for specific positions, but for companies; this means that recruitment criteria do *not* concern applicants' degrees and skills, *but* rather focus on their general aptitudes and interpersonal skills (Japan Business Federation, 2014). This criterion is sometimes called *ningen-ryoku* or "human capacities". My interviewees appeared to form a belief that this broad range of qualities could be acquired through hands-on, socially desirable experiences outside of academic courses and formal education systems. For instance, when Yoku was job-hunting, his mentor professor taught him the importance of cultivating originality based on *keiken*:

I think there is added value to each individual. ... What I have done differently from others, and why I did those things. Right now, I am actually doing the job-hunting. I think that I can sell myself based on [those experiences].

Even Iori, a first-year student, was aware of the job-hunting process and the importance of engaging in various experiences: "I often hear about job-hunting [from my part-time work co-workers]. ... They say it's better to do internship". Another co-worker also told her that studying abroad could help, which drove her to pursue this potentially valuable experience.

To summarize, *keiken* or valued experiences was an important pathway through which the students pursued *ikigai* or a life worth living, because without it, they believed that their daily lives could default back to an undesirable state called the minimum life: a life characterized by routine and mundane tasks. In addition to their own past experiences of this state, the job-hunting

process pressured the students to reflect on the value of their college lives and make them more valuable.

### **3.1.1.3 The paradigm of *keiken* or valued experiences**

The most important question regarding *keiken* or valued experiences is: *how* did the students pursue valued experiences? To answer this question, I capitalized on an analytic technique called “paradigm” that “helps analysts code around a category” so that they can identify related conditions, (inter)actions, and consequences (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 153). In the following, I describe categories within the sub-theory of *keiken* (Figure 3.2) in more detail starting from the actions and followed by their consequences and conditions.

#### **The actions of valued experiences**

My analysis suggested that the informants pursued *keiken* or valued experiences through four distinct actions: (a) value engagement, (b) value diversification, (c) value balancing, and (d) value disengagement.

#### ***Value engagement***

How can one “do a valued experience”? This analytical question led me to distinguish between “valuable” and “valued” experiences. Doing *keiken* is an act of bringing potentially valuable, or value-able, experiences into actuality. This process required *not only* the students’ behavioural involvement in a targeted activity *but also* their cognitive valuation of the experience. More specifically, the students needed to partake in the activity in such a manner that corresponded to its potential value(s). If one found an activity as “enjoy-able”, then he or she needed to engage with this value by, for example, focusing on the present moment and finding pleasure in bodily sensations. If one found an activity “comfort-able”, then he or she needed to engage with this value by, for instance, not being concerned with other everyday issues. Thus,

the students needed to align both their behaviours and cognitions with the type(s) of experience value their activities afforded. This applied to all of the four types of experience value: enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and comfort.

This process of value engagement became evident when the interviewees described differences between their valued experiences and other activities. For example, Iori discussed how her effortful experiences related to brass band music differed from her past similarly challenging activities:

I was totally half-hearted up until junior high school. ... I played piano from three, but I stopped it eventually. ... I did swimming, but I quit it because it wasn't fun. ... I quit all those things because I did not like something about them. ... I faced a barrier, felt like "Oh, I can't", and then quit it. But, in the case of brass band music, I hit a real obstacle, but overcame it. It was so different in a sense of accomplishment.

Thus, what distinguished these activities was that Iori persisted through challenges—engaged with the value of effort—related to brass band music, while she did not for the other activities. Also noteworthy is that clearly Iori did not value these past activities as she “did not like” them. In terms of stimuli, Fuyumi's case of studying abroad was revealing. One of her *ikigai* pictures represented the transition from the first half of the program when she could not fit in a group of participants to the second half where she could:

At first, I was only with Japanese. I hated myself for doing that. ... But, in the latter half, we became friends through sports. ... People over there were so active until 3 or 4 am. ... We played sports, volleyball, until 3 am and bonded.

Hence, what made this experience truly stimulating and valuable was Fuyumi's decision to embrace new environments and ideas by getting out of a circle of Japanese friends. In this

fashion, value engagement required the alignment between potential value(s) of activities and one's behaviours and cognitions.

### ***Value diversification***

To further enhance their perceived *ikigai*, my informants often engaged with multiple experience values (e.g., enjoyment and effort) within their daily lives, or what I termed value diversification. Diversifying experience values elevated their *ikigai* level beyond the additive effects of individual experiences. This became apparent when the informants were asked to think of a hypothetical situation wherein they lost one or more of their valued experiences. For example, although Kakeru stressed his efforts to become a pilot in relation to his *ikigai*, he also recognized the importance of having comforting and enjoyable experiences, such as playing an electronic organ and running a marathon—the activities he labeled as leisure:

I am not an airplane geek. ... It's not like I go to an airport and come home with my heart being comforted. To me, airplane symbolizes something I make an effort toward. ... But, airplanes do not make me satisfied entirely. ... I have something else with which I can feel relaxed. ... I think having totally different things [from making efforts toward the dream] is very important.

Thus, Kakeru alluded to the synergy between effort and comfort/enjoyment. In contrast, Sayaka was a strong advocate of enjoyment; however, she still believed that a hypothetical life only with enjoyable experiences, and without effortful ones, would not be as worth living as her real life:

[If I had only enjoyable activities] I'm not sure if I could enjoy them like I do. ... Say, we decide to go out on this day, but there is a class. The class would be absolutely boring compared to the hang-out. [But] because I go through it, I can enjoy [hanging out with friends]. Well, it's fun anyway, but I doubt that it would be enjoyable enough to let me

feel *ikigai*.

This commentary also indicated the synergy of value diversification positively impacted the students' *ikigai* beyond the effects of individual experiences.

Two subtypes of value diversification were also identified: (a) *diversification across experiences* and (b) *diversification within an experience*. The former was the simpler way to engage with different values across multiple experiences. For example, one could make efforts in studies, while perceiving enjoyment in his or her hobby. When Kanon summarized her view of *ikigai*, she referred to multiple experiences and associated different values with each of them:

What is *ikigai* for me? ... All of these [photographs]. Having a cup [of coffee]—delicious. Having a relaxing time—happy. ... Playing piano to replicate that song—fun. Travelling and realizing that I can speak English better—fun. ... And [my dog] comforts me and makes me happy.

Kosuke, another aviation student, compartmentalized his life into effortful experiences to pursue his dream to become a pilot and enjoyable experiences through his hobby:

Personally, I want to separate my [future] work and private lives. Suppose I love airplanes and make them my hobby *and* job. If I fail in things related to airplanes, then my hobby would be destroyed, too. So, it's nice if I can enrich my hobby, something other than airplanes, I guess. It's like synergy, perhaps.

This quotation describes another important role of value diversification, which I call risk management. That is, having multiple valued experiences reduced the risk of losing all of them at once, and thus falling into the minimum life state.

My conceptualization of value diversification, however, was seriously challenged by Mizuki, who provided all 10 *ikigai* photographs related to her varsity staff experiences. A closer



inspection into her accounts resulted in detecting the other subtype of value diversification within an experience, meaning that Mizuki experienced different values through her varsity commitment. The following excerpt supported this:

When I joined the team as a player, playing a new sport was fun in many ways, right? I could feel accomplished in many things ... Since I turned into a staff, I can see [other] players from a different perspective from player's. That's new fun.

At least three values—enjoyment, effort, and stimuli—could be seen in this comment. This subtype of diversification was further tested through theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) of other varsity athletes (e.g., Bunta, Hinata, and Naomi). While none of them exhibited as extreme a choice of pictures as Mizuki, their accounts supported this hypothesis. For instance, Hinata ranked her varsity experience as the most important contributor to her *ikigai* because she could “experience the most diverse things here [on the team]”. She described the experience as both effortful *and* enjoyable:

In this team, each member has ... at least two jobs. ... During my first year, [working for the team] taught me a lot of things that will help me when I graduate. ... We have the goal to win the national championship at the intercollegiate level, so we do our best toward it. And [the sport] is simply fun.

As such, when the students had one dominating experience, they tended to engage with multiple values within it so that they could still diversity experience values in their daily lives.

### ***Value balancing***

Another action to pursue *ikigai* through valued experiences was what I termed value balancing. This was the process through which the students found and maintained a balance between competing values. As discussed in relation to the four experience values (see p. 115),

the value of effort was often contrasted with that of enjoyment, whereas stimuli was opposite to comfort. Thus, balancing between enjoyable and effortful experiences, or between stimulating and comforting experiences, had an added value to their pursuit of *ikigai*. For example, Yoku stated, “*Ikigai* is to do [work and hobby] in a balanced way”, with work symbolizing effort and hobby mostly indicating enjoyment. While ranking his *ikigai* photographs, Jotaro referred to the balance between ordinary, comforting experiences and new, stimulating experiences:

I thought what I do all the time and new challenges are both equally important. ... I found [international travel] fun, and look forward to doing it more, so it’s the number one. And this [picture of me hanging out with old friends] is nothing new, but still what I want to continue for the rest of my life. That’s the other most important thing.

This excerpt about different leisure experiences also suggested that a better balance among competing values was facilitated especially through their leisure pursuits. Kanon supported this possibility when she explained a photograph of a spur-of-the-moment tennis match she enjoyed with her friends:

I have been pretty busy with the [extracurricular activity]. ... We have study trips every week. I can’t really have time focused on hanging out now. But, when a class was cancelled, ... my classmates and I were like, “Let’s play tennis!” and just did it. I felt that such time was very important to me. ... The time [for the extracurricular program] is good, too, for sure. ... But, having time when I can move my body without thinking of those [effortful] things is necessary for me. ... I need both. The key is a balance.

Thus, when the effortful experience preoccupied her daily life, enjoying the sport—albeit momentarily—helped her achieve balance. Value balancing, especially through leisure, was another action toward enhancing *ikigai*.

After identifying the balance across experience values, the following question arose: What was the ideal balance between the values? The answer based on the data was: it depended on students' situations. My informants were cognizant of norms regarding what value(s) they should prioritize more in a given situation (e.g., first vs. fourth year). Other people and institutions played a role in shaping these norms. For instance, although Jotaro's view of *ikigai* centered on enjoyment, as a fourth-year student he was conscious of the need to make efforts in graduation thesis and job-hunting. His parents affected this awareness:

I think I am making an effort pretty well. Probably, if I was doing this [job-hunting] for myself, I might have felt like "that's enough" and stopped somewhere in the middle. ... Motivation [to strive]? I guess I don't want to be a burden [of my parents]. ... [My parents] told me that they were investing a lot of money on me.

There were also some instances where enjoyment became a priority in students' lives. An example was Ayane's summer vacation during her last year of high school just after she was accepted for university. She was freed from all effortful responsibilities:

I was like, "Oh, yeah!" It was so much fun. I also quit a part-time job. ... I could focus solely on [hanging out with my home-stay guests]. I didn't have to think of exams ... I didn't have to work part-time. ... Just my friends. Because it's the summer vacation.

Thus, the ideal balance across the experience values depended on social norms related to particular situations in the students' lives. These norms formed through their interactions with friends, parents, and teachers, as well as social institutions, such as job-hunting process, vacation time, and college admission.

### ***Value disengagement***

The fourth and last action that constituted the *keiken* sub-theory was to detach oneself

from overwhelming, often effortful experiences. I termed this process as value disengagement. As previously described (see p. 117), effortful experiences caused immediate negative outcomes, such as stress and frustration. Thus, engaging with them over time took an emotional toll on students' well-being. In some extreme cases this resulted in a state I called over-engagement, where students felt overwhelmed and worn out by the challenges they faced and could no longer continue engaging with them. For instance, Shio had to miss some classes because a series of effortful experiences, and associated stress, negatively affected her body:

When did I get overwhelmed? ... In May, I quit [a student group]. ... Because our leader was like "Let's do this and that" without thinking much. ... I did those works, started a part-time job, and had to talk to my parents about my allowance. On top of them, all studies came up. I was like "Ugh!" ... Because of stress, I couldn't move my arms and legs.

Another example was Ayane's two-month study abroad program in which she served as a leader of 40 other participants. She faced conflicts with other students. Although she retrospectively valued this effortful experience, she also provided a poignant account of how stressful it was at the time: "I lost eight kilograms [during the program]. ... The first one month was so tough. I couldn't eat, and if I ate, I'd throw it up. It was so hard". Thus, it was very important for the students to take "time out" from such overwhelming experiences so that they could maintain their well-being as well as re-engage with these challenging experiences.

My interviewees called this act of taking time out *ikinuki*, or breather. This was often done through casual leisure pursuits. For instance, Figure 3.6 represented Fuyumi's value disengagement through a spur-of-the-moment night-out with her local friends:

[The night-out] made me feel refreshed. Now, I have a lot of assignments and have to do



*Figure 3.6.* One of Fuyumi's *ikigai* photographs about a spur-of-the-moment night-out with her local friends.

a lot of things to prepare for the study abroad program. It's so much stress ... I just went for it after a long time, and it was so fun. It made me feel motivated [again for the studies].

Thus, the value of this night-out was not only enjoyment, but also distancing her from overwhelming effortful, academic experiences. Noteworthy here was that Fuyumi did not emphasize stress coping as this experience's outcome, but underscored regained motivation for her studies. Value disengagement differed from stress coping in that the former focused on re-engaging with a stressor, while the latter's purpose being to mitigate negative emotional impacts of the stressor. In addition to casual enjoyment, simple activities also helped the students disengage from overwhelming experiences. For example, Iori turned to her hobby of photography, as well as her good friends, when she felt overwhelmed:

Like, "Ugh, I have assignments and I have to do stuff for [the volunteer work]. Oh my god!" (Laughter) ... I wanted to kind of forget about all of them, once. (Laughter) ...

Well, if I go to school like usual, take classes, go home, and do homework, what I have to do is constantly in my mind. ... But, when I am taking photos and being with these [friends], I don't remember [what I have to do]. I don't think of it. ... It creates a pause in that preoccupied, "oh-my-god" moment. Once I have that pause, I can reset myself into a neutral state. I can't keep going with the "oh-my-god" state.

Hence, simple activities helped them clear their minds, when they felt preoccupied by their challenging experiences.

### **The consequences of valued experiences**

Valued experiences—value engagement, diversification, balancing, and disengagement—resulted in two perceptions that their lives were rich in *ikigai*: (a) life affirmation and (b) life

vibrancy.

### ***Life affirmation***

Through their *keiken*, my informants often perceived that their daily lives were worth living. I call this subjective perception life affirmation. For my interviewees, *ikigai* meant this experience-based, concrete feeling of life worthiness, rather than an abstract metaphysical idea of meaning. For example, Bunta believed that his major effortful experience—varsity baseball—made his college life as worthy as, if not worthier than, other non-athlete students' lives:

Because I am doing this [varsity baseball], I wouldn't lag behind people who come to school just as student. I think I am learning a lot [from the varsity experience]. Of course, this means that I can't study as much as [non-athlete students], but I feel that [the varsity] has taught me something important other than [studies].

Bunta's belief in the value of his college life was closely related to his varsity experience. It appeared that the value of individual experiences was generalized to the value of the students' daily lives. Effortful experiences were not only the source of life affirmation. For example, Eri's daily experiences in her academic program were predominantly enjoyable, including hanging out with friends who shared her passion for sports. These enjoyable experiences made Eri believe in the value of her college life to the extent that the first-year student could not imagine having this valuable college life in any other program: "I think that there is no other [my department]. ... I thought of other programs. But, after I came here, I wondered, 'what would have been like if I could not come here?'" To further validate this finding of life affirmation, the member-check participants were asked to provide an example of their *keiken* and describe how they felt while engaging in it. Kanon referred to her participation in an international student conference as an organizing member:

[The conference] was a type of experiences only college students could get. ... I feel that doing valuable experiences has positive effects not only on things in the area of that particular experience, but also all experiences and my life [in general].

Hence, experience values the students perceived were carried over to their daily lives in general. In other words, the interviewees valued *not only* their individual experiences, *but also* their current life that allowed for such experiences.

### ***Life vibrancy***

When my participants engaged in *keiken*, the other consequence was their subjective perception that their daily lives were full of energy and motivation. This was because the students were strongly driven to pursue experiences that they valued, and this motivation toward specific experiences spilled over into their daily lives in general. I call this perception life vibrancy. For example, Kaze defined *ikigai* as “the state in which I am looking forward to the future and feeling fired up like, ‘Let’s do this!’” She felt this way, as her old dream to become a dancer at the Tokyo Disney Resort had recently resurfaced. Since then, she had engaged in a few dance-related, effortful experiences, including practicing dance at a studio and organizing dance-based extracurricular events. Another exemplar of life vibrancy came from Makoto. He described how he had felt immediately after a series of effortful experiences:

Right after the study abroad and internship programs, my motivation was so high. I was often talking to others [about what I experienced]. I was involving them, like “Let’s do this!” or “Let’s do that!” I think I was very vital.

Life vibrancy applied to a life with valued experiences other than effortful ones. Many of such non-effortful experiences occurred in leisure contexts. For instance, Masaomi identified stimulating experiences, such as traveling, as a main source of his life vibrancy. Masaomi



discussed how these experiences made his daily life more vibrant:

[My *ikigai* is] stimulating things, I think. ... For example, when I go out somewhere, and find something stimulating, I feel that I should make action more proactively. I am normally at home. ... But, when I get stimulated, I'm like "Oh, let's go somewhere!" or "Let's invite [someone]!"

In response to the member-check question, Violet provided the following description of life vibrancy based on her stimulating and enjoyable experience in an English speech contest: "And the two feelings of stimuli and enjoyment resulted in good stress during [the event]. Compared to the time without any valuable experiences, I was 'shining' this time. ... I had increased motivation, positive attitudes, and confidence in doing anything". In short, the students perceived life vibrancy when their motivation toward specific valued experiences was carried over to their perceived energy in their daily lives in general.

### **The conditions of valued experiences**

The third and last part of Corbin and Strauss's (2015) methodological concept called paradigm is to identify conditions that give a rise to people's actions. Two main conditions of *keiken* or valued experiences were found: (a) value understanding and (b) action.

#### ***Value understanding***

The first condition, value understanding, refers to the state where the students understood what type of experience was valuable in a given life circumstance. Although it was initially unclear whether their awareness of experience values preceded their involvement or not in their retrospective accounts, illustrative was an analysis of the students' transitions from a state without *keiken* to a state with it. For example, Akihiro began exploring experiences when he identified the importance of enjoying his college life: "I thought I should enjoy being a college

student more. That's why I looked up the English Speaking Society and joined it. In my first year, I was like, 'student groups—whatever' and didn't look for one at all". Sometimes, this value understanding occurred through socialization. For example, Masaomi consulted his parents before making major effortful commitments, such as study abroad program and senior thesis seminars. Their advice helped him understand what experience he needed at that specific moment: "So, when I decided something ... like studying abroad, I talked to my parents. They told me that I was like [being curious and enjoying trips] when I was a child. And I was like, 'that's right'". Additional evidence for value understanding came from cases where the students did not match their expectations with the values an activity could provide. For instance, Naomi originally joined the women's varsity soccer team *not* for effort, *but* for enjoyment. However, as the team had become more competitive, there was a greater gap between what she wanted—enjoyment—and what the team offered—effort:

I just wanted to do some exercise ... [As the team became more competitive] it made me question. ... I was saying that I wanted to quit the team and do something different, like surfing. ... The number of morning practice increased, and I wondered why I was doing it. ... Well, at that point, there was one more year left, so I wanted to finish it. Plus, it got more enjoyable as I became better [at the sport] than before.

This excerpt clearly illustrated dynamic changes in the (mis)match in the values Naomi preferred and the one her team provided. Eventually, she identified enjoyment—the original value she sought—as her performance improved, while she also agreed to the value of effort.

### ***Action***

The other important condition of valued experiences emerged from the member-check data. The member-check participants were asked about a hypothetical situation where they

would provide advice to their friend who struggled with having *keiken* (Appendix B). The majority of the respondents referred to action, or the ability to act on an opportunity for a potentially valuable experience without hesitation. For example, this hypothetical question reminded Kaze of a similar situation where she advised one of her friends who struggled with the job-hunting process:

I'd recommend that [s/he] just do what [s/he] wants to do at the moment, without thinking too much. I guess, that friend is perhaps just wondering about what [s/he] wants to do but not making action. ... If you always follow your heart and make action, I think you can discover something or feel *ikigai*.

This quotation implied that one could not always know the value of various experiences before engaging in them. My interviewees recognized that sometimes *keiken* emerged from activities that they had not expected to become so valuable. Therefore, it was necessary *not* to overthink before embarking on a potentially valuable experience, *but* to act or “just do it” when an opportunity arose. After identifying action within the member-check data, I revisited the original interview data only to realize that my participants had already discussed the significance of this condition. For example, Shio deemed her curiosity and ability to act on opportunities as the reasons why she became involved in some of her major *keiken*:

I am a very curious person. ... We don't know until we do things. I'm like, “just do it without being indecisive. So, I'm more like, “Oh, that seems interesting. I'm in”.

Because it appeared enjoyable, I joined, for example, the student council board. Because it seemed fun, I chose media studies [as my major]. (Laughter)

Specifically in a leisure context, Fuyumi referred to a similar type of curiosity as the motivation for stimulating travel experiences: “And, places I have never been, things I do for the first time,

and things I want to experience. I am a very curious person, so I want to go to many places and do a lot of things”. Thus, the quality of action gave rise to various types of *keiken* including leisurely experiences.

To summarize the paradigm of *keiken* or valued experiences, my analysis suggested that the students engaged in four types of related yet distinct actions to pursue them. First, through value engagement, they aligned their behaviours and cognitions with the value(s) of a particular experience (i.e., enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and/or comfort). Second, in the process of value diversification, they engaged with multiple experience values simultaneously within or across their experiences. Third, by value balancing, they found a balance between competing experience values: that is, enjoyment versus effort and stimuli versus comfort. Fourth, when they felt overwhelmed by extremely effortful experiences, value disengagement was necessary, through which they distanced themselves from the exhausting experiences while enjoying something casual and simple. These actions resulted in two perceptions. Life affirmation was the perception that their daily life was worth living, whereas life vibrancy was the feeling that their daily life was full of energy and motivation. Lastly, two conditions preceded *keiken* actions. Value understanding was the state where they understood what value(s) was important in a given life circumstance. Action was their ability to act on an opportunity for potentially valuable experiences without hesitation.

### **3.2.2 The sub-theory of *ibasho* or authentic relationships**

The second major source of *ikigai* reported by my interviewees was their interpersonal relationships, which were often represented in pictures of their friends and family. Some of my earlier interviewees called these relationships *ibasho*, or “the place to be” in Japanese. This phrase was used in later interviews to examine its relevance to *ikigai*. Virtually all of the

interviewees identified at least one of their *ikigai* photographs using the term *ibasho*. For example, Sayaka associated a few of her pictures, including Figure 3.7, with this word. When probed, she defined *ibasho* as follows:

It's the place where [people] tell you it's okay to come back. ... It's the place where you feel that the version of you in that place was appreciated. Like, varsity teammates and coach, my [boss] and colleagues at my part-time job in this [picture], and my teacher in that [picture]. The teachers who took care of me say, "This is the place where you belong". I guess it's the place where you feel secure.

As such, it was clear that *ibasho* usually denoted a certain type of interpersonal relationships that the students cherished. Moreover, as Sayaka mentioned her relationships with former varsity teammates and coach, many *ibasho* relationships were developed and/or maintained through leisure experiences. The following subsection defines what *ibasho* is in relation to Corbin and Strauss's (2015) analytic concepts of property and dimension.

### **3.2.2.1 What is *ibasho*?**

Across the different interview cases, what emerged as the core property of *ibasho* was authenticity. *Ibasho* was authentic in two ways: (a) the students found these relationships "truer" than other relationships, and (b) they also appreciated and valued them over other relationships. These two issues were also intertwined; because *ibasho* was truer than other relationships, the students valued them more.

By authenticity, the students meant that they could reveal all aspects of themselves in these relationships, including the sides of themselves they perceived to be undesirable. Thus, they could behave and remark in a way that was consistent with their sense of true self. For instance, Chika discussed the difference between her friends whom she deemed as *ibasho* and



*Figure 3.7.* One of Sayaka's photographs of *ibasho* or authentic relationships.

other friends, in terms of if she could show her “negative sides”:

Like, this [best] friend and these [college friends] both really know my negative sides, like how incapable I am, issues I have, ... [and] my tendency to chicken out. ... They hang out with me even though they know such negative aspects.

Describing the picture of her and her local friends getting drunk and having fun (Figure 3.8), Leena felt that “it’s okay to show [my] bad sides” to these friends. This was because: “[These friends] probably know all of my habits and not good things”. To Daisuke, *ibasho* meant people to who he could tell the “naked truth”:

My relationships were messy. ... I can’t really talk about those things, right? To others.

Perhaps, I may be trying to make good impressions. ... But, I can share with these friends even those things I feel I can’t tell [others]. Like, I can reveal all aspects of who I am.

Thus, in *ibasho*, the students felt safe to reveal all aspects—both desirable and undesirable—of their identity. This allowed them to honestly do and say what they wanted.

In contrast, there were also some instances where the students and their close others did or said what was clearly not “true”, as in reflecting what they really believed; however, the interviewees still appreciated these interactions. For example, Makoto illustrated his relationship with his girlfriend whom he considered as one of his *ibasho*:

There was the time when I was still doing job-hunting. I told her, “I got rejected ...”. But, she was like, “It’s alright. The company that doesn’t hire you is ... no good” or “they don’t know what they are missing”. I was like, “Ah, kind”.

I assumed that these remarks did not truly represent her observation of the corporation, nor that Makoto believed in their authenticity. Instead, what was authentic or genuine here was the girlfriend’s empathy for Makoto. This genuine care was the second reason why *ibasho* was



*Figure 3.8.* One of Leena's photographs captioned as "drunken".



deemed as authentic by the informants. There were many cases in which genuine care manifested in simpler acts of kindness to each other. Many interviewees included pictures of presents they received from, or gave to, their close others. For example, Remi described one of her pictures (Figure 3.9) captioned as “the birthday surprise for my best friend”:

It was her 20th birthday, and she cried for me. (Laughter) Because I made an [photo] album. ... Because she was turning 20, it's sort of milestone and important. I thought it would be better to give something that stays in memory than in shape.

What should be noted here was not only Remi's act of giving, but also the thought she put into this surprise gift: What would be the most appropriate gift on this anniversary? Such caring attitudes also applied to the students' relationships with their family members. For instance, Shio illustrated the way she was constantly reminded of how caring her parents were:

I think [my parents] care about me. If I do not respond on [a message application] regularly, a [message] jumps in, asking “How are you doing lately? Alright?” ... They worry that their messages are not read [by me] and they don't receive my replies. ... They call me.

Hence, either with their friends or family members, the students exchanged genuinely caring acts. They thought of each other first, not themselves. In this way, the key properties of *ibasho* were that the students could be true to who they really were and exchange genuinely caring acts.

After identifying what defined *ibasho*, it was also theoretically important to examine how this category varied, or what Corbin and Strauss termed “dimension”. An important variation was found in relation to the key category of the present *ikigai* theory: *keiken* or valued experiences. Namely, *ibasho* formed within the students' valued experience seemed to function somewhat differently from authentic relationships that existed mostly outside of these



*Figure 3.9.* One of Remi's photographs taken from a surprise party she threw for her best friend's 20th birthday.

experiences. I call the former “comradery” and the latter “family”.

### **Comradery**

When *ibasho* was formed through experiences that the students and their close others engaged in and valued together, these relationships were categorized as comradery. Comrades were often the students’ friends who were also college students. Because of the shared valued experiences, the students and comrades interacted with each other on a regular basis. Moreover, they shared similar values, goals, and concerns. For example, in a sporting context, Hinata distinguished her comradery in her varsity team from her non-authentic relationships with people in her academic program:

In our lacrosse team, everyone is looking at the same direction, and striving to achieve the goal to win the national championship. ... But, when I go to [my academic program], people have totally different goals. So, it’s not like I don’t like people with whom I don’t share much, but talking to them feels like “So?”

Comraderies existed in the context of experience values other than effort. For example, Tidus maintained his close friendship with one of his high school best friends because of their shared passion: video games:

We have very similar tastes in video games. ... Do you know Kingdom Hearts? ... I shared a new production video [of the newest edition] with him on Twitter. (Laughter)  
Our conversation expanded quickly from there. ... [My best friend] has his own view, right? So, that makes me liking the games and music more.

As such, the fact that comrades were also closely involved in the students’ experiences allowed them to strongly influence *keiken* and to play a role different from that of other *ibasho* members.

This influence, however, was not always positive. Daily interactions around deeply invested experiences sometimes led to tensions and conflicts between them. For instance, Iori

called her study buddy Akari (pseudonym) as “rival”, and described how straightforward she could be with her when conflicts occurred, which sometimes caused tensions:

I tell [Akari] even something bad about her, super-directly, like nothing. ... Like,

“Annoying”. (Laughter) Or, “Will you stop saying that?” ... Sometimes it isn’t okay.

(Laughter) Well, but I know that it will probably be alright at the end, so I can say [those things].

Shio observed a similar issue in her college friendship. While her friends made her school life more enjoyable, she sometimes had “complaints [about them] *because of* the close relationship” (emphasis added). Thus, the self-authentic nature of comrades and their daily interactions could backfire. This was partly why the other type of *ibasho*—“family”—was important.

### “Family”

“Family”, or *kazoku* in Japanese, was the sub-category of *ibasho* in which the students and their close others did not engage in the same valued experiences. In this sense, “family” relationships were more distant from their *keiken* and daily lives; these close others did not necessarily have regular contacts with the students. Typically, “family” members included their biological family members, teachers, and old friends who were no longer attending the same school. Because these individuals had known the students for a long time, “family” was often associated with its comforting nature. For instance, Iori included a picture of her two local friends with whom she spent most of her 18-year old life: “We three have been always together, and it’s like I can let my guard down with them most. They are like my family. We don’t compete with each other. How can I put it, like air? (Laughter)” Similarly, Masaomi described how important his parents and their advice was because they had observed him throughout his life: “I really appreciated my family when [I had to decide] my future direction. ... They have

raised me while really observing me. ... Like, when my environments change, ... and my school environments change, my family never changes". Thus, those whom the students considered as their "family" existed in their lives over time, which resulted in strong trust between them and different dynamics than comradery.

However, what made "family" members unique was not only the long duration they had been known but also their distance from the students' *keiken*. Because of this distance, "family" members served as a safe source of consultation when issues arose in their *keiken*. For instance, although Shio considered interactions with her program friends as enjoyable experiences, Shio also emphasized the importance of her boyfriend as someone she could complain about these friends: "[My boyfriend] is the one who listens to my complaints. ... I have complaints about [my program friends] because we are close to each other. I can't share those complaints with these [school friends], right?" Leena studied hard her second and third languages (i.e., English and Finnish), but felt frustrated about how slow this process was. As individuals who lived outside of the Japanese and academic cultures, her Finnish godparents provided emotional support and gave her another perspective:

I am so half-hearted and immature. But, [my godparents] treat me like their own daughter even knowing that side of me. They call me family. ... I can't really speak English fluently ... They say it's okay because I can communicate what I want to say. Like, they make me feel that English doesn't really matter.

Daily interactions with other students and teachers who were academically- and internationally-oriented could make students like Leena become stressed when they could not live up to expectations. However, these "family" members, who often had different value standards, provided the students a different perspective.

To summarize, comrades shared similar values with the students and directly impacted their *keiken*. However, their daily interactions could also lead to some tensions. “Family” members in contrast served as a stable source of consultation because they had known the students over time, did not have direct vested interest in their experiences, and offered different values and perspectives. Having noted this, it is important to add that the line between comradery and “family” was not rigid and static across situations and over time. For example, when the students were involved in multiple valued experiences, comrades in one experience could serve as “family” in another experience. Moreover, when the students went through life transitions (e.g., school graduation), their comrades often remained in their lives but as “family” members, as they no longer shared valued experiences.

### **3.2.2.2 Why is *ibasho* so important?: The matrix of inauthentic relationships**

In this section, I address the question: “Why was having *ibasho* or authentic relationships so important that it would impact the students’ *ikigai*?” To do so in regard to the context or “matrix” of *ibasho* (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 164), I scrutinized the interviewees’ accounts on their relationships outside of their *ibasho*. One common characteristic of such relationships was *inauthenticity*. For example, the students were concerned about strategically showing certain aspects of who they were, especially favourable ones. Doing this led to behaviours and remarks inconsistent with who they really were. For instance, Eri, a baseball fanatic, recalled that she was downplaying this leisure identity with her high school friends because she considered being enthusiastic about sports to be uncommon among female adolescents in Japan. She contrasted this inauthentic behaviour with the way she freely expressed her passion for baseball during her college program:

In my high school, ... I tended to change my behaviors depending on who I was with. ...

That's the issue of showing or not showing the plain side of me. ... I sometimes felt it was a lot of work. Since I came here [in my sport management program], I can show my plain self, so it feels easier.

Shio also found her previous friendship “suffocating” compared with her college friendship, which felt “easier”:

In my high school days, [my friends] were like, “why don't you prioritize us, though we are this close?” Or, one of them was like, “why do you treat me in the same way as other normal friends?” So, there was a time when I was tired of having to do so ... because treating [someone] specially is basically being different from your plain self, and then it's just “acting”. I don't like that.

Another element that characterized *inauthentic* relationships was the way the informants were “concerned about” others. In contrast to genuine care in which the students thought of their close others first, being concerned about—or *ki-wo-tsukau* in Japanese—was a defense mechanism against others' judgment about their behaviours and remarks. Thus, the focus here was not on uplifting others, but on keeping themselves out of trouble. For instance, Bunta referred to his biological family as an example of his inauthentic relationships:

I really hate that I am concerned around my family. ... My brother and sister were [scolded by my father]. But, I learned from seeing them [scolded], and know [his] “spots”. That makes me feel that I am really concerned around my parents.

A first-year student, Tidus, discussed similar concerns about judgment in his new college friendships, especially related to his self-described “unusual” leisure interests: “[With my college friends] I guess I am not really showing things I like. Like my hobbies. ... I am not sharing my favourite games and stuff. Or, favourite singers. If I tell them, ... they may judge me”. As such,

in their *inauthentic* relationships, the students did not care for others; rather they were concerned about how others would judge their behaviours and remarks.

In short, *inauthentic* relationships—where the students could not reveal who they really were and were concerned about others’ judgment—were prevalent in their lives. *Inauthenticity* could apply to their friendship and even family relation. This prevalence of *inauthenticity* made rather rare authentic relationships, or *ibasho*, so valuable that having them enhanced their *ikigai*.

### **3.2.2.3 The paradigm of *ibasho* or authentic relationships**

The foregoing sections addressed what *ibasho* was and why it was important in the students’ pursuit of *ikigai*. The last theoretically important question is: “How did *ibasho* help the students pursue a worthier life?” Adopting the analytic concept of “paradigm” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), I focused on the students’ interactions within their authentic relationships, as well as the conditions and consequences of such interactions.

#### **Interactions in authentic relationships**

My analysis discovered that the students interacted with their close others, whom they viewed as their *ibasho*, in two distinct manners: (a) experiencing together and (b) sharing experiences. The former refers to their interactions within valued experiences, or *keiken*, while the latter signifies their interactions outside of valued experiences.

##### ***Experiencing together***

The students valued their interactions with their close others whom they considered as *ibasho* through their communal valued experiences. Thus, this interaction—*experiencing together*—commonly occurred among comrades. Although this type of interactions applied to all the four experience values, it was most salient in the context of effort and enjoyment. Whichever value was concerned, *keiken* reflected the students’ personal values (see p. 115), and thus



engaging in it with others was an experiential process through which they communicated their values with each other. Doing so brought the students and their comrades even closer and, consequently, added value to their lives in the interpersonal domain.

When effortful experiences were shared with comrades, interactions added an element of competition, encouragement, and communal achievements and growth. For example, Kanon referred to the close friendship that she formed through a short-term study abroad program, where participants experienced a myriad of challenges:

For two months, ... we had presentations every week. It was really tough. But, we helped each other and divided work among us. ... There was no morning, day, and night. We spent every minute together ... It's like we can sense what each other thinks. If I am in trouble and tell them "I am having this issue", they will make some action for me.

Thus, persevering through challenges together—even during a short period of time—helped the students and their comrades to bond closely with each other, which in this case led to genuine care among them. In relation to his *ikigai* picture in Figure 3.10, Masaomi described his relationship based on a long-term effortful experience, where he could be truly who he was. This was his old friendship with his high school varsity archery teammates: "There were many problems [in the team], but we overcame them together. ... I can still tell anything [to them]. It's them whom I can tell anything besides my family". Although a longer time spent with comrades clearly helped their relationship, what was more salient within the interview accounts was the effect of overcoming difficulties together. This particular mode of interactions allowed them to raise the quality of their relationships to the authentic level.

Enjoyable experiences also served as a context of interactions between the students and



*Figure 3.10.* One of Masaomi's photographs that captured his relationship with his high school varsity teammates.

their close others, especially comrades. Similar to the case of communal efforts, their accounts of time they enjoyed time together with their close others was followed by evidence of strengthened relationships. For instance, Shio used a picture in Figure 3.11 to represent her close relationship with her college best friends. The picture was taken after sharing enjoyable experiences. She chose this particular picture, possibly over hundreds of other pictures with them, because they “scribbled” messages on it that directly signaled their closeness:

We didn’t have a chance to hang out with all of us for a while. ... We scheduled to go to [a neighboring city] to play bowling, and this picture was taken after having much fun like, “Yeah!” ... And this is what my friends scribbled. They wrote “I love you all” without any hesitation. That made me so happy.

Eri included a picture taken from a recent barbeque hosted by a student group she had joined. This particular event was important as the enjoyable activity and mood revealed the friendly sides of senior members—which were not always visible in daily serious interactions—and helped Eri better connect with them: “When we went for a barbeque, ... I talked to different seniors, and they were kinder and funnier than I expected. It was so much fun”. Hence, engaging in enjoyable experiences with their close others also helped the informants form, maintain, and strengthen their authentic relationships.

In short, the two different types of communal experiences helped the students achieve and maintain authentic relationships. Through effortful experiences, the students often faced common obstacles; jointly overcoming these difficulties brought them closer. Enjoyable experiences appeared to provide an opportunity for the students to discover part of who they were that was not apparent in other types of interactions. Either way, experiencing together had positive impacts on the students’ authentic relationships.



*Figure 3.11.* One of Shio's photographs that represented her relationship with her best friends in her academic program.

### *Sharing experiences*

The second major mode of interactions my participants had with their close others is termed *sharing experiences*. The students shared information about their *keiken* with their close others who were not directly involved in these experiences. Therefore, this type of interactions often took place within “family” relationships. Such interactions also maintained and enhanced the authentic nature of their relationships. Two subtypes of sharing experiences with distinct purposes were identified: (a) reporting experiences and (c) getting support.

The first subtype—*reporting experiences*—was a mode of interactions in which the interviewees simply hoped to let their close others know about processes and/or consequences of their valued experiences. Doing so was a very effective way to update these others about their daily lives because *keiken* were the parts of their everyday lives they viewed as valuable and noteworthy. This was especially true for “family” members, who were not directly involved in the students’ core activities. For instance, Shio included a picture of an online chat between her and her parents who lived elsewhere (Figure 3.12). As Shio and her parents played in the same band, their conversations were often about music and school work—experiences she valued: “[I tell my parents,] ‘How my keyboard is going’ and ‘how my school is going’. I update them about my recent situations, and they update me about theirs”. Describing their updating interactions, many interviewees used the term “complaints”, or *guchi* in Japanese, which usually connotes complaining about something that one cannot really address. This was the case of a recent conversation over dinner between Daisuke and his high school best friend Satoshi (pseudonym). The point of *guchi* was not to get help to fix a problem, but rather to inform close others of their major experiences and to make sure that their relationships were still strong:

It’s like updating about recent things ... When I am in trouble, ... I just go talk to Satoshi.



Well, he doesn't tell me anything [particular to do], but he listens to me. ... So, I complain and get advice from him. ... He really knows bad sides of me. (Laughter) He's like, "Oh what the heck". But, he listens to me. So, I feel that I really still need him.

Thus, reporting his experiences reassured Daisuke that he could still be who he really was in front of Satoshi, and could receive genuine care from his best friend. In addition to reporting the progress of *keiken*, sharing major outcomes was also an effective way for the students to stay in touch with their close others and strengthen their authentic relationships. For example, speaking of how important his biological family was to his *ikigai*, Tidus said, "[he] want[s] to share good things that happened in school". Tidus gave me the following example, his work as a part-time bridal photographer was recognized:

After taking photographs, we give an album to the groom and bride, right? ... In it, there was one of my pictures. That made me soooooo happy. As soon as I got home, I called my parents to tell, "Hey, [my photograph] was used!" ... They got really excited, too. ... That made me happy.

As much as his parents' positive response made Tidus value this experience more, this interaction also helped him validate his close relationship with them.

The second subtype of sharing experiences was *getting support*. In this process, the students shared their experiences with their close others with the clear purpose of obtaining their support—emotional and/or material—so that they could overcome the challenges and/or immediate negative outcomes (e.g., distress, frustration, dissatisfaction) they faced. Hence, this mode of interactions was salient in the context of effortful experiences. For example, Ayane's description of a picture of her boyfriend focused on how supportive he was when she struggled with challenges such as a study abroad program:

To study abroad, we need a [English exam] score. ... I had to do grammars all of sudden. ... That stressed me out. ... Then, [my boyfriend] gave me three textbooks. He helped me studying when I had some questions even at night. ... When I got all “What am I gonna do? ...”, he taught me English or helped me on other things. ... he even cooks for me. ... I’m like “Thanks, thanks”.

Not surprisingly, because of the genuinely caring nature of authentic relationships, these close others were sources of rich support for the students. Receiving actual support made them further value their relationships. The other characteristic of *ibasho*, self-authenticity, also made their support unique and valuable for my informants. Namely, their close others provided support in a very straightforward manner, even telling difficult things for the students to hear. For instance, Chika appreciated her friendship with her high school best friend because her advice was more direct than others’:

[My high school best friend] knows me more than anyone. ... For example, when I go talk to others, people around me are like, “It’ll be alright”. And they reassure me and show empathy to me. But, she is the only one who honestly says things like, “You are wrong here, Chika” and “It’s your fault”. She guides me to the right direction, and tells me honestly what she really thinks.

Therefore, the carefree nature of their relationships allowed for the direct advice the students often needed.

To conclude, the two main types of interactions the students engaged in within their *ibasho* were experiencing together and sharing experiences. Through the former type of interaction, they and their close others partook in valued experiences—especially effortful and enjoyable ones—together. In the latter type of interaction, the students reported progress and



consequences of their experiences to their close others, and received rich support from them to overcome difficulties in their experiences. Both types helped the informants strengthen their authentic relationships with their close others. Also noteworthy was that some of these interactions occurred in leisure contexts (e.g., online chat, at dinner), signaling the relevance of leisure's sociability to the *ibasho* interactions.

### **The consequences of interactions in authentic relationships**

As implied in the preceding section, interactions within *ibasho* or authentic relationships resulted in two major perceptions, which were related to the defining characteristics of these relationships: self-authenticity and genuine care. It should be noted that although the *formation* of authentic relationships per se often required a long time, these interactions brought about students' awareness that they had such relationships and that relationships with these particular qualities were valuable.

#### ***Self-authenticity***

Self-authenticity occurred when students felt they could be true to who they really were in their close relationships. This feeling was often described with the word “plain” or “*su*” in Japanese. For example, Kaze's photograph of her and her high school varsity teammates (Figure 3.13) was taken from their trip in which they enjoyed drinking and getting their faces painted. This represented her feeling “plain” with these close friends, which was not the case when she was with her college friends:

[With the high school friends] I am, like, more “plain”. And I say things, without being so worry about [what they think]. When I'm with these [college friends], I often think of various things, including “what would happen if I say this”, before actually saying it.

Whereas Kaze's old friendship fell under the subcategory of “family”, Eri perceived self-



*Figure 3.13.* One of Kaze's *ikigai* pictures in which she and her high school volleyball teammates pose with their painted faces.

authentic in her relationship with her comrades: specifically her friends in her sport-related academic program. This first-year student already found herself being true to who she really was—a baseball fanatic: “Everyone [in the program] likes sports, so ... they connect us. ... Here it feels easier to hang out with other students. ... Since I came here, I can show my “plain” side, so it makes things easy”. Bunta characterised his relationship with his girlfriend—who was in one of his *ikigai* photographs—as “carefree”:

We say whatever we want to say. For instance, in extreme cases, we may say, “You look ugly” or “That’s disgusting”. We say things that normal couples would not say to each other. ... We aren’t concerned about each other[’s judgment]. ... The time and space shared with her feels so natural.

Eri’s reference to her “easier” friendship and Bunta’s comparison of his relationship with other “normal couples” indicated that these students valued this self-authentic feeling of their *ibasho*.

### ***Genuine care***

The other consequence of *ibasho* interactions was genuine care, or the perception that the students’ close others truly cared about them without consideration of any personal gain. For example, Ayane selected a picture of her high school homeroom teacher because he was one of her “family” members who genuinely cared about her. She noticed this during her college admission:

[From my high school] only 10 students could enter [my college program]. And I was 11th. Who was most upset? My teacher. (Laughter) ... When I got admitted, my teacher burst into tears and looked so happy. ... I learned that he cared about me.

Chika deemed her family photograph as the most important contributor to her *ikigai*, because she felt greatly supported and cared for by them. She described this perceived support as “warm”:

When things didn't go well with friends or I couldn't [play music well] on the varsity [brass band] team, I really wanted to go home. It's not about wanting to escape from the situations, but my home feels warm or hmm... they accept me. ... It feels warm when we just want TV or go travel [together].

This quotation also illustrated the importance of leisure (e.g., TV watching, travel) as a context where the students appreciated their authentic relationships. Several other interviewees used the word "warm", or *atatakai* in Japanese, to express the feelings of being supported and cared for. Leena felt this way when she hung out with her best friend who shared a Finnish ancestry: "Just talking [to her] a little makes me feel warm. It feels like being supported, or supporting each other. Yeah. (Laughter) It's kind of weird, right?" Again, just as Chika ranked her family picture the most important, Leena's assessment of her friendship as "weird" implied that the relationship was special and thus valuable, as much as feeling this way was strange.

### **The conditions of interactions in authentic relationships**

The last components of the paradigm of *ibasho* or authentic relationships were the conditions that preceded the two types of interactions: experiencing together and sharing experiences. A major condition for each mode of interactions was identified: echoed values and trust, respectively.

#### ***Echoed values***

For the students and their close others to participate in and value the same experiences, an important antecedent condition was that they knew they shared similar personal values: or what I term echoed values. My informants recalled the times when they came to this awareness. For instance, Kanon became close friends with her study buddies (i.e., comrades) when they realized that they all valued making efforts through academic experiences:

People around me are not the type of students who, for example, study hard in a library until late night, ... But, I want to try a little different things in my studies, increase my score in [an English exam], and study abroad. ... When I told [my study buddies] that I wanted to try those things, they totally agreed with it. That made us much closer to each other.

This conversation preceded their communal, effortful experiences of studying hard together. In the context of enjoyment, Shio described the similar phrase of learning about each other before she had a series of fun get-togethers with her college friends:

So, every time I got a new friend, we had lunch together on the roof. ... Over lunch, we talked about what we liked, and we dug up each other's favourite things and things we were interested in. And we got really close to each other.

Another way for the students to share similar values with their close others was to participate in the same activity with them over an extended time. Doing so often led them to internalize similar values. This was most notable among varsity athletes. For instance, Hinata recalled the time when she and her cohort teammates started to value putting efforts into non-sport activities, such as preparing for practice:

At the beginning, I felt forced to [prepare for practices]. ... Like, [senior members told us], "To win an intercollegiate competition, there are things that members in each year can and should do. ... when [first-year members] do their best at taking care of team's belongings and stuff, senior members can move smoothly. So, let's do your best." ... We started to think that way.

Thus, echoed values—that is, sharing similar values with close others—was an important condition of experiencing together.

## *Trust*

The other main mode of interactions, sharing experiences, required trust as an antecedent condition. This was because the information shared through this type of interactions sometimes involved private issues, such as negative emotions and personal failures. For instance, Fuyumi consulted her old friends in her hometown when issues arose in relation to her *keiken*, because they were more trustworthy than her college friends:

I can talk about my family issues only with my local friends. ... college friendships don't have to be that intimate. We sometimes have fun by hanging out like this, but when it comes to deep talks, I really feel that my local friends are different. I guess I can't trust [my college friends]. ... The length of our friendships is different [from college friendships].

Thus, whether she could trust others was an important condition for Fuyumi to report her experiences. Often, trust was nurtured over an extended period of time. For Leena, this applied to her relationship with her godparents. She expressed absolute trust in them: "These people will never change, and they will always be there for me. I will never hate them, and they will never reject me, unless I do something extraordinarily [bad]". There were also some cases where the students faced difficulties with their future close others, which led to the rapid formation of rapport between them. For instance, Daisuke failed a college entrance exam and had to spend a year preparing for the following year. He called this time "the rock bottom", but cherished his relationship with his friends who went to the same preparatory school:

Our [exam scores] sometimes dropped at the same time, and we're like "Oh, we suck". ... We kind of knew what each other was thinking of. I counted on them very much. ... Toward the end, my [score] was bad ... but they didn't care about those things, and

talked to me. Well, how to put it, they get me, you know?

Thus, the students trusted their close others enough that they could sometimes disclose personal issues, such as failures and negative emotions.

To summarize the paradigm of *ibasho* or authentic relationships, the students shared their personal values related to *keiken* with their close others. They also deeply trusted these others. The former condition—that is, echoed values—resulted in a type of interactions called experiencing together. In it, my informants and their close others partook in and valued the same experiences, especially effortful and enjoyable ones. The latter condition—that is, trust—led to the other mode of interactions called sharing experiences, through which the students shared information on their valued experiences with close others who were not directly involved in them. These two modes of interactions brought about two important perceptions. On the one hand, the students perceived that they could be true to who they really were in these close relationships. On the other hand, they also felt that they could receive genuine care from their close others without consideration of any personal gains.

### **3.2.3 The sub-theory of *houkou-sei* or directionality**

Many of the collected *ikigai* photographs were not related to my interviewees' present experiences, but rather were concerned with either their past experiences or future goals. Although objects in these pictures did not “exist” in the students' current lives, it was clear that they had substantial impacts on their perception of their current life's worthiness. In describing this effect, the informants often used the Japanese word “*houkou-sei*”, wherein “*houkou*” denotes direction and “*-sei*” is a suffix that further emphasizes an abstract state or a quality of a connected word. More specifically, interviewees' use of this word referred to their perceived direction in life: where they had come from, what they were currently doing, and where they

hoped to go. *Houkou-sei* or directionality was about finding meaningful associations among their past, present, and future, and not a random accumulation of experiences. For example, Iori included a picture of the sky taken from an airplane window. This rather abstract photograph symbolized her future goal of getting a job where she would help send young people to foreign countries. This goal was linked to her past international experiences that she valued (e.g., Figure 3.4):

Well, it's an airplane, so it's related to foreign countries. So, it represents what I want to do in the future. ... It's like *houkou-sei* for the future. [An airplane] feels like the place where I am reminded that it will be enjoyable to do this kind of job. (Laughter) ... To send people overseas.

Makoto summarized why a series of past effortful events were important; these experiences represented what he had accomplished in his college life: “But, what’s most important to me is that there is this ‘flow’ now. I can tell what I have done in my college life. And these [events] are important for that. ... It’s like part of creating my process”. As such, *houkou-sei*, or directionality, added a temporal aspect to my *ikigai* theory.

### **3.2.3.1 What is *houkou-sei*?**

Although *houkou-sei* consisted of the past, present, and future, its essence or property (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) was perceived connections among them. Specifically, the students’ present valued experiences played an important role as the “hinge” that linked their past experiences and future goals. In other words, merely having valued experiences in the past or future goals was not sufficient for them to attain directionality. It was when they were meaningfully associated with their present *keiken* that they achieved this temporal dimension of *ikigai*. For example, Iori started to link her current effortful experience—studying English—to



her future career:

I want to get a job where I can use things into which I am putting efforts. So, like, the job that requires English? ... When I went abroad, I felt encouraged by the people who sent me off. ... So, I want to do the job to send off people overseas. ... I think I want to be the one to send out people to the experiences I had.

It was not necessarily one particular experience that directionality hinged upon, but current daily life or present self in general also allowed for these connections. For instance, when asked about her future goals, Shio a media studies major, picked up a photograph taken from a recent get-together with members of her student group. This picture symbolized what she enjoyed and identified with—talking with others and using her voice—which was related to a future career she aspired to:

I like to talk. It's not that my future dream is really determined, but I want to get a job where I can talk. A radio personality sounds most interesting. I want to express by using my voice somehow ... So, it's that [dream's] basis.

This quotation also indicated that not only effortful experiences, but also other types of experiences including enjoyable ones, served as a basis for directionality. Also implied in Shio's comment was that an association among the past, present, and future did not have to be explicit, as long as the students could make sense of it. Thus, directionality depended on the students' cognitive appraisals to an extent. For example, Daisuke, an aerospace engineering major, included a picture of a student-led engineering project to develop small airplanes and rockets (Figure 3.14). Although Daisuke's real dream was to become a pilot by transferring to an aviation program, this project was "the closest thing" to this dream, and therefore gave him a sense of directionality:



*Figure 3.14.* One of Daisuke's photographs about his student project with other aerospace engineering students.

I guess this is something directly linked to my future. Actually, I want to be a pilot in the future. ... but it's the closest thing to a pilot I got now. It's the closest thing to the aviation industry. It feels like this is something I will be doing in the future.

Thus, the property of *houkou-sei* was perceived *association* among the past, present, and future. This depended on not only how closely events and goals were *actually* related to one another, but also how meaningfully the students could make sense of the relationship in their mind.

Although I discussed the issue of dimension (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) in terms of the foregoing two sub-theories, I did not find a theoretically informative dimension or variation in *houkou-sei*. I did examine the distinction between the past- and future-based associations; however, I found that it was not so clear in the students' accounts as present, past, and future events were often mixed.

### **3.2.3.2 Why is *houkou-sei* important?: The matrix of inertia**

The question of “Why was *houkou-sei* or directionality relevant to the students' *ikigai*?” concerns the context or “matrix” of directionality (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). To address this query, I inspected interview accounts on life situations where my informants lacked this temporal aspect of *ikigai*. One common issue emerged: The students tended to engage in current experiences, or activities if they were not explicitly valued, for their own sake. In other words, many informants noted that they were inclined not to carefully consider the long-term implications of their current experiences, which in turn stalled their effective pursuit of *ikigai*. Kakeru fell into this situation during his high school days. He described this time as “inertia” or *dasei* in Japanese. Thus, Kakeru felt that at that time his life was focused on what he already had in his life, rather than important goals:

When I was a high school student, I wanted to become a pilot but also lived my everyday

life with inertia. ... I was in the track and field team, and of course did practice very hard every day. ... but I was not as passionate as I am now about enhancing myself.

Thus, one could live valuing his or her current experiences, but not associate them with the past or future. My informants did not consider this state of living in the moment as being worthy.

Leena identified her propensity to become fixated on enjoyable experiences and to delay challenging and effortful experiences that, she understood, had more to do with her future:

I know that I have to work on things like languages and studies every day little by little, and gradually cumulating them. But, I can't do that. ... I say, "Oh, this is fun now, so let's do this", and time passes when I realize. ... I don't think I am doing things for the future.

Although my interviewees described inertia as a personal issue, the fact that many of them mentioned it indicated that the problem was more of systemic, socio-cultural nature. Arguably, the amount of one's past experiences correlates with the length of his or her life; not surprisingly, some of my young adult interviewees felt they had not yet had many experiences, as discussed in relation to the minimum life (see p. 127). This limited past experiences made it difficult for them to make meaningful associations between the present and the past. Simultaneously, these young adults perceived a great deal of uncertainty about their future, which in turn constrained their ability to link their present experiences to the future. Violet discussed this latter point, when she expressed her fear of graduation and loss of current *keiken* in the face of the uncertain future:

I say that studying is my *ikigai* now. But, I also think that studies won't be an *ikigai* when I graduate [the school]. ... I can't think of the next *ikigai*. ... If I can't find a "theme" [about a given time of life], I can't draw my path well. It's like I can't walk straight. ... It's scary.

Hence, a college life was, in many ways, the time when my informants were greatly vulnerable to the state of inertia. This was the context or matrix in which directionality and its importance to *ikigai* should be understood.

### **3.2.3.3 The paradigm of *houkou-sei* or directionality**

This sub-section elucidates how the students pursued *houkou-sei* or directionality. Adopting the analytical technique of “paradigm” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), I identified relevant (inter)actions, consequences, and conditions in the pursuit of perceived association among the past, present, and future.

#### **The actions of directionality associations**

The pursuit of directionality was essentially the act of associating the past, present, and future. My informants did this in two distinct ways: (a) cognitive associations and (b) behavioural associations.

#### ***Cognitive associations***

The first subtype of directionality associations was largely cognitive in nature. That is to say that the students had already been involved in a given valued experience, which in turn they associated with the past and/or future in their mind. Consequently, I termed this action *cognitive association*. Makoto, for example, explained how he used his imagination to make mental connections between his current experience and potential future opportunities:

I often use my imagination about [how I can make my future life full of *ikigai*]. ... Like, if I can become this, then I can do this or that next. If I can do that, then I can do this further. We can imagine whatever we want, right? ... Isn't it fun to imagine that things we can do in the future expand? ... This may be my *ikigai*.

Whereas this quotation delineated the abstract nature of cognitive associations, many other

instances of this action for directionality were more closely embedded in the informants' actual experiences. For example, Ayane chose a photograph of an extracurricular program she had been involved in since Grade 8 (Figure 3.15). The program provided Japanese students an opportunity to learn English and encourage self-expression through interactions with international students. Shifting her role from participant to volunteer, Ayane discussed how staying involved in this program allowed her to connect to her past through interactions with young participants who were going through similar challenges:

I thought that if I ... work to reduce the challenges I faced [for current participants], they may not perceive them [as difficult as I did] ... I could not express myself well when I was in Grade 8. ... But, when I conveyed my thoughts, it made me so happy. So, I wanted to support [current participants experiencing] that.

While some informants like Ayane engaged in cognitive associations in terms of their long-term hobby, volunteering, and athletics, the largely mandatory nature of academic life made it important for them to also creatively associate their studies with the past or future. For instance, when probed about the relevance of mandatory junior-level courses to her *ikigai*, Shio demonstrated cognitive associations through an act she called "positive thinking": "Mandatory courses are like 'why don't you study the foundation for the new things you want to do?' ... Mandatory courses are the classes that help me study what I like later". Thus, Shio could still connect her current experiences in mandatory courses to what she would learn in advanced courses; and this in turn, she believed, would help her future career. Thus, regardless of how explicit actual relationships among their past, present, and future were, cognitive appraisals helped the students form meaningful associations.



*Figure 3.15.* One of Ayane's photographs that represented her volunteer commitment to an international youth camp program.

### ***Behavioural associations***

My interviewees also made behavioural changes to better align their present lives with the past and/or future. I termed this action *behavioural associations*, as the students strategically chose their current experiences that were more clearly relevant to their past and/or future than other experiences. Kakeru, provided a quintessential example of this. As he had recently received an offer for a pilot position, his dream had changed from becoming a pilot to becoming an outstanding pilot. This change led him to start a series of new effortful experiences that were better aligned with this new goal:

Now, I [am trying to] bring myself to this goal [to become an exceptional pilot]. ... I can “reverse-calculate” what I have to do [now] for that [goal]. ... For example, I want to study meteorology more. Well, ideally, I want to get a license as a certified weather forecaster.

Kaze provided an example of behavioural associations in a leisure context. She had embarked on a series of new experiences that she believed were related to her goal of becoming a Disney dancer:

Recently, I started to go to a ballet school. I want to go to the place that I hated before. If I seek [to become a Disney dancer], I need ballet, too. At the same time, I also started to go to a dance school. ... I need stamina, so I bought a panda suit for that.

With this full-body panda suit (Figure 3.16), Kaze was also involved in an extracurricular activity to promote and teach dancing. In terms of associations with the past, Remi chose a career that helped her make sense of what she had done in her college life. Remi, a fourth-year student, had recently accepted an offer to work as a supervisor of convenience store owners. She accepted the offer because the quality necessary for this position—supporting others—was congruent with





*Figure 3.16.* One of Kaze's photographs taken from her extracurricular activity to promote dance.

her college experiences:

[The recruiter] from that [convenience store] company told me that I did both: I played basketball [by myself] before and I worked as a manager [for the soccer team] during college. ... And I realized that I liked supporting more. (Laughter) ... I thought that a job directly related to this story was in the convenience industry. It was like, “Oh, the convenience industry may fit with me”.

Hence, the other subtype of directionality association—behavioural associations—required the students to engage in experiences that were more readily relatable to their past or future than other experiences.

### **Consequences of directionality associations**

The directionality associations resulted in two types of life perceptions—life legacy and life momentum—depending on whether a particular association was concerned with the past or the future, respectively.

#### ***Life legacy***

When my informants associated the present with the past, what entailed was their subjective perception that their past had meaningfully contributed to their current experiences, lives, and selves. I called this perception *life legacy*. For example, Ayane used the word legacy or *isan* in Japanese to express how meaningful she felt her study abroad program was, as what she had learned in the program remained relevant to her college life afterwards:

I learned how I can interview people and communicate that to others in an accessible way. That helped me a lot in college. ... that experience was like my legacy. ... This was so different from what I learned in the Japanese education system. That’s why it was a good experience for me.

As such, life legacy was the feeling that students' past experiences remained relevant to their current experiences, lives, and selves, and therefore were not wasted. This perception developed in leisure contexts, especially when the students had committed to a particular leisure activity for an extended period of time. For instance, Yoku felt that he had improved substantially through his 15-year long hobby of calligraphy:

At the beginning, of course, I was not good at all ... [Teachers corrected my creations] writing over [my letters] with red ink. ... But, recently, they started to praise my creations. There are more circles [i.e., good creations]. ... And when I compared [my creations], I can see the process through which I have become better and better. ... By reviewing the difficult part, I bask in a feeling of superiority now.

Thus, Yoku felt a sense of increased meaning because he could connect his past efforts—despite the low initial quality of his calligraphy creations—to his current, much higher quality handiwork. Chika chose her *ikigai* photographs based on “whether things had great influences on me, and plus if I think I wouldn’t be who I am now without them”. Describing two of her long-time hobbies—ballet and classic music, Chika continued: “I have done [ballet and classic music] since I was a small child. They have really influenced various things like my values and imagination”. Therefore, these past-present associations resulted in life legacy, or the subjective perception that the students' past had made a meaningful contribution to their current experiences, lives, and selves.

### ***Life momentum***

In contrast, present-future associations allowed the interviewees to feel that their present experiences and daily lives helped them achieve their desired future. I termed this perception *life momentum*. For instance, Iori used the word “engine” to express life momentum in relation to

pictures of her English studies and volunteer activities at a non-profit organization: “[these experiences are] the engine in my life, driving force, or power that makes me move forward”.

These effortful experiences were linked to the future job Iori’s desired: to provide young people with international experiences. Masaomi had perceived this forward momentum in his life since he had been accepted for a study abroad program. This program served as a short-term goal with which he associated his current effortful experiences:

[The program] has been a source of motivation. ... Well, with that future goal, I feel that it would be wasteful if I cannot speak English when I arrive in [the country]. Because I get money from my parents, I think I should learn something [from the program]. I am not lazy any more, but I have this feeling that “let’s do things right!” after I was accepted.

In the member-checking stage, Kakeru characterised his college life by the forward momentum he felt toward his goal of becoming a pilot:

I feel that I had directionality continuously from the college entrance to graduation. Of course, I cumulated knowledge and experiences to become a pilot ... I was in this positive cycle in which I overcame barriers ... and I turned that effort and sense of accomplishment into motivation to overcome more difficult challenges. My college life was all about moving forward.

As such, when the students meaningfully associated their present valued experiences with the future, they perceived that their current lives were leading to the desired future state and resulted in feelings of momentum in life.

### **The conditions of directionality associations**

My analysis also identified two major conditions of directionality associations: (a) defining past and (b) clear goals.

### *Defining past*

My informants referred to some of their past experiences represented in their *ikigai* photographs as “turning points” in their lives. These experiences had usually caused substantial changes in the students’ values and perspectives and had lingering effects on their lives. Thus, these salient past experiences offered the interviewees solid ground on which they could form past-present associations. I describe this as *defining past*. For example, Fuyumi called her two study abroad programs during her high school days as “events that changed [her]self”. She explained how transformative these effortful and enjoyable experiences were:

When I studied abroad in London alone once [before the later two programs], ... I was bullied so bad. That experience made me think like, “I don’t want to go abroad any more. I really hate it”. ... But, this friend who went [on the programs] together talked me into them, I was forced to go, and they turned out to be very fun. Like, I overcame my trauma.

Fuyumi further considered these defining past experiences as the reason why she chose her current major of international studies. Similarly, Iori believed that her study abroad program in Singapore (see Figure 3.4) “determined [her] directionality in the future”. When asked to imagine what it would have been like if she had not joined the program, Iori stated: “Probably, I would not have been interested in English this much. Probably, I would not have done this [internship] ... because without going on to [the study abroad], you can’t do the intern”.

Although it was difficult to establish actual causality, what the data clearly indicated was that the interviewees found these defining experiences so impactful that many of their subsequent and current experiences were associated with them. Of course, the students did not have to go abroad to gain such influential experiences. Remi referred to the challenges she faced on a high school varsity basketball team as part of her defining past. She called this experience as the “crossroads

in my life”. This was because her coach convinced her of the importance of teamwork and having a caring attitude toward others. Remi believed that what she learned from this led to her recent enjoyable and effortful experiences, such as preparing a well-thought-out surprise birthday party for her best friend and working as a manager for a local soccer team. Hence, one of the important conditions of directionality associations was to have defining experiences in the past. These experiences functioned as a solid foundation on which the students readily related their current experiences, lives, and selves.

### ***Clear goals***

Setting *clear goals* facilitated the future-centered directionality associations. With well-defined goals, the students readily associated their current experiences, daily lives, and selves. For example, Kakeru distinguished between his high school life, where he suffered inertia or a lack of directionality (see p. 176), and his college life, where he had clearer goals. His goals had become clearer lately since he had received an offer of his dream job—being a pilot:

[In college] I realized the importance of setting concrete goals and bringing myself there. ... now I got the job. ... so it’s crystal clear and easy to understand [what to do]. But, back then [in high school], I had vague uncertainty about the future

Another fourth-year student Jotaro also felt his goals became clearer recently as he engaged in the job-hunting process:

Probably, I feel that I have the most *ikigai* now. ... Because I have the clearest goal ever: to become independent, work, and get out of [my parents’] house as I live there now. To achieve these goals, I feel that I am making the most effort ever. During my high school or study abroad days, ... I didn’t have a clear goal of what I want to become in the future.

Of course, academics and occupations were not the only domains where the students set clear

goals; they also did so in their leisure lives. For instance, Violet believed that she had clearer goals during her high school days compared to her college life. This was because she belonged to a tennis varsity team then, which made it easier for her to identify goals:

During my high school days, I was looking at only tennis. ... It was very easy to set goals. ... But, now there are many things I am involved in and interested in. That makes it difficult to identify goals. ... For example, back in high school and tennis, I was all, “Oh, I really have to win that competition”. And that’s it. But, now it’s more complicated to decide on goals.

Thus, setting clear goals irrespective of life domains helped the students identify current experiences that would relate to them, which in turn resulted in better directionality.

To summarize, the sub-theory of directionality or *houkou-sei* involved both cognitive and behavioural actions that the students engaged in to construct mental associations between their present and their past and/or future. In terms of cognitive associations, the students mentally associated experiences they had already been involved in with the past or future. In terms of behavioural associations, the students selectively chose and partook in experiences that appeared more pertinent to their past and/or future than other experiences. These directionality associations resulted in two subjective perceptions: life legacy and life momentum. Life legacy was the perception that one’s past had meaningfully contributed to his or her present experiences, life, and self. In contrast, life momentum referred to the belief that one’s present experiences were helping him or her to achieve the desired future. Lastly, having defining past experiences and setting clear goals both facilitated the directionality associations, providing solid grounds in the past or future, respectively, to which the students anchored their present experiences.

## Chapter 4: Quantitative Study

The purpose of this second study was to quantitatively discern explanatory power of the *ikigai* theory that developed in the first study, and its relationship with leisure variables.

### 4.1 Methods

To achieve the above goal, a quantitative research design specifically online survey and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) were adopted as the data collection and analysis methods.

#### 4.1.1 Sampling

A Japanese survey company was contracted to compile a sample of Japanese undergraduate students. Of 172,086 possible student panelists, 4,830 were randomly selected. Panelists responded to a series of screening questions based on the following inclusion/exclusion criteria: (a) he or she held Japanese nationality and spoke Japanese as his or her native language; (b) he or she attended a four-year university (or college) in Japan, excluding 2-year junior college and graduate school; and (c) his or her academic year. In terms of the last screening question, panelists were given the option of four academic years and “Other”. Those who chose the last option were excluded from the study. Of 4,328 panelists who satisfied all of the inclusion criteria, 2,921 were randomly selected. These individuals received an invitation email, with those who completed the follow-up survey during the first 24 hours composing the final sample ( $N = 674$ ). The response rate was 23.1%, although it should be noted that data collection ceased once the target sample size (i.e., 650) and a priori sample characteristics (i.e., in terms of gender and academic year) were achieved.

The target sample size was calculated based on Hair et al.’s (2017) recommendations for PLS-SEM. Specifically, 156 cases were required for a model with a significance level of .05,



statistical power of .80, minimum  $R^2$  of .25, and maximum 10 paths entering a latent variable. This number was multiplied by four, resulting in 624, as there was the possibility of running a multi-group analysis across the four academic year groups. Because a small number of unusable cases might exist, the final target size was 650.

With regard to data stratification, nearly equal numbers of male and female students and students in each of the four academic years, were desired. Of 674 respondents who completed the survey, 337 (50.0%) were female, and 168 students were in each of the first-, second-, and third-years while 170 students were in their fourth year.

Finally, given one reason for using an online survey was to obtain a nationally representative sample of Japanese university students, it is worth noting that participants represented 44 out of 47 prefectures in the country.

#### **4.1.2 Data collection**

An online survey was conducted between August 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016. The survey had several noteworthy characteristics. First, it was conducted on a web browser. Second, respondents were forced to answer all of the questions in a given section before proceeding to the next section. This feature eliminated missing values. Third, respondents were not allowed to go back to previous sections once they had been completed. Fourth, the order of the items within each section (e.g., scale, inventory, sub-scale) was randomized for each respondent. The reason for doing so was that personalized randomization mitigates concerns with common method biases (Sato, Jordan, & Funk, 2014, p. 300). The only exception to the above was with the *ikigai* processes inventory, in which case each group of formative items was shown randomly followed by a global measure. Fifth, by completing the survey, participants received a certain amount of points that they could exchange for a gift from the online survey company. The company's

policy is that the amount of points a participant receives depends on a survey's length. Although the exact amount of points participants obtained for this study, and its monetary price, was not disclosed by the company, the corporation assured that the monetary value would be only a few Canadian dollars.

#### **4.1.3 Measures**

There were four types of measures in my study: (a) *ikigai*-related, (b) leisure-related, (c) SWB-related, and (d) demographic-related. In the actual survey, respondents were first asked about SWB and single-item *ikigai* as these questions were the most abstract. Then, participants went through all of the *ikigai* measures developed based on the qualitative findings, starting with *ikigai* perceptions, followed by *ikigai* processes, and concluding with *ikigai* conditions. The respondents were subsequently asked about their leisure participation and leisure valuation. Lastly, they provided information on their demographic background.

***Ikigai-related measures.*** Among the *ikigai*-related measures were the: (a) *ikigai* perceptions scale, (b) *ikigai* processes inventory, (c) *ikigai* conditions scale, and (d) single-item *ikigai* measure (Kondo, 2003). The first three sets of measures were newly developed based on the qualitative findings from the first phase of my dissertation.

***The ikigai perceptions scale.*** This scale was developed to measure the six distinct perceptions of *ikigai*, specifically: (a) life affirmation, (b) life vibrancy, (c) self-authenticity, (d) genuine care, (e) life momentum, and (f) life legacy (see Appendix C for the definitions of each construct).

To develop measures for these constructs an initial pool of items, in Japanese, was constructed based on the qualitative findings in the first phase of my dissertation. These preliminary items, and their English counterparts, were then reviewed by Drs. Gordon Walker

and Eiji Ito. Their detailed comments guided the first round of item revision. Next, the revised items, in Japanese, were reviewed by eight *ikigai* or Japanese well-being research experts. Following Dunn, Bouffard, and Rogers's (1999) recommendations, the experts evaluated how well each item fitted with each of the six construct definitions including both target and non-target constructs, using a 5-point scale. They were also asked to provide any comments about the items and the definitions. The experts' quantitative data were statistically analyzed, as per Dunn et al., to examine both convergent and divergent validity. Three items exhibiting validity issues were revised, with help of the experts' qualitative comments, so that their meaning became (a) similar to the other items for the target construct and/or (b) distinct from the non-target constructs. The revised items were then pilot-tested with 14 Japanese undergraduate students at the University of Alberta and Wakayama University, Japan. A few items' wording was slightly modified to clarify their meaning. The final set of 18 items is listed in Appendices C and D.

Respondents answered the above items using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (does not apply to me at all) to 5 (applies very much to me). It should be noted that these items were designed to follow the common factor or reflective measurement model (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006; Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011).

***The ikigai processes inventory.*** This inventory was developed to measure the eight processes of *ikigai* pursuit identified in my qualitative study, specifically: (a) value engagement, (b) value diversification, (c) value balancing, (d) value disengagement, (e) experiencing together, (f) sharing experience, (g) cognitive association, and (h) behavioural association (see Appendix E for the definitions of these constructs).

Construction of the *ikigai* processes inventory basically paralleled the procedure for the

*ikigai* perceptions scale. However, the five processes—except for value disengagement—were designed to be formative measures (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006). In formative measurement, the causal directionality between items and latent variables is opposite to that in reflective measurement. The latter assumes that a true score of latent variable (e.g., *ikigai* perception) causes variance in people’s responses to items. Formative measurement on the contrary creates a weighted composite of items and considers this as a proxy for the true score of the latent variable. The validity of formative measurement models is largely determined by content validity or whether a set of items measures all major aspects of a target construct (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001; Hair et al., 2017; MacKenzie et al., 2011). Evaluating this in the expert review process required me to inform them which item theoretically belonged to a given construct. In addition to assessing how well each item fit a target construct, experts were asked to evaluate how comprehensive a set of items for a given construct was, considering its definition, using the same 5-point scale.

Inspection of the review data, following Dunn et al.’s (1999) absolute fit analysis procedure, indicated a few issues that appear to be more a function of the expert survey’s design than of the items themselves. First, a few items were rated low on convergent validity, when the corresponding part of target construct definition was listed after other key elements (e.g., the value of comfort in the definition of value engagement was listed after the other three types of value). Second, regardless of the survey’s instructions to evaluate content validity against the provided construct definitions, the experts’ qualitative comments indicated that some reviewers appeared to instead use either their own definitions or ones in the extant literature. This resulted in relatively low content validity scores.

A few other item-related issues also emerged. First, not surprisingly, the discriminant

validity between reflectively-identified value diversification and balancing items was low. Some reviewers suggest that I should rather use concrete examples for these items. This led to a major revision of these items, transforming them from reflective to formative measures. Second, originally, value disengagement items were subsumed under value balancing. This led multiple experts to point out the lack of convergent validity by noting that these constructs should be measured separately. For the rest of the study, these constructs were treated as distinct from one another. The final set of 31 items, and five global items for validation of formative measures, is listed in Appendices E and F. Respondents answered these items, using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (does not apply to me at all) to 5 (very much applies to me). The items were formatively identified, except for value disengagement.

***The ikigai conditions scale.*** This scale was developed to measure the six distinct conditions of *ikigai* processes, specifically: (a) value understanding, (b) action, (c) echoed value, (d) trust, (e) defining past, and (f) clear goals (see Appendix G for the definitions of these constructs).

Although initial items for these constructs were developed based on my qualitative findings, and then reviewed by Drs. Walker and Ito in the same manner as the earlier measures, the *ikigai* conditions scale was not expert-reviewed. This was because (a) the above two measures constitute major parts of present *ikigai* theory, and (b) adding more items to the expert review would likely have led to respondent fatigue and thus an extremely low response rate. This scale was included in the pilot test however, and some wording changes were subsequently made to its items. The final set of 12 items is displayed in Appendices G and H. Respondents answered these items, using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (does not apply to me at all) to 5 (very much applies to me). It should be noted that the conditions scale was supposed to be reflectively

identified.

**The single-item *ikigai* measure.** Kondo's (2003) single-item *ikigai* measure was included as a reference to validate the newly created *ikigai* perceptions scale. Inspired by Cantril's (1965) ladder scale used to measure life satisfaction, this instrument asks respondents to report their level of *ikigai* during a certain period of time (i.e., over the past one month in this study, consistent with other measures), and ranges from zero (i.e., absence of *ikigai*) to 10 (i.e., full of *ikigai*). Kondo reported that the item's test-retest reliability coefficient, over a two-month period among older adults, was .81.

**Leisure-related measures.** Four measures of different aspects of leisure were included in this study: leisure time, leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, and leisure valuation. In the actual survey, *jiyuu-jikan* or a Japanese expression that corresponds to "free time" in English was used instead of *rejaa* (i.e., a phonetic translation of "leisure") or *yoka* (i.e., a Japanese term roughly meaning "excessive time"). This was because the latter two terms were found to carry specific connotations (Ito & Walker, 2014).

**Leisure time.** Leisure time was measured by asking respondents to report the average amount of leisure time (i.e., hours) per typical (a) weekday and (b) weekend day over the past month. Instructions specified that this should not include time for studies, work, and survival including sleeping and eating. Participants chose their responses for the weekday and weekend day separately, using a scale ranging from zero to 24 hours. These two items were identified formatively in PLS-SEM analyses to avoid the loss of information because of aggregation.

**Leisure participation.** Leisure participation was measured by asking students how frequently over the past month they engaged in each of 12 leisure activities: outdoor recreation activities (e.g., cycling, fishing, visiting parks), sports (e.g., badminton, soccer), social activities

(e.g., chatting, eating out, spending time with family or friends), games (e.g., chess, video games computer games), exercising (e.g., walking, swimming), media activities (e.g., listening to music, reading, watching movies or television), volunteering as a group or with an organization, attending sport events, artistic or creative activities (e.g., cooking, playing a musical instrument, going to museum or concert), travelling for pleasure on holidays or vacation, resting or relaxing (e.g., doing nothing, taking a nap), and gambling (e.g., pachinko, horse racing, sport lottery). This inventory has previously been used in the context of leisure and well-being (e.g., Walker et al., 2011). Some examples were modified to better fit the Japanese context; for example, pachinko—a gambling game that combines aspects of pinball and a slot machine—was used instead of casino games such as video lottery terminals. Students reported their frequency of participation using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very often). These items were formatively identified in PLS-SEM analyses.

***Leisure satisfaction.*** Leisure satisfaction was measured using a single-item scale: “All in all, I am satisfied with my free-time activities”. Again, “free-time” or *jiyuu-jikan* was strategically used rather than other leisure-related Japanese terms to avoid their connotations (Ito & Walker, 2014). Respondents answered this question using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (does not apply to me at all) to 7 (very much applies to me). The Leisure Satisfaction Scale (Beard & Ragheb, 1980) was not adopted because of (a) its length (i.e., 51 items for the original form and 24 items for the shorter form) and (b) problematic factor solutions reported in past studies (e.g., Lysyk, Brown, Rodrigues, McNally, & Loo, 2002). Another important reason for choosing the single-item format over its multi-item counterpart was to make the leisure satisfaction measure consistent with other single-item domain life satisfaction measures (described below).

***Leisure valuation.*** A new measure of how people valued their leisure experiences was

developed based on my dissertation's qualitative findings. The scale development process followed the same procedures as for the *ikigai* perceptions scale, except that the leisure valuation scale was reviewed by 13 experts in the field of Japanese leisure and/or leisure and well-being. The final set of 12 items can be found in Appendices I and J. Students responded to these items, using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (does not apply to me at all) to 5 (very much applies to me). This scale was designed to be identified as a reflective-formative higher-order measurement model (Hair et al., 2017; Jarvis et al., 2003); that is, the valuation of each of the four values—enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and comfort—was measured reflectively, and these four sub-dimensions formatively composed overall leisure valuation.

**SWB-related measures.** Several SWB measures were included in the online survey, primarily to validate the newly developed *ikigai* perceptions scale. These included: (a) the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), (b) domain life satisfaction measures, (c) the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), and (d) the affect valuation index (AVI; Tsai, 2007).

**SWLS.** Four of the five original items in the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) were utilized. The item “if I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing” was excluded because Oishi (2009) reported that it lowered internal consistency when used with a Japanese sample. The Japanese version was derived from Oishi (p. 48). Respondents were asked to answer each item using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (does not apply to me at all) to 7 (very much applies to me). The Japanese version of the 7-point scale was also adopted from Oishi's work.

**SHS.** Three items were modified from the original SHS (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) and its Japanese counterpart (Shimai, Otake, Utsuki, Ikemi, & Lyubomirsky, 2004). Modification was necessary because each of the original SHS items requires a different response



scale; this was not possible in the current online survey platform. To address this issue, the label of the positive end of each scale was incorporated into the item wording itself. For example, the first item was re-phrased: “In general, I consider myself a very happy person.” Respondents were asked to answer the revised items, using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (does not apply to me at all) to 7 (very much applies to me). The SHS’s original fourth item was not included as it is a reverse-coded item, and reverse-coding has been found to reduce internal consistency (e.g., Weems & Onwuegbuzie, 2001).

***Domain life satisfaction measures.*** In addition to the aforementioned leisure satisfaction scale, satisfaction with five other life domains was measured, each using a single-item scale. These life domains included: academic, health, economic, relationship (including friends and partners), and family. The selection of these life domains was based on similar studies (e.g., Sato et al., 2014), while excluding domains that appeared less relevant to Japanese students’ lives (e.g., spiritual). Participants answered each question using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (does not apply to me at all) to 7 (very much applies to me).

***AVI.*** Eight items were employed to measure four distinct quadrants of emotional experiences (Tsai, 2007): low-arousal positive (LAP; calm and relaxed), high-arousal positive (HAP; enthusiastic and excited), low-arousal negative (LAN; dull and sluggish), and high-arousal negative (HAN; fearful and nervous). The original English version was back-translated (Brislin, 1970) by professional translators. Consistent with the original scale (Tsai, 2007), respondents were asked how often they experienced each of the emotions over the past month using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (did not feel at all) to 5 (felt all the time).

***Demographic measures.*** Demographic information collected in this survey included: sex, age, prefecture of current residence, academic year, academic major, student group

membership, employment status, and parental annual income level.

#### **4.1.4 Data cleaning**

Data cleaning was conducted on the 88 items required for the main statistical analyses, specifically the: 18 *ikigai* perceptions items, 31 *ikigai* processes items, 12 *ikigai* conditions items, two leisure time items, 12 leisure participation frequency items, one leisure satisfaction item, and 12 leisure valuation items. Data were cleaned using SPSS version 23 and following Tabachnick and Fidell's (2013) recommendations.

First, univariate normality was examined using the SPSS frequencies function and requesting histograms. Statistical tests (e.g., Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests) were *not* used because of their documented sensitivity to sample size (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Rather, the analysis focused on how far the skewness and kurtosis scores deviated from acceptable ranges. Different cut-off points appear in the literature, such as less than absolute value of two for both skewness and kurtosis (Field, 2009) and less than absolute value of three for skewness and less than absolute value of seven for kurtosis (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Two items—gambling participation and leisure time during weekday—had kurtosis scores greater than two (2.41 and 2.67, respectively). Most scores, however, did not even exceed an absolute value of one. Considering the non-parametric nature of PLS-SEM, univariate normality was deemed to be within an acceptable range.

Standardized scores (i.e., *z* score) were examined to identify potential univariate outliers, as per Tabachnick and Fidell's (2013) recommendations. *Z*-scores for all main items were computed by the SPSS Descriptive function, and then visually inspected. Two items had absolute *z*-score of 3.29 or greater (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 73): gambling participation ( $z = 3.51$  for raw score of "5";  $n = 12$ ) and leisure time during weekday ( $z = 3.76$  for the raw score of 24

and  $z = 3.33$  for the raw score of “22”;  $n = 12$  and 1, respectively). As gambling participation seems to be non-normally distributed in the Japanese population (e.g., Nichiyukyo, 2014) the highest score of this variable was *not* considered to be an outlier. Given the non-parametric nature of PLS-SEM, the gambling participation variable was left untreated. In terms of the leisure time items, 24 hours was a virtually impossible response as (a) this was asked in the context of a typical weekday or weekend day and (b) it was explicitly stated that this should not include time for studies, work, and survival (e.g., sleeping, eating). Possible explanations for this result are that (a) these respondents did not read the instruction carefully and/or (b) they experienced response fatigue by this final part of the survey. In either case, it is likely that these were *not* true “outliers” but rather response problems. Thus, I treated values of 24 as “missing values” and mean-replaced them, because the ratio of these cases did not exceed the suggested threshold of five percent missing data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 96). This treatment kept the skewness and kurtosis scores for these leisure time items, during the weekday and weekend day, within an acceptable range (i.e.,  $s = 1.065$  and  $0.478$  and  $k = 1.045$  and  $0.075$ , respectively).

To investigate homoscedasticity, a series of regressions were run among seven items with skewness and kurtosis scores of 1 or greater: game-playing participation, volunteering participation, sport event attendance, artistic/creative activity participation, gambling participation, and leisure time during the weekday and weekend day. The homoscedasticity analysis focused on these items because a larger number of items in the main analysis would have led to an exponentially large set of regressions. Because heteroscedasticity tends to co-occur with non-normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 85), this choice is justifiable. For each regression, I requested a scatterplot of standardized residual on the X axis and standardized predicted on the Y axis. Visual examination of the scatterplots did not suggest any obvious

heteroscedasticity among the residuals, except for between leisure time during the weekday and weekend day. Based on the observation that “heteroscedasticity is not fatal to an analysis of ungrouped data” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 85), I instead inspected how this potential heteroscedasticity occurred across gender and academic-year groups (i.e., 2 by 4 = 8 cells). I split the SPSS data file based on the cell group, and requested variance for both leisure time during the weekday and weekend day. Then, I calculated  $F_{\max}$  for both variables across the groups: the largest  $F_{\max}$  for leisure time during the weekday was 1.932 and the one for leisure time during the weekend day was 1.776. These values are well under the cut-off point of 10 recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (p. 86) in the context of balanced groups. Thus, the potential influence of heteroscedasticity on future analyses was assumed to be negligible.

No missing values existed among the main variables, except for the extreme responses of 24- and 22-hour leisure time. The absence of missing values was because respondents could not proceed to the next question or complete the survey without answering all of the questions, except for the option not to report their parental income level.

Potential multivariate outliers were explored by computing Mahalanobis Distance (MD) and Cook’s values using the SPSS Regression function. Because these multivariate outlier indicators are not immune to errors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 74), blind application of the chi-square inferential test was avoided. Rather, MD and Cook’s values were plotted and manually inspected. MD values flagged ID 669 as a potential multivariate outlier while Cook’s values pointed to ID’s 460 and 669. Thus, ID 669 was case-wise deleted first. Then, MD and Cook’s values were computed again with one less case. Cook’s values still identified ID 460 as a potential outlier, thus leading to a second case-wise deletion. The third round of MD and Cook’s values did not indicate any potential outliers. The sample size at this point was 672.

Multicollinearity was inspected, using the multicollinearity diagnostics available as part of the SPSS Regression function. All 88 main items were used in this regression. No variable had a condition index of 30 or greater *and* variance proportions of .50 or greater (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 91). Therefore, it was assumed that multicollinearity was absent in the final dataset.

#### **4.1.5 Data analysis**

The analysis process was composed of three distinct stages: (a) obtaining descriptive statistics and inspecting the indicators' validity and reliability, (b) examining a correlation matrix of the main variables and a series of multiple regression results, and (c) performing PLS-SEM to test main *ikigai* and leisure models. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 23 unless otherwise specified.

First, the final sample's ( $N = 672$ ) demographic characteristics were assessed, using sex, academic year, academic major, student group membership, employment status, parental income level, and age. The validity and reliability of the main variables and supplementary variables (e.g., life satisfaction, happiness) were evaluated as per Hair et al. (2017). Their procedure was appropriate for this study as they (a) recognized the differences between reflective and formative measurement models, and (b) discussed the process in the context of PLS-SEM. In addition, a series of confirmatory factor analysis, using Amos version 23 (Arbuckle, 2014), was conducted to determine the dimensionality of the *ikigai* perceptions. Lastly, the criterion-related validity of the newly developed *ikigai* perceptions scale was scrutinized, using established SWB measures (i.e., *ikigai* single-item scale, SWLS, SHS, and AVI).

Second, a matrix of zero-order correlation coefficients was inspected to gain insight into the relationships among the main variables, along with two control variables: sex and academic

year. Simultaneously, the main variables' means and standard deviations were examined. Then, a multiple regression analysis was performed to determine to what extent the leisure-related variables contributed to students' *ikigai* perceptions while controlling for the effects of other domain life satisfaction as well as demographic characteristics.

Third, a series of PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2017) analyses were conducted to (a) discern the relationship among the *ikigai* conditions, processes, and perceptions, and (b) the relationship between the leisure variables and the *ikigai* processes and perceptions. These analyses were done within each of the three sub-theories (i.e., *keiken* or valued experience, *ibasho* or authentic relationship, and *houkou-sei* or life directionality) as opposed to all sub-theories together. This decision was because of (a) a large number of variables, although PLS-SEM's estimation converged; (b) relatively weak relationships across the sub-theories; and (c) concerns regarding discriminant validity of life vibrancy and life momentum. These analyses utilized SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015).

## 4.2 Results

The final sample's ( $N = 672$ ) demographic characteristics are reported in Table 4.1. As shown, there were near equal numbers of females and males ( $n = 337$  and  $n = 335$ , respectively), as well as near equal numbers of students across the four academic years (ranging from  $n = 167$  to  $n = 170$ ). The most frequently self-identified academic major was art and humanity ( $n = 150$ , 22.3%), followed by other ( $n = 134$ , 19.9%), and then management and economics ( $n = 130$ , 19.3%). Among those who reported "other" majors, 53 identified medical degrees (e.g., medicine, nursing) in a subsequent free-description. In terms of student group membership, 268 (39.9%) students did not belong to any group, while 153 (22.8%) students were affiliated with a cultural club, and 111 (16.5%) belonged to a sport club. Most students either worked in a part-

Table 4.1 A Summary of Demographic Characteristics of the Final Sample

		<i>n</i>	%
Sex	1. Male	335	49.9
	2. Female	337	50.1
Academic year	1. First year	167	24.9
	2. Second year	168	25.0
	3. Third year	167	24.9
	4. Fourth year	170	25.3
Academic major	1. Arts & humanities	150	22.3
	2. Engineering	90	13.4
	3. Management & economics	130	19.3
	4. Math & natural sciences	78	11.6
	5. Social sciences	90	13.4
	6. Other	134	19.9
Student group membership	1. No membership	268	39.9
	2. Varsity (sport)	80	11.9
	3. Varsity (culture)	60	8.9
	4. Club (sport)	111	16.5
	5. Club (culture)	153	22.8
Employment status	1. No employment	247	36.8
	2. Part-time (< 20 hours per week)	297	44.2
	3. Part-time ( $\geq 20$ and < 40 hours per week)	109	16.2
	4. $\geq 40$ hours per week	19	2.8
Parental income (JPY)	1. < 2,500,000	77	11.5
	2. $\geq 2,500,000$ and < 5,000,000	57	8.5
	3. $\geq 5,000,000$ and < 7,500,000	73	10.9
	4. $\geq 7,500,000$ and < 10,000,000	70	10.4
	5. $\geq 10,000,000$	54	8.0
	6. Don't know or don't want to answer	341	50.7
<i>M</i>		<i>SD</i>	Range
Age	20.14	1.33	18-24

Note.  $N = 672$ .

time position less than 20 hours per week ( $n = 297$ , 44.2%) or were not employed at all ( $n = 247$ , 36.8%). The majority of respondents either did not know or did not want answer the question

concerning their parents' income level ( $n = 341$ , 50.7%). Lastly, students' average age was 20.14 years, and ranged from 18 to 24 years ( $SD = 1.33$ ).

#### **4.2.1 Validity and reliability**

The validity and reliability of the newly developed *ikigai* measures were assessed by following the process described by Hair et al. (2017). To do so, statistical models that represented the three sub-theories—valued experiences, authentic relationships, and directionality (Figures 4.1 to 4.3)—were run, using the PLS algorithm and the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples, bias-corrected and accelerated methods, and a significance level of .05. In addition, I ran a series of redundancy test models for each formative measurement model (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2017), where a set of formative items predicted a global indicator of the same construct. The validity and reliability results are summarized in Tables 4.2 to 4.4. The three sub-models were used here and in the following analyses instead of the overall *ikigai* model because: (a) the overarching *ikigai* theory encompasses many latent variables, which makes it difficult to interpret results, although the PLS algorithm still converged; (b) relatively few significant paths were found across the sub-models that had only minimal effects; and (c) the discriminant validity between life momentum and life vibrancy was not clearly supported.

Based on the sub-models' results, Hair et al.'s (2017) validity and reliability criteria for reflective and formative measurement models were mostly met. Two issues should be noted. First, the reliability of the items that measured an *ikigai* condition called action was slightly below the conservative threshold of .70 ( $\rho_A = .67$  and  $\alpha = .66$ ). However, Hair et al. suggested that for an exploratory study such as mine, a cut-off point of .60 is acceptable (p. 112). Second, some formative measures explained less than 50% of corresponding global single indicators. As



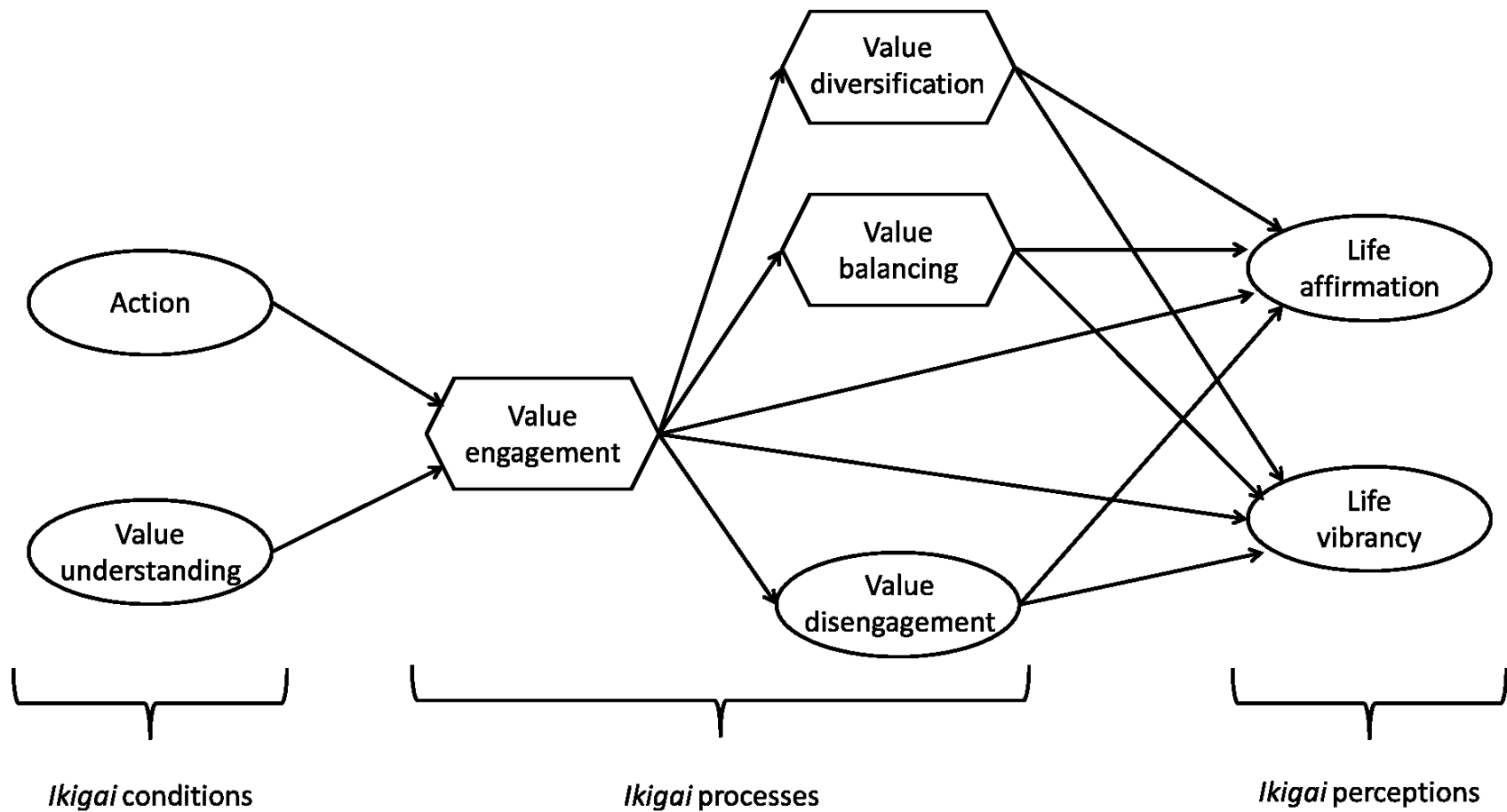


Figure 4.1. A theoretical model of *keiken* or valued experiences.

An oval circle indicates a reflectively identified variable (Mode A) while a hexagon means a formatively identified variable (Mode B).

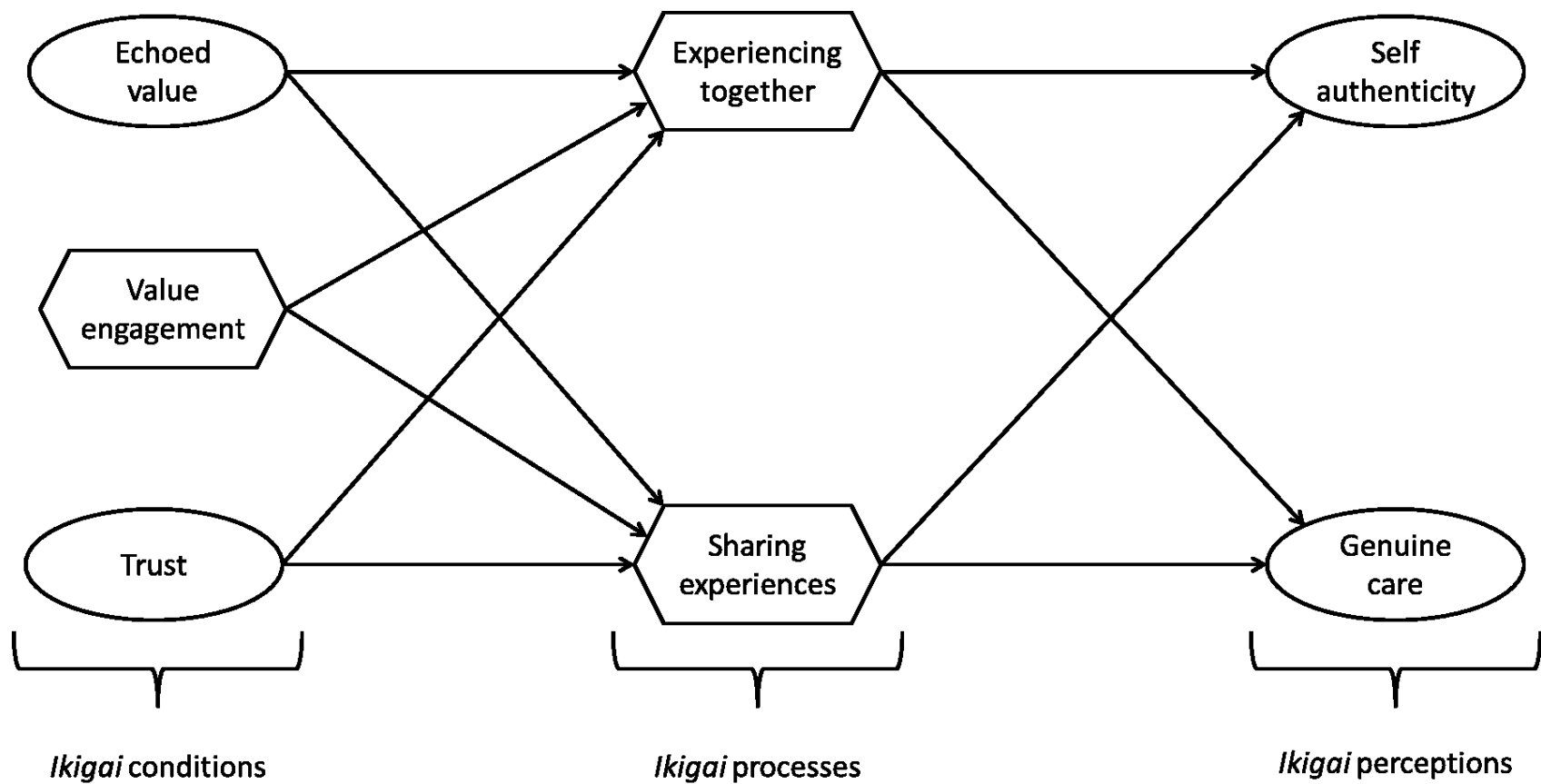


Figure 4.2. A theoretical model of *ibasho* or authentic relationships.

An oval circle indicates a reflectively identified variable (Mode A) while a hexagon means a formatively identified variable (Mode B).

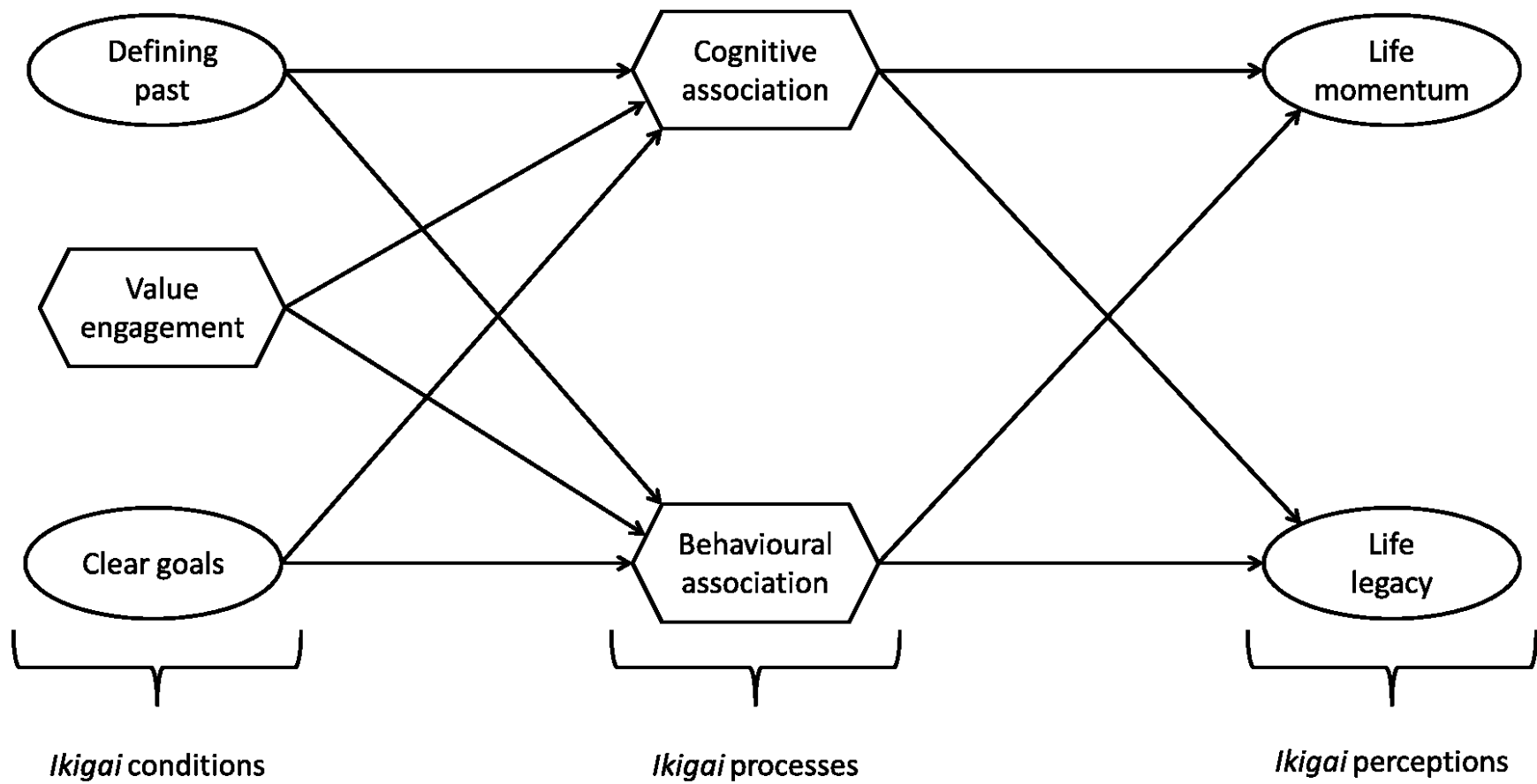


Figure 4.3. A theoretical model of *houkou-sei* or directionality.

An oval circle indicates a reflectively identified variable (Mode A) while a hexagon means a formatively identified variable (Mode B).

Table 4.2 Validity and Reliability of the *Ikigai* Measurement Models in the *Keiken* Model, Following Hair et al.'s (2017) Process

<b>Reflectively</b> measured constructs	Convergent validity (AVE greater than .50)	Discriminant validity (heterotrait-mono trait ratio less than .90)	Inter-item consistency ( $\rho_A$ / Cronbach's $\alpha$ close to or greater than .70)	Indicator reliability (factor loadings greater than .70; based on PLS-SEM)
Life affirmation	.76	.67 – .84	.84 / .84	.86, .89, and .86
Life vibrancy	.75	.62 – .84	.83 / .83	.89, .86, and .84
Value disengagement	.76	.50 – .73	.85 / .84	.89, .85, and .88
Action	.74	.64 – .87	.67 / .66	.84 and .89
Value understanding	.81	.50 – .87	.76 / .76	.89 and .90
<b>Formatively</b> measured constructs	Convergent validity ( $R^2$ or variance of single-item indicator of the same construct explained by the formative counterpart)	Absence of collinearity (max VIF less than 5)	Significance of outer weights based on bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples, .05 level, bias-corrected)	
Value engagement	.61	2.40	All weights were significant but one stimuli item ( $p = .329$ ). However, the item had outer loading of .71 (.50 or greater), so it was retained.	
Value diversification	.46	2.22	All weights were significant.	
Value balance	.36	1.94	All weights were significant.	

*Note.* The factor loadings are listed in the order of item number (see Appendices C, E, & G).

Table 4.3 Validity and Reliability of the *Ikigai* Measurement Models in the *Ibasho* Model, Following Hair et al.'s (2017) Process

<b>Reflectively</b> measured constructs	Convergent validity (AVE greater than .50)	Discriminant validity (heterotrait-mono trait ratio less than .90)	Inter-item consistency ( $\rho_A$ / Cronbach's $\alpha$ close to or greater than .70)	Indicator reliability (factor loadings greater than .70; based on PLS-SEM)
Self-authenticity	.75	.70 – .89	.84 / .83	.88, .84, and .88
Genuine care	.74	.76 – .89	.83 / .82	.87, .88, and .83
Trust	.83	.70 – .79	.80 / .80	.91 and .92
Echoed value	.80	.70 – .86	.75 / .74	.88 and .90
<b>Formatively</b> measured constructs	Convergent validity ( $R^2$ or variance of single-item indicator of the same construct explained by the formative counterpart)	Absence of collinearity (max VIF less than 5)	Significance of outer weights based on bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples, .05 level, bias-corrected)	
Experiencing together	.49	2.63	All weights were significant.	
Sharing experiences	.55	2.41	One item had a non-significant weight, but it had an outer loading of .76. Thus, it was retained.	
Value engagement	.61	2.40	Five items had non-significant weights. However, all of them had an outer loading of .67 or higher, thus being retained.	

*Note.* The factor loadings are listed in the order of item number (see Appendices C, E, & G).

Table 4.4 Validity and Reliability of the *Ikigai* Measurement Models in the *Houkou-sei* Model, Following Hair et al.'s (2017) Process

<b>Reflectively</b> measured constructs	Convergent validity (AVE greater than .50)	Discriminant validity (heterotrait-mono trait ratio less than .90)	Inter-item consistency ( $\rho_A$ / Cronbach's $\alpha$ close to or greater than .70)	Indicator reliability (factor loadings greater than .70; based on PLS-SEM)
Life momentum	.77	.67 – .83	.85 / .85	.86, .89, and .89
Life legacy	.72	.44 – .83	.80 / .80	.85, .83, and .86
Defining past	.80	.59 – .72	.74 / .74	.89 and .89
Clear goals	.83	.44 – .67	.80 / .79	.90 and .92
<b>Formatively</b> measured constructs	Convergent validity ( $R^2$ or variance of single-item indicator of the same construct explained by the formative counterpart)	Absence of collinearity (max VIF less than 5)	Significance of outer weights based on bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples, .05 level, bias-corrected)	
Cognitive association	.43	2.36	All weights were significant.	
Behavioural association	.49	2.58	All weights were significant.	
Value engagement	.61	2.40	Three items had non-significant weights, but they had outer loadings of .74 or higher. Thus, these items were retained.	

*Note.* The factor loadings are listed in the order of item number (see Appendices C, E, & G)

$R^2$  does *not* have a strict cut-off point, most of these values appear acceptable (cf.  $R^2 = .45$ ; Sarstedt, Ringle, Raithel, & Gudergan, 2014). However, the value balance measures had a notably low explained variance:  $R^2 = .36$ . This may have been because the value balance global indicator was computed based on the value engagement items. After a series of computations and re-codings (Appendix K), the global indicator's distribution was somewhat skewed ( $s = .930$ ), whereas similar non-normality was not observed among the other global items. This positive skewness conceptually made sense as value balancing was deemed to be the most difficult phase among the four value-related constructs (i.e., value actualization, diversification, and disengagement were necessary conditions for balancing).

In terms of the validity and reliability of the leisure valuation scale, the four sub-scales were scrutinized based on an a-priori theoretical model in which the four leisure variables directly and indirectly—through the *ikigai* processes—predicted the *ikigai* perceptions. The convergent validity of each sub-scale was supported by AVE values greater than .50 (i.e., all ranged from .69 to .77). Discriminant validity was examined by inspecting heterotrait-monotrait ratios; the combination of leisure enjoyment and comfort exhibited issue as it had a ratio of .98, while less than .90 is desired. A follow-up bootstrap analysis with 5,000 subsamples, bias-corrected and accelerated method, and a significance level of .05 suggested that this value was significantly different from 1.0 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015), thus justifying treating these two sub-scales separately. Internal consistency was supported by  $\rho_A$  of .70 or higher (i.e., all ranged from .78 to .85), whereas indicator reliability was supported by outer loadings of .70 or greater (i.e., all ranged from .81 to .88).

In regard to the existing SWB indicators, all of which played supplementary roles in this study, only their reliability scores (i.e.,  $\alpha$ ) are presented here. The SWLS (Diener et al., 1985)

and the SHS (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) demonstrated good internal consistency (i.e., .92 and .88, respectively). In contrast, the values for positive and negative affect were low (i.e., .51 and .66, respectively). This was presumably because the measures for these two constructs were part of an inventory, rather than scale, and contained some heterogeneity as they tapped into both high- and low-arousal dimensions (Tsai, 2007; e.g., enthusiasm and peacefulness for positive affect). When these items were divided into the four affect quadrants (i.e., HAP, LAP, HAN, and LAN), their internal consistency increased (.63, .77, .67, and .61, respectively, based on the Spearman-Brown coefficient for two items; Eisinga, te Grotenhuis, & Pelzer, 2013). Thus, based on this statistical reasoning as well as congruence with quadrant affective theory (Tsai, 2007), the four items for each emotional valence were retained.

Next, a series of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the dimensionality of the *ikigai* perceptions. This dimensionality concerned one of my research questions. This analysis was also important because, as mentioned earlier (p. 249), life vibrancy and life momentum had a heterotrait-monotrait ratio greater than .90, which suggested potential issue with their discriminant validity (although the follow-up bootstrap analysis discerned that it was significantly different from 1.0; Henseler et al., 2015). To begin with, six theoretically plausible models were tested: (a) one-factor (i.e., overall *ikigai*) model, (b) three-factor (i.e., valued experiences, authentic relationships, and directionality) model, (c) six-factor (i.e., life affirmation, life vibrancy, self-authenticity, genuine care, life momentum, and life legacy) model, (d) three-factor model with one higher-order factor (i.e., overall *ikigai*), (e) six-factor model with one higher-order factor, and (f) six-factor model with three higher-order factors (i.e., valued experiences, authentic relationships, and directionality). Because of the discriminant validity issue between life vibrancy and momentum, one additional model was tested: five-factor



model in which these two constructs were collapsed into one factor.

The CFA results are summarized in Table 4.5. Two indices to compare non-hierarchical (or non-nested) models, AIC and BIC, suggested that the six-factor model was most replicable as it had a comparatively better fit and fewer free parameters (Kline, 2016, p. 287). This model's factor loadings and inter-factor correlations are shown in Figure 4.4. Model fit indices also supported this model:  $\chi^2(120) = 352.90, p = .000$ ; GFI = .943; AGFI = .918; CFI = .969; RMSEA = .054, CI 10% [.047, .060],  $p_{\text{close}} = .164$ ; SRMR = .030. Thus, the six latent variables were identified separately in the following PLS-SEM analyses.

The last stage in validating the new *ikigai* perceptions scale was to examine the criterion-related validity based on its zero-order correlations with the single-item *ikigai* measure and the existing SWB measures. It was hypothesized that the multi-item *ikigai* perceptions scale would be most strongly correlated with *ikigai* as measured by Kondo's (2003) single-item, followed by life satisfaction as measured by the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985), happiness as measured by the SHS (Lyumobirsky & Lepper, 1999), positive affect as measured by Tsai's (2007) affect inventory, and negative affect as measured by Tsai's (2007) affect inventory. The rationale for this hypothesis was that *ikigai* perceptions are cognitive assessments of different aspects of a worthy life, and therefore life satisfaction—the cognitive aspect of SWB—would be the most proximal. Happiness is conceptualized as an overall SWB indicator, thus mixing the cognitive and affective dimensions. The affective assessment would have weakest correlations, while positive affect would have stronger correlation than its negative counterpart as *ikigai* is largely deemed as being a positive state. The initial results are displayed in Table 4.6. As shown, the order of correlation coefficient sizes and direction was as expected. However, the gap in the coefficient sizes between the multi-item *ikigai* and single-item *ikigai* and between the multi-item

Table 4.5 A Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses of the *Ikigai* Perceptions

	One-factor model	Three-factor model	Six-factor model	Three-factor model with one higher order factor	Six-factor model with one higher order factor	Six-factor model with three higher order factors	Five-factor model
$\chi^2_M(df_M)$	1466.44 (135)	673.181 (132)	352.90 (120)	673.181 (132)	629.704 (129)	398.012 (126)	395.428 (125)
$p$	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
GFI	.735	.884	.943	.884	.902	.934	.935
AGFI	.664	.849	.918	.849	.870	.910	.911
CFI	.824	.928	.969	.928	.934	.964	.964
RMSEA,	.121,	.078,	.054,	.078,	.076,	.057,	.057,
CI 10%,	[.116, .127],	[.072, .084],	[.047, .060],	[.072, .084],	[.070, .082],	[.050, .063],	[.051, .063],
$p_{close}$	.000	.000	.164	.000	.000	.038	.037
SRMR	.075	.044	.030	.044	.058	.034	.031
AIC	1538.444	751.181	454.909	751.181	713.704	488.012	487.428
BIC	1700.813	927.081	684.933	927.081	903.135	690.973	694.900

Note.  $N = 672$ .

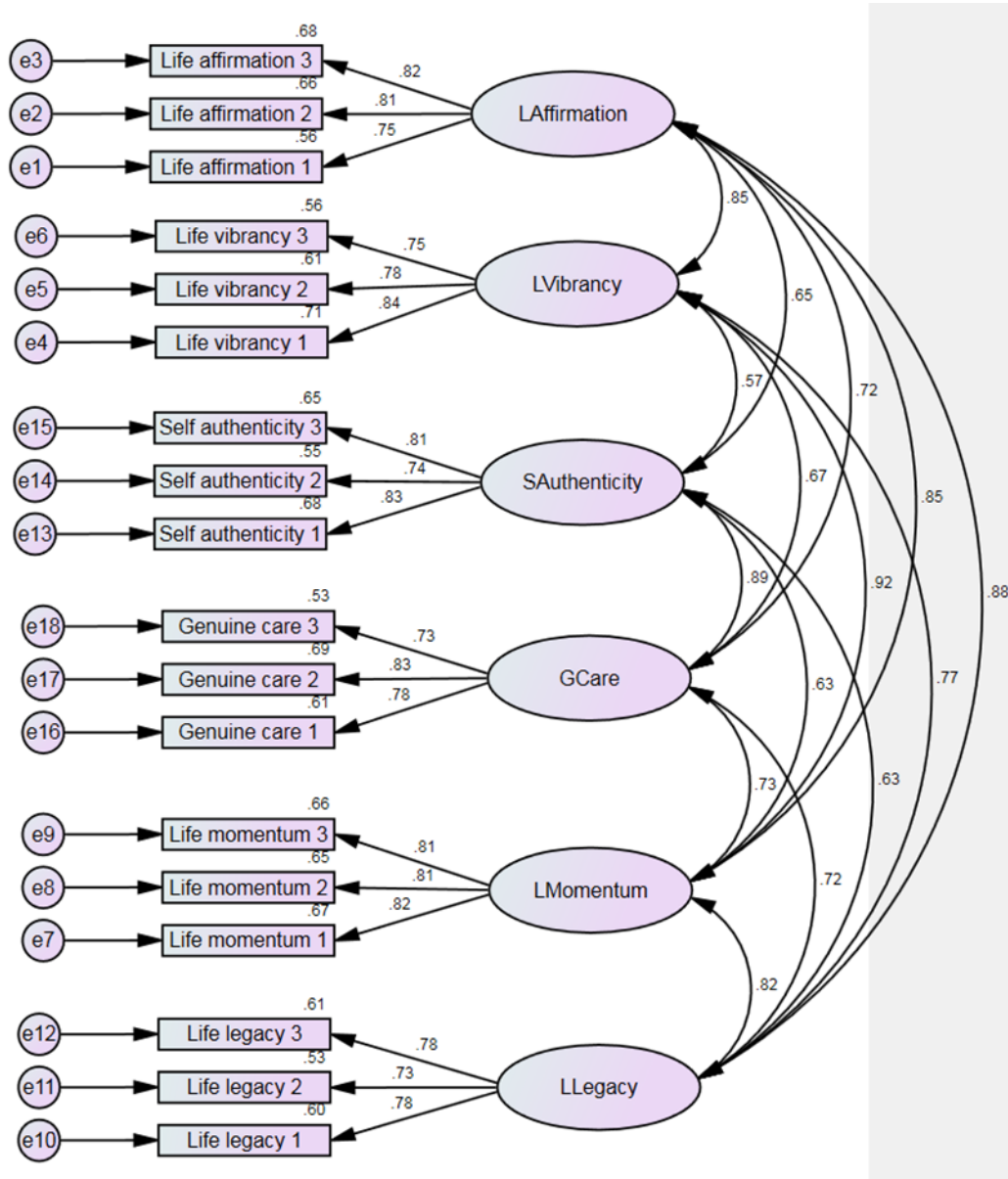


Figure 4.4. The results of confirmatory factor analysis of the six-factor model. All coefficients are standardized.

Table 4.6 A Zero-Order Correlation Matrix between the *Ikigai* Perceptions and SWB Indicators

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. <i>Ikigai</i> perceptions	(.94)					
2. <i>Ikigai</i> single item	.69**	---				
3. Life satisfaction	.68**	.65**	(.92)			
4. Happiness	.65**	.62**	.81**	(.88)		
5. Positive affect	.50**	.48**	.46**	.45**	(.66)	
6. Negative affect	-.23**	-.27**	-.22**	-.22**	.10*	(.51)

Note.  $N = 672$ . \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ . The numbers in the parentheses are  $\alpha$  values for each scale.

Table 4.7 A Zero-Order Correlation Matrix between the *Ikigai* Perceptions without the Authentic Relationships Dimension and SWB Indicators

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. <i>Ikigai</i> perceptions without the interpersonal aspects	(.94)					
2. <i>Ikigai</i> single item	.72**	---				
3. Life satisfaction	.79**	.65**	(.92)			
4. Happiness	.67**	.62**	.81**	(.88)		
5. Positive affect	.51**	.48**	.46**	.45**	(.66)	
6. Negative affect	-.25**	-.27**	-.22**	-.22**	.10*	(.51)

Note.  $N = 672$ . \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ . The numbers in the parentheses are  $\alpha$  values for each scale.

*ikigai* and the SWLS (i.e.,  $r = .69$  and  $.68$ ) was minimal. Considering relatively low inter-factor correlations between the authentic relationship and other aspects observed in the CFA results (Figure 4.4), the zero-order correlations were recalculated with the multi-item *ikigai* excluding this interpersonal aspect (i.e., self-authenticity and genuine care). These results are reported in Table 4.7. The gap between the correlation of the multi- and single-item *ikigai* measures and the correlation of the multi-item *ikigai* measure and life satisfaction was enlarged (i.e.,  $r = .72$  and  $.70$ , respectively). Consequently, both the full set of the multi-item *ikigai* scale and its subset without the *ibasho* dimension were used in the subsequent regression analyses.

#### 4.2.2 Correlation and regression analyses of leisure and *ikigai*

A zero-order correlation matrix composed of the main *ikigai* and leisure variables, along with two demographic variables (i.e., sex and academic year), was initially scrutinized to gain a better overall understanding of their inter-relationships (see Table 4.8). Visual examination of the correlation patterns was largely consistent with expectations. For example, among the four leisure variables, leisure time had negative, minimal to small correlations with the *ikigai* variables (Cohen, 1992). Leisure valuation, as conceptualized as the aspect of leisure experience highly relevant to *ikigai*, had positive correlations with the *ikigai* measures strongest in size among the leisure variables. Somewhat surprisingly, the leisure participation and satisfaction correlations with the *ikigai* variables were not discernably different from each other in terms of size. However, in the context of SWB, life satisfaction has often been found to have stronger correlations than leisure participation (e.g., Kuykendall et al., 2015). The *ikigai* condition and process variables had medium to large sizes of positive correlations with other aspects of *ikigai* (Cohen, 1992). Finally, most of the *ikigai* perceptions variables had large positive correlations with one another (Cohen, 1992).

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of leisure-related variables on the *ikigai* perceptions, while controlling for demographic characteristics and domain life satisfaction scores (see Table 4.9). In Step One, six demographic variables were introduced: sex, age, academic year, employment status, group (i.e., varsity or club) membership, and varsity membership. Of these variables, sex ( $b^* = .16$ ), employment status ( $b^* = .08$ ), and group membership ( $b^* = .14$ ) were found to significantly predict the *ikigai* perceptions. When the five domain life satisfaction indicators (i.e., academic, health, economic, relationship, and family) were added in Step Two, only sex ( $b^* = .07$ ) and employment status ( $b^* = .06$ ) remained

Table 4.8. A Summary of Means (*M*), Standard Deviations (*SD*), and Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients among the Main Leisure and *Ikigai* Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Sex	---	---	---											
2. Academic year	---	---	.00	---										
3. L. time	6.77	3.72	.00	-.09*	(.82 <sup>ab</sup> )									
4. L. participation	2.54	0.61	-.05	-.02	-.08*	(.75 <sup>b</sup> )								
5. L. satisfaction	4.66	1.46	.16**	.10*	.10*	.26**	---							
6. L. valuation	3.53	0.70	.18**	.02	-.06	.31**	.36**	(.92 <sup>c</sup> )						
7. Value understand.	3.22	0.88	0.02	.02	-.04	.32**	.34**	.49**	(.76 <sup>a</sup> )					
8. Action	3.33	0.85	.10**	.02	-.06	.39**	.32**	.56**	.61**	(.66 <sup>a</sup> )				
9. Echoed values	3.18	0.89	.15**	-.01	-.06	.39**	.33**	.45**	.54**	.58**	(.74 <sup>a</sup> )			
10. Trust	3.40	0.97	.23**	.00	-.02	.32**	.34**	.47**	.44**	.52**	.66**	(.80 <sup>a</sup> )		
11. Defining past	3.24	0.96	.07	.08*	-.07	.36**	.27**	.52**	.55**	.61**	.55**	.50**	(.74 <sup>a</sup> )	
12. Clear goals	3.00	0.99	-.01	-.01	-.11**	.31**	.22**	.35**	.61**	.51**	.44**	.35**	.45**	(.79 <sup>a</sup> )
13. V. engagement	3.27	0.79	.14**	-.03	-.07	.41**	.36**	.55**	.48**	.57**	.53**	.49**	.56**	.38**
14. V. diversification	3.32	0.94	.14**	-.01	-.03	.35**	.33**	.53**	.46**	.54**	.48**	.43**	.54**	.33**
15. V. balancing	3.12	0.95	.07	.03	-.09*	.39**	.33**	.48**	.45**	.51**	.47**	.41**	.51**	.34**
16. V. disengagement	3.31	0.88	.09*	.03	-.02	.34**	.44**	.53**	.40**	.48**	.44**	.41**	.46**	.32**
17. Exp. together	3.38	0.87	.15**	-.02	-.01	.36**	.30**	.48**	.43**	.51**	.55**	.61**	.45**	.31**
18. Sharing exp.	3.27	0.90	.20**	.02	-.04	.34**	.31**	.49**	.41**	.48**	.60**	.64**	.45**	.30**
19. Cognitive asso.	3.18	0.86	.03	.04	-.12**	.37**	.25**	.47**	.58**	.60**	.49**	.42**	.55**	.52**
20. Behavioural asso.	3.14	0.87	.08*	.05	-.13**	.39**	.30**	.49**	.56**	.59**	.50**	.45**	.55**	.57**
21. Life affirmation	3.37	0.90	.15**	.06	-.03	.34**	.45**	.58**	.54**	.62**	.55**	.53**	.55**	.39**
22. Life vibrancy	2.98	0.88	.06	.04	-.13**	.41**	.34**	.48**	.52**	.54**	.53**	.43**	.55**	.44**
23. Self-authenticity	3.32	0.88	.16**	.07	-.01	.29**	.32**	.44**	.42**	.48**	.55**	.64**	.47**	.33**
24. Genuine care	3.32	0.81	.17**	.09*	-.05	.32**	.36**	.49**	.47**	.53**	.59**	.64**	.51**	.35**
25. Life momentum	3.13	0.90	.10**	.10**	-.16**	.34**	.32**	.49**	.58**	.60**	.55**	.48**	.56**	.55**
26. Life legacy	3.38	0.84	.15**	.12**	-.07	.31**	.38**	.54**	.53**	.59**	.51**	.48**	.56**	.35**

Table 4.8 Continued

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
1. Sex														
2. Academic year														
3. L. time														
4. L. participation														
5. L. satisfaction														
6. L. valuation														
7. Value understand.														
8. Action														
9. Echoed values														
10. Trust														
11. Defining past														
12. Clear goals														
13. V. engagement	(.88 <sup>c</sup> )													
14. V. diversification	.78**	(.85a)												
15. V. balancing	.75**	.75**	(.82a)											
16. V. disengagement	.63**	.63**	.66**	(.84)										
17. Exp. together	.51**	.51**	.43**	.46**	(.88b)									
18. Sharing exp.	.50**	.47**	.42**	.43**	.69**	(.88b)								
19. Cognitive asso.	.59**	.54**	.50**	.41**	.51**	.48**	(.86b)							
20. Behavioural asso.	.64**	.59**	.58**	.46**	.51**	.52**	.77**	(.88b)						
21. Life affirmation	.68**	.65**	.66**	.61**	.53**	.50**	.56**	.59**	(.84)					
22. Life vibrancy	.66**	.62**	.65**	.52**	.47**	.45**	.54**	.62**	.70**	(.83)				
23. Self-authenticity	.45**	.44**	.40**	.42**	.61**	.54**	.47**	.45**	.55**	.48**	(.83)			
24. Genuine care	.53**	.50**	.44**	.44**	.62**	.61**	.50**	.52**	.60**	.56**	.74**	(.82)		
25. Life momentum	.63**	.58**	.59**	.50**	.51**	.49**	.61**	.67**	.72**	.78**	.53**	.61**	(.85)	
26. Life legacy	.60**	.57**	.55**	.54**	.53**	.46**	.60**	.59**	.72**	.64**	.52**	.59**	.68**	(.80)

Note.  $N = 672$ . \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ . The numbers inside parentheses are Cronbach's  $\alpha$  unless otherwise is indicated. <sup>a</sup> Spearman-Brown coefficient due to 2 items. <sup>b</sup> Formative measurement model. <sup>c</sup> Second-order formative measurement model.

Table 4.9 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting the *Ikigai* Perceptions by Demographic Characteristics, Life Domain Satisfaction, and Leisure-Related Variables

	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	<i>b</i> <sup>*</sup>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i> <sup>*</sup>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i> <sup>*</sup>	<i>SE</i>
1. Sex	.16***	.05	.07*	.04	.04	.04
2. Age	.10	.04	.10	.03	.07	.03
3. Academic year	.03	.05	-.07	.03	-.03	.03
4. Employment status	.08*	.04	.06*	.03	.05	.02
5. Student group	.14**	.06	.04	.05	.03	.04
6. Varsity	.02	.07	-.03	.06	-.02	.05
7. Academic satisfaction			.30***	.02	.18***	.02
8. Health satisfaction			.08*	.02	.03	.01
9. Economic satisfaction			.01	.02	.02	.02
10. Relationship satisfaction			.29***	.02	.21***	.01
11. Family satisfaction			.20***	.02	.12***	.02
12. Leisure time					-.04	.01
13. Leisure participation					.12***	.03
14. Leisure satisfaction					.05	.02
15. Leisure valuation					.33***	.03
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.06		.46		.57	
<i>F</i>	7.54***		53.20***		60.07***	

Note. *N* = 672. \* *p* < .05, \*\* *p* < .01, \*\*\* *p* < .001.



significant. However, satisfaction with academic ( $b^* = .30$ ), relationship ( $b^* = .29$ ), family ( $b^* = .20$ ), and health ( $b^* = .08$ ) were also found to significantly predict the *ikigai* perceptions. In Step Three, the four leisure-related variables were introduced: leisure time, leisure participation, leisure satisfaction, and leisure valuation. As a result, all of the demographic characteristics became non-significant, whereas satisfaction with relationship ( $b^* = .21$ ), academic ( $b^* = .18$ ), and family ( $b^* = .12$ ) remained significant. Moreover, leisure valuation ( $b^* = .33$ ) and leisure participation ( $b^* = .12$ ) also significantly predicted the *ikigai* perceptions after controlling for the other variables. It is important to underscore here that leisure satisfaction did not significantly predict the *ikigai* perceptions, whereas this domain satisfaction was found to be a stable predictor of SWB (e.g., Kuykendall et al., 2015). When the *ikigai* perceptions aggregate excluding the authentic relationship dimension was used as the dependent variable, a similar pattern of significant predictors was found with one exception: leisure time significantly and negatively predicted the *ikigai* perceptions (Appendix L).

#### 4.2.3 PLS-SEM analyses of *ikigai* sub-theories

To test my grounded theory of *ikigai*, the three statistical models based on the sub-theories (see Figure 4.1 to 4.3) were analyzed using PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2017). All PLS-SEM analyses included sex and age as control variables.

**The sub-theory of *keiken* or valued experiences.** First, the results of the *keiken*, or valued experiences model, are shown in Table 4.10 and Figure 4.5. Collinearity was not a substantial issue in this structural model, as supported by the maximum VIF 3.33 (i.e., less than 5 as per Hair et al., 2017, p. 194). As expected, the associations' directions were all positive. The bootstrap procedure indicated that all paths were significant at a .05 level, except for the one from value disengagement to life vibrancy. Although this null finding was surprising as the

Table 4.10 PLS-SEM Results of the *Keiken* or Valued Experiences Model

		Endogenous variables				
		Value engagement	Value diversification	Value balance	Value disengagement	Life affirmation
						Life vibrancy
$R^2$		.36	<b>.62</b>	<b>.58</b>	.43	<b>.56</b>
$f^2$	Value understanding	0.04				
	Action	0.21				
	Value engagement		<b>1.60</b>	<b>1.35</b>	<b>0.76</b>	0.07
	Value diversification					0.02
	Value balance					0.03
	Value disengagement					0.04
$Q^2$		.19	.53	.49	.33	.41
$q^2$	Value understanding	0.02				
	Action	0.09				
	Value engagement					0.03
	Value diversification					0.01
	Value balance					0.01
	Value disengagement					0.02

*Note.*  $N = 672$ . According to Hair et al. (2017), the evaluation criterion for  $R^2$  is .25, .50, and .75 for weak, moderate, and substantial effects, respectively. The cut-off points for  $f^2$  and  $q^2$  are 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 for small, medium, and large effects.  $Q^2$  values greater than zero have predictive relevance. Values that are medium in size are bolded.

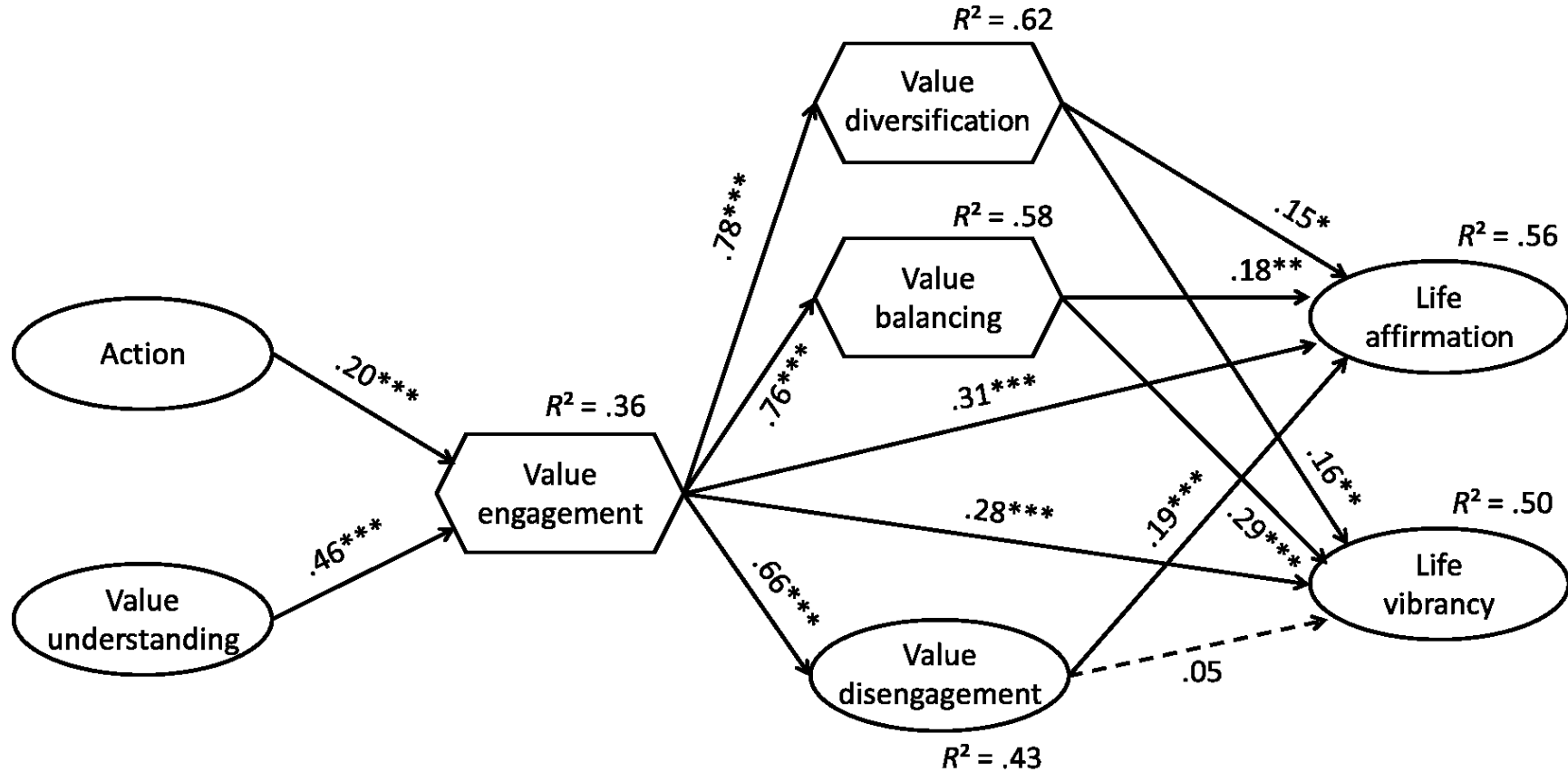


Figure 4.5. Results of PLS-SEM analysis of the valued experiences model.

An oval signifies a reflectively identified latent variable, whereas a hexagon designates a formatively identified variable. Path coefficients are standardized. The significance tests of structural paths were based on the bootstrap procedure with 5,000 subsamples, bias-corrected and accelerated method, and a significance level of .05.

\*  $p = .004$ , \*\*  $p = .001$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

qualitative analysis clearly indicated this theoretical link, the overall findings still suggested that all exogenous variables were relevant to at least one of the endogenous variables. In terms of  $R^2$  values indicative of “in-sample predictive power” (Hair et al., 2017, p. 198), three variables were of particular interest: value engagement, life affirmation, and life vibrancy. According to Hair et al. (2017, p. 199), an  $R^2$  of .36 for value engagement signaled a weak effect, whereas an  $R^2$  of .56 and .50 for life affirmation and life vibrancy, respectively, were moderate in size.

A predictor variable’s impact on an endogenous variable can be determined based on  $f^2$  (i.e., its effect size) (Hair et al., 2017). Value engagement, diversification, balancing, and disengagement had small effects on life affirmation ( $f^2 = 0.07, 0.02, 0.03$ , and  $0.04$ , respectively). With regard to life vibrancy, value engagement, diversification, and balancing had small effects ( $f^2 = 0.06, 0.02$ , and  $0.05$ , respectively). This list of small effects despite the earlier moderate  $R^2$  values was presumably because the value-related predictors had overlapping effects on their target variables. Action had a medium effect on value engagement ( $f^2 = 0.21$ ), and value understanding had a small effect on the same outcome variable ( $f^2 = 0.04$ ).

To examine the *keiken* model’s ability to predict the endogenous variables beyond the context of this sample (i.e., its predictive relevance), the blindfolding procedure was performed<sup>6</sup> (Hair et al., 2017). The resultant  $Q^2$  values were as follows: .53 (value diversification), .49 (value balancing), .41 (life affirmation), .37 (life vibrancy), .33 (value disengagement), and .19 (value engagement). Given that values larger than zero indicate the predictive relevance (Hair et al.,

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<sup>6</sup> The blindfolding procedure is a type of resampling statistical method. Based on a pre-determined distance number  $D$ , resampling extracts only every  $D$ th case in the original sample and creates a separate pseudo-sample. An analyst should choose  $D$  in such a way that a quotient of dividing the total case number by  $D$  is not an integer. In this case, I used  $D = 9$  for  $N = 672$ .

2017, p. 207), the values for life affirmation and life vibrancy appeared promising as this model was designed to predict these *ikigai* perceptions. In contrast, the relatively low value for value engagement suggested that the current model might be missing a major explanatory variable.

A series of the blindfolding procedures were performed while rotationally deleting one of the exogenous variables, which allowed for computing  $q^2$  or the indicator of relative impacts of the predictors on the predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2017). Among the *ikigai* process variables, value engagement had small effects on the predictive relevance of both life affirmation and life vibrancy ( $q^2 = 0.03$  and  $0.03$ , respectively). Value balancing had a small effect on life vibrancy prediction ( $q^2 = 0.03$ ), whereas value disengagement had a small effect on life affirmation prediction ( $q^2 = 0.02$ ). Finally, value diversification had only minimal effects on the model's predictive relevance ( $q^2 = 0.01$  for both life affirmation and vibrancy). These results should be carefully interpreted, considering that the effects of the value-related predictors on the *ikigai* perceptions may have had a substantial overlap. Of the *ikigai* condition variables, both action and value understanding had a small effect on the predictive relevance of value actualization ( $q^2 = 0.09$  and  $0.02$ , respectively).

Lastly, the importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) was applied to the *keiken* model (Hair et al., 2017; Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). This analysis graphically combines path coefficients (or the importance information) with the mean scores of latent variables or indicators (or the performance information), to identify constructs or indicators that have relatively high importance (i.e., larger coefficients) and low performance (i.e., lower means). Such constructs and indicators are promising candidates for future interventions. The IPMA results at the construct and indicator levels for life affirmation and life vibrancy are shown in Figures 4.6, respectively. All of the constructs and indicators did not substantially differ in terms of their

means. At the construct level, value engagement was the most important in terms of both life

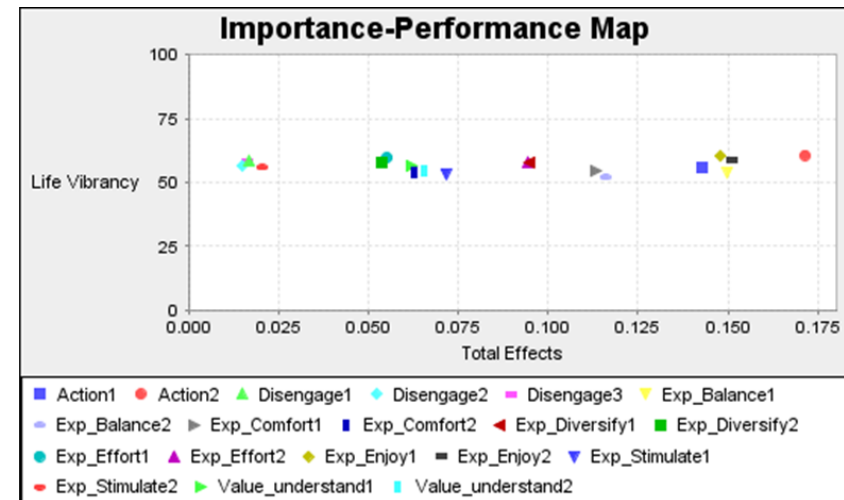
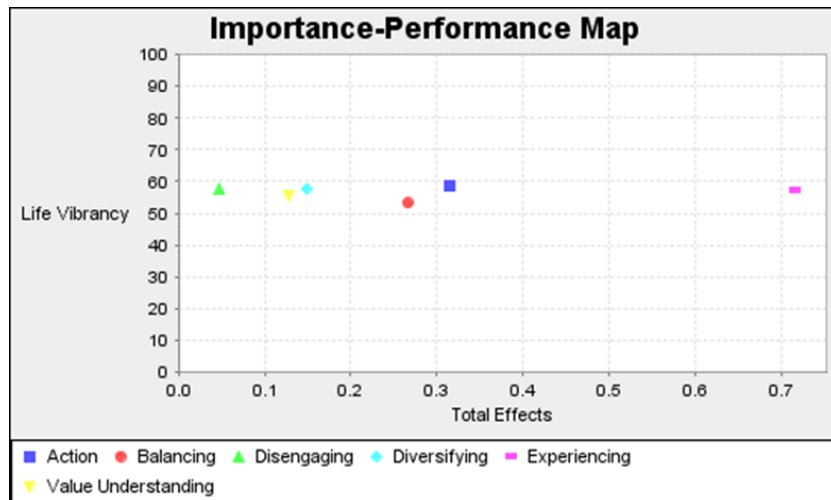
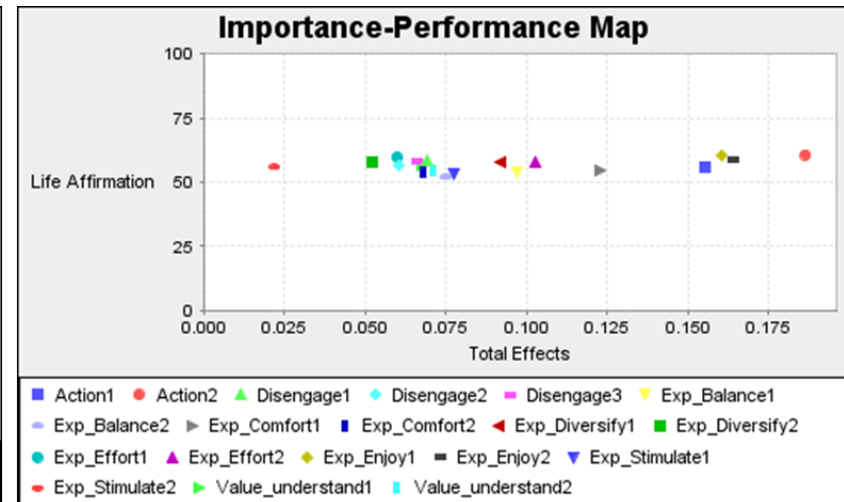
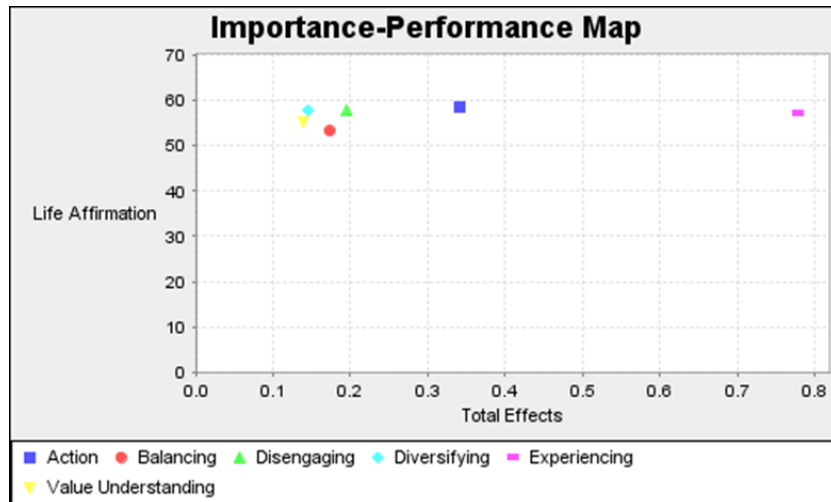


Figure 4.6. The IPMA results of the valued experienced model with regard to life affirmation (top) and life vibrancy (bottom).

affirmation and vibrancy. At the indicator level, one of the action items (i.e., “I find important things to be by getting involved in various things”) exhibited relatively high importance, followed by the two enjoyment items (i.e., “I have felt joy in my recent experiences” and “I have enjoyed my recent experiences”), and the other action item (i.e., “I do not overthink things and take an opportunity for a good experience”).

**The sub-theory of *ibasho* or authentic relationships.** With regard to the second sub-theory of *ibasho*, or authentic relationships, the omnibus PLS-SEM results are described in Table 4.11 and Figure 4.7. A collinearity issue was not detected in this model, as substantiated by the maximum VIF of 1.99 (Hair et al., 2017). All path coefficients were positive, as hypothesized. The bootstrap procedure indicated that all paths were significant at a .05 level, thus suggesting that all of the exogenous variables were relevant to their endogenous variables.  $R^2$  values ranged from moderate to small in size (Hair et al., 2017): .51 for sharing experiences, .45 for experiencing together, .45 for genuine care, and .41 for self-authenticity. Among the *ikigai* process variables, experiencing together had a small effect on self-authenticity ( $f^2 = 0.02$ ) and genuine care ( $f^2 = 0.13$ ) (Hair et al., 2017). Sharing experiences also had a small effect on both perceptions ( $f^2 = 0.04$  and  $0.11$ , respectively). The *ikigai* conditions and value engagement had small effects on the *ikigai* process variables, ranging from  $f^2 = 0.02$  to  $0.14$ , with the exception of trust’s medium effect on sharing experience ( $f^2 = 0.18$ ).

In terms of predictive relevance or  $Q^2$  (Hair et al., 2017), the blindfolding procedure resulted in values greater than zero for all endogenous variables (see Table 4.11). With regard to each predictor’s impact on the predictive relevance, all  $q^2$  values fell into the small effect category (Hair et al., 2017).

A series of IPMA were also conducted for the *ibasho* sub-model (Hair et al., 2017;



Table 4.11 PLS-SEM Results of the *Ibasho* or Authentic Relationships Model

		Endogenous variables			
		Experience together	Sharing experiences	Self-authenticity	Genuine care
$R^2$		.45	<b>.51</b>	.41	.45
$f^2$	Echoed values	0.02	0.05		
	Trust	0.14	<b>0.18</b>		
	Value engagement	0.08	0.060		
	Experience together			<b>0.19</b>	0.13
	Sharing experiences			0.04	0.11
$Q^2$		.32	.36	.31	.33
$q^2$	Echoed values	0.02	0.03		
	Trust	0.08	0.09		
	Value engagement	0.04	0.03		
	Experience together			0.12	0.08
	Sharing experiences			0.03	0.07

*Note.*  $N = 672$ . According to Hair et al. (2017), the evaluation criterion for  $R^2$  is .25, .50, and .75 for weak, moderate, and substantial effects, respectively. The cut-off points for  $f^2$  and  $q^2$  are 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 for small, medium, and large effects.  $Q^2$  values greater than zero have predictive relevance. Values that are medium in size are bolded.

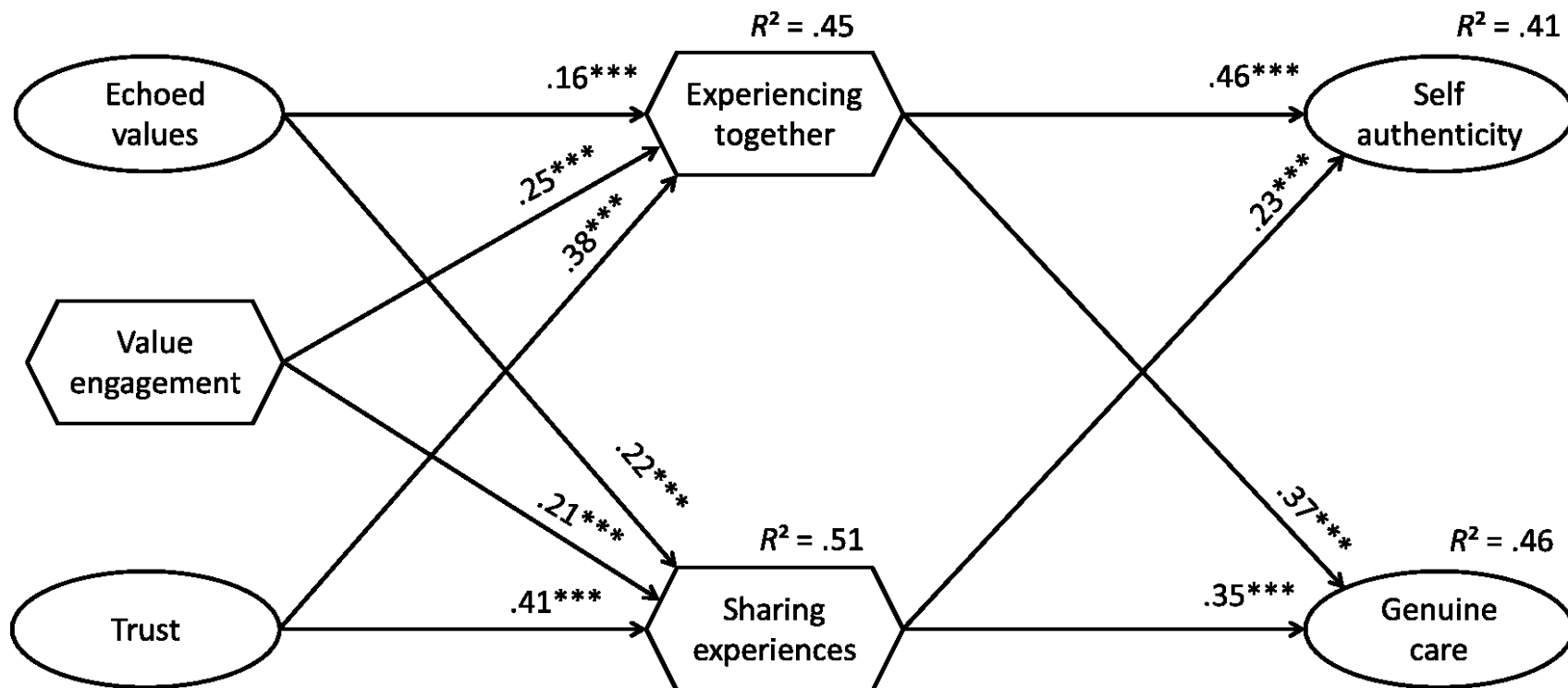


Figure 4.7. Results of PLS-SEM analysis of the authentic relationships model.

An oval signifies a reflectively identified latent variable, whereas a hexagon designates a formatively identified variable. Path coefficients are standardized. The significance tests of structural paths were based on the bootstrap procedure with 5,000 subsamples, bias-corrected and accelerated method, and a significance level of .05.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). Results are shown in Figures 4.8. The constructs and indicators in this sub-model had similar mean values with each other. Thus, the following analyses focus on importance or effect. At the construct level, experiencing together had the strongest effect on both self-authenticity and genuine care, whereas sharing experiences also had a large impact on genuine care. At the indicator level, one of the enjoying together items (i.e., “I have enjoyed my experiences more when they were shared with my close others”) was the most important predictor of both self-authenticity and genuine care. In the case of self-authenticity, this best predictor was followed by the other enjoying together item (i.e., “with my close others, I have enjoyed pretty much anything”) and the two trust items (i.e., “I believe that my close others will help me when I am in trouble” and “I trust my close others so that I can talk about private issues”). With regard to genuine care, it was followed by the two trust items identified above, one of the sharing experiences items (i.e., “I have shared my recent experiences with my close others”), and the other enjoying together item.

**The sub-theory of *houkou-sei* or directionality.** The omnibus PLS-SEM analysis results of the final directionality sub-model are summarized in Table 4.12 and Figure 4.9. As with the other models collinearity was not an issue, as the maximum VIF of 2.43 was well below the threshold value of five (Hair et al., 2017). As shown in Figure 4.9, all associations were positive; as was theorized. The bootstrap procedure revealed that all paths were significant at a .05 level, meaning that all exogenous variables were relevant to their endogenous variables.  $R^2$  value sizes ranged from small (.41 for life legacy) to moderate (.55 for behavioural association) (Hair et al., 2017). Among the predictors, behavioural association had a medium effect on life momentum ( $f^2 = 0.19$ ), although the other effects of the *ikigai* processes on the *ikigai* perceptions were small in size (see Table 4.12) (Hair et al., 2017). Among the *ikigai* conditions,

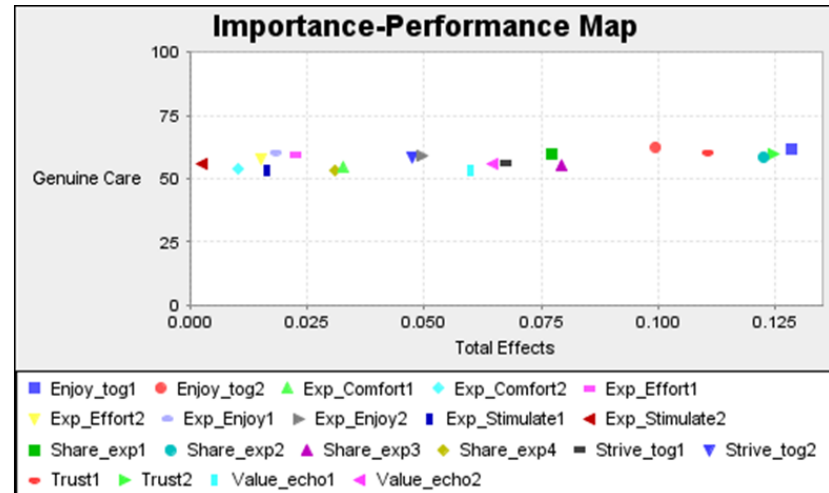
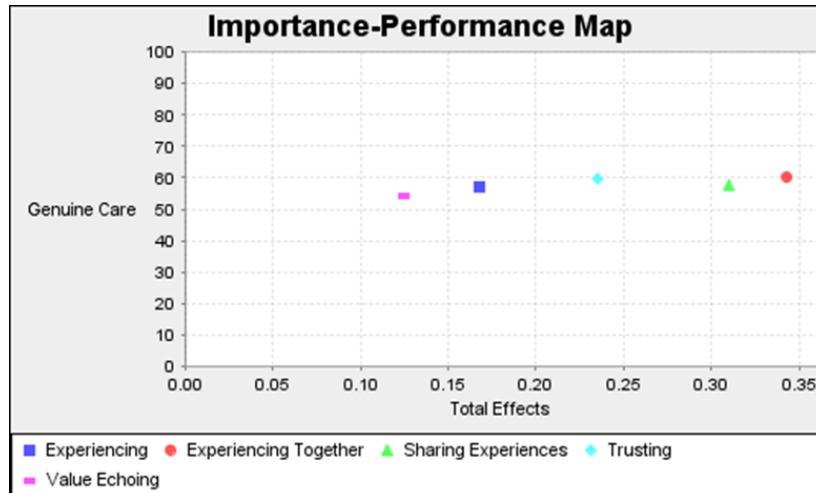
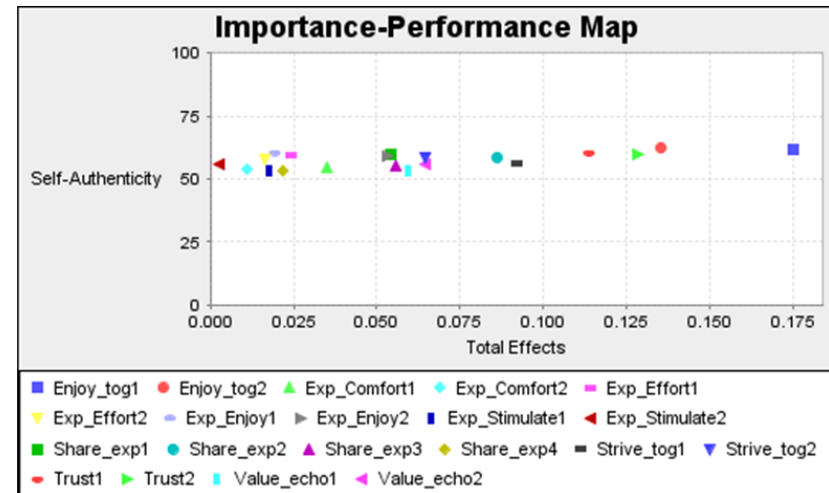
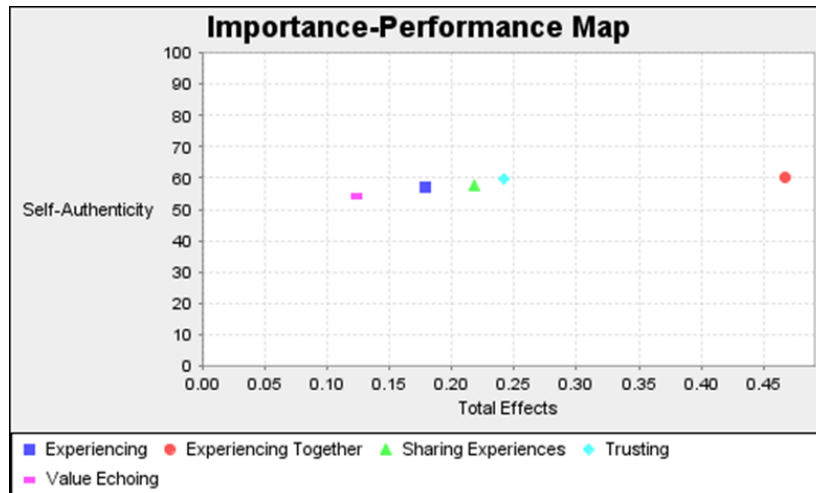


Figure 4.8. The IPMA results of the authentic relationships model with regard to self-authenticity (top) and genuine care (bottom).

Table 4.12 PLS-SEM Results of the *Houkou-sei* or Directionality Model

		Endogenous variables			
		Cognitive association	Behavioural association	Life momentum	Life legacy
$R^2$		.48	<b>.55</b>	.48	.41
$f^2$	Defining past	0.06	0.04		
	Clear goals	0.10	<b>0.18</b>		
	Value engagement	<b>0.18</b>	<b>0.27</b>		
	Cognitive association			0.04	0.10
	Behavioural association			<b>0.19</b>	0.06
$Q^2$		.33	.40	.36	.29
$q^2$	Defining past	0.03	0.02		
	Clear goals	0.06	0.10		
	Value engagement	0.09	0.14		
	Cognitive association			0.03	0.06
	Behavioural association			0.12	0.04

*Note.*  $N = 672$ . According to Hair et al. (2017), the evaluation criterion for  $R^2$  is .25, .50, and .75 for weak, moderate, and substantial effects, respectively. The cut-off points for  $f^2$  and  $q^2$  are 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 for small, medium, and large effects.  $Q^2$  values greater than zero have predictive relevance. Values that are medium in size are bolded.

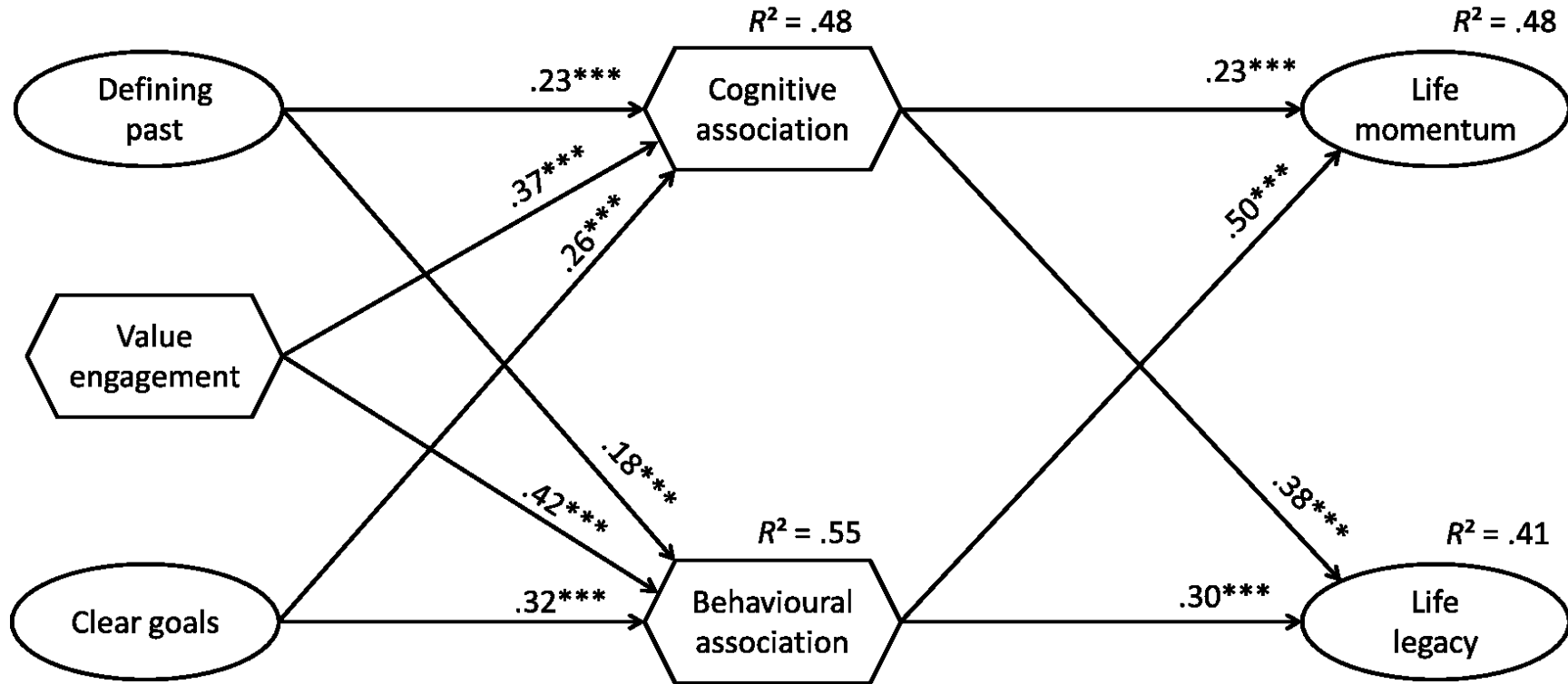


Figure 4.9. Results of PLS-SEM analysis of the directionality model.

An oval signifies a reflectively identified latent variable, whereas a hexagon designates a formatively identified variable. Path coefficients are standardized. The significance tests of structural paths were based on the bootstrap procedure with 5,000 subsamples, bias-corrected and accelerated method, and a significance level of .05.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

clear goals exerted a medium-size impact on behavioural association ( $f^2 = 0.18$ ); the other paths from clear goals and defining past entering the *ikigai* processes had small effects. Value engagement had a medium effect on both behavioural and cognitive association ( $f^2 = 0.27$  and  $0.18$ , respectively).

In terms of predictive relevance, the blindfolding procedure indicated that all  $Q^2$  values substantially differed from zero. This suggests that this directionality model had the ability to predict the endogenous variables beyond the current sample context (Hair et al., 2017). In terms of  $q^2$ , all predictors had small effects on their outcome variables, ranging from 0.02 (i.e., the effect of defining past on behavioural association) to 0.14 (i.e., the effect of value engagement on behavioural association) (Hair et al., 2017).

The IPMA results for this sub-theory are shown in Figure 4.10 (Hair et al., 2017; Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). The graphs suggested that, consistent with the two other sub-theories, the constructs and indicators in the directionality model did not differ from one another in terms of their means. In terms of importance level, behavioural association had the strongest impact on life momentum whereas life legacy was most strongly influenced by cognitive association. At the indicator level, life momentum was affected by the four behavioural association items (i.e., “I have participated in things that were related to my past valuable experiences”; “I have participated in things that would help me get closer to my ideal future life”; “I have been engaged in things where I could use what I learned in my past experiences”; and “I have been engaged in things that would lead me to achieve my future goals”), and one of the clear goals items (i.e., “I clearly envision the future life I want”). In contrast, one of the cognitive association items (i.e., “In my mind, I relate what I have recently done to my past valuable experiences”) was by far the strongest predictor of life legacy.

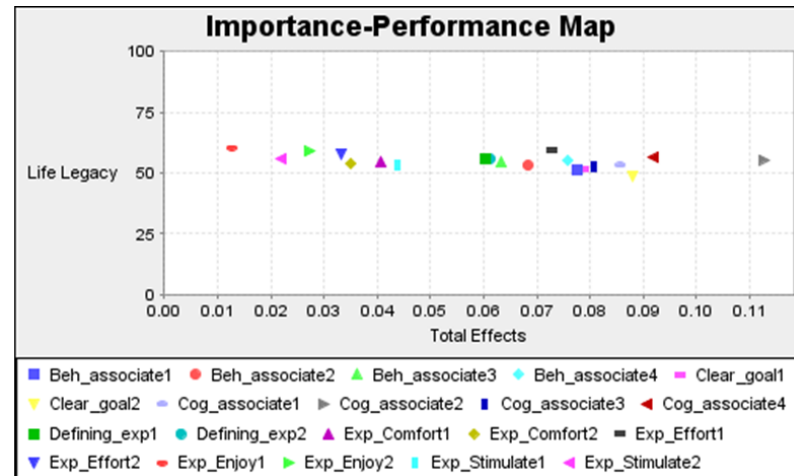
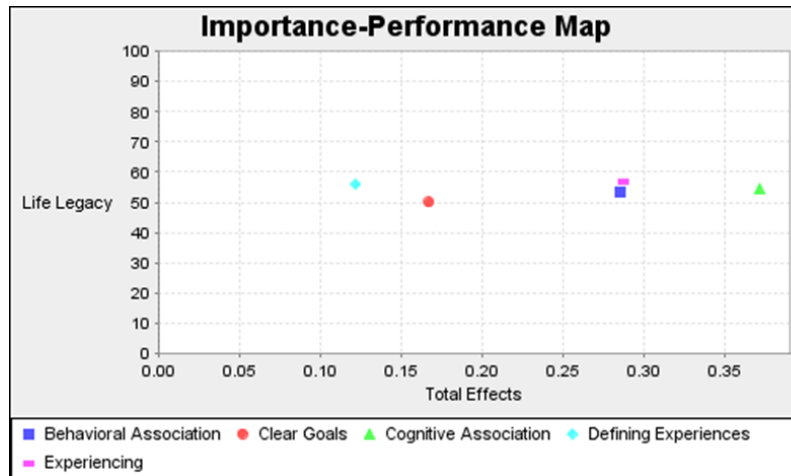
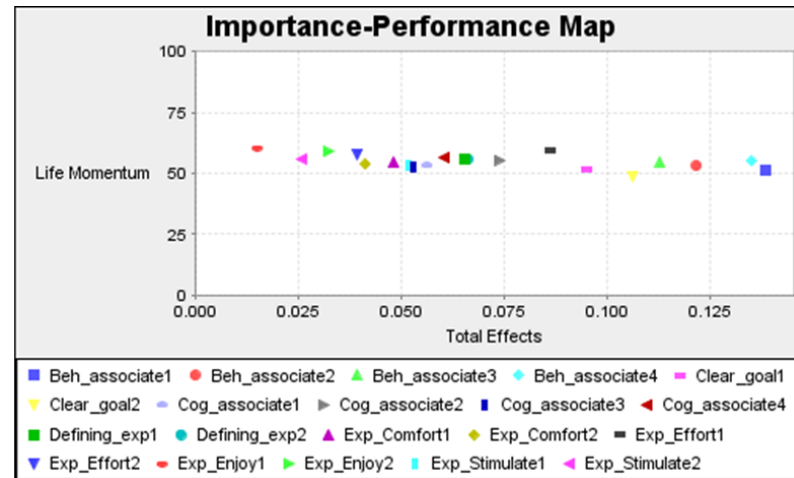
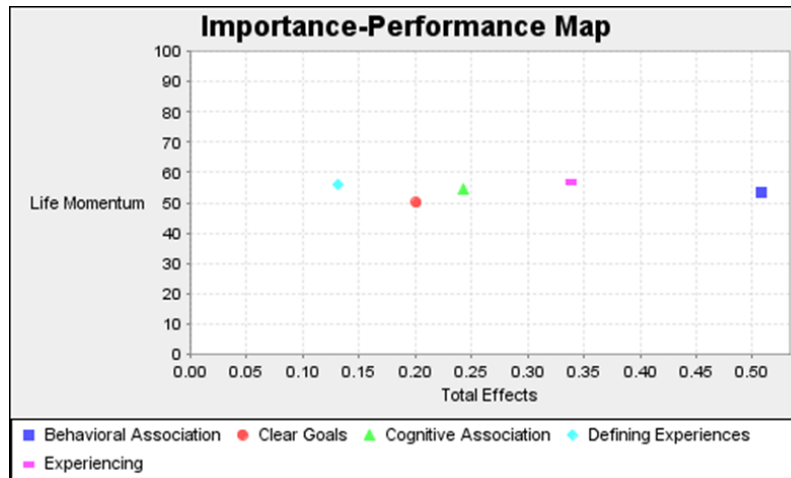


Figure 4.10. The IPMA results of the directionality model with regard to life momentum (top) and life legacy (bottom).



#### 4.2.4 PLS-SEM analyses of leisure and *ikigai*

Finally, another series of PLS-SEM analyses were conducted to examine the relationships among the leisure variables and the *ikigai* processes and perceptions. In line with the earlier subsection, three models were run for *keiken* or valued experiences, *ibasho* or authentic relationships, and *houkou-sei* or directionality. This procedure aided in interpreting the results. In each model, the four leisure variables—leisure time, activity participation, satisfaction, and valuation—predicted the *ikigai* perceptions directly and indirectly, with the latter being via the *ikigai* processes. In so doing, leisure valuation was identified as a second-order “reflective-formative” measurement model (Hair et al., 2017, p. 282).

**Leisure and valued experiences.** The relationship between the leisure variables and the *ikigai* variables in the valued experiences model was tested (Figure 4.11). Information on the measurement models for the leisure variables is presented in Table 4.13. Multicollinearity was not a substantial issue as the maximum VIF score was 2.47. In terms of outer weights, leisure participation was largely defined by social activity, artistic and creative activity, travel activity, sports activity, and gaming activity (inverse weight). Leisure time was determined by the weekday variable. Although all the four dimensions had significant weights in forming the higher-order variable of leisure valuation, stimuli valuation was most influential, followed by comfort, enjoyment, and effort.

In terms of the structural model, a collinearity issue was not evident given the maximum VIF of 3.61 (Hair et al., 2017). Standardized structural path coefficients and their significance, derived from the bootstrap analysis results, are summarized in Table 4.14.

Overall, leisure time’s impacts on the *ikigai* variables were non-significant, although two

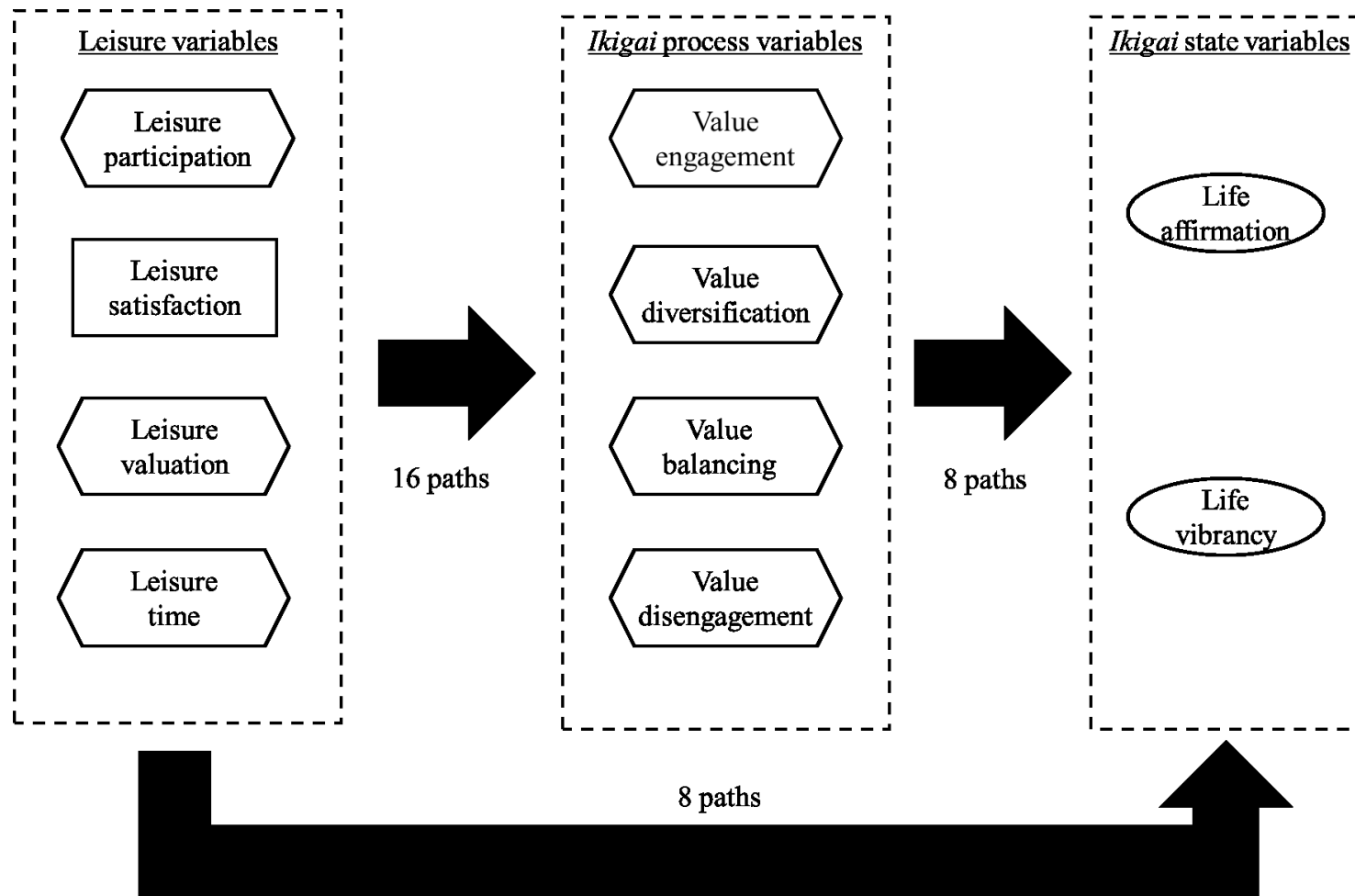


Figure 4.11. The PLS-SEM model of the leisure and valued experiences model.

An oval indicates a reflectively identified measurement model. A hexagon is a formatively identified measurement model. A rectangular means a single-item measurement model.

Table 4.13 Properties of the Leisure Variable Measurement Models in the Valued Experiences Sub-Model

Latent variable	Lower-order variable	Indicator	VIF	Weights	Loadings
Leisure time		Weekday	1.91	1.33*	.88**
		Weekend	1.91	-0.66	.26
Leisure participation		Artistic & creative	1.31	0.26***	.59***
		Exercise	1.57	0.13	.48***
		Gambling	1.65	-0.10	.18*
		Game	1.09	-0.14*	.03
		Media	1.31	0.11	.31***
		Outdoor recreation	1.73	0.13	.55***
		Relaxing	1.21	0.10	.28***
		Social	1.32	0.51***	.79***
		Sport events	2.17	0.00	.35***
		Sports	1.75	0.16*	.41***
		Travel	1.35	0.25**	.62***
		Volunteer	1.68	0.12	.42***
Leisure valuation	Leisure enjoyment	Leisure enjoyment 1	1.85	2.93***	.87***
		Leisure enjoyment 2	2.39	---	.86***
		Leisure enjoyment 3	2.40	---	.86***
	Leisure effort	Leisure effort 1	1.93	2.76***	.85***
		Leisure effort 2	1.67	---	.81***
		Leisure effort 3	1.88	---	.84***
	Leisure stimuli	Leisure stimuli 1	2.33	3.15***	.88***
		Leisure stimuli 2	2.12	---	.86***
		Leisure stimuli 3	2.15	---	.85***
	Leisure comfort	Leisure comfort 1	2.37	2.99***	.87***
		Leisure comfort 2	2.39	---	.88***
		Leisure comfort 3	2.47	---	.87***

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$  based on the bootstrap results

Table 4.14 Structural Paths and Their Bootstrap Significance in the Leisure and Valued Experiences Model

Predictor variable	Outcome variable	Direct effect (standardized)	Indirect effect (standardized)	Predictor variable	Outcome variable	Direct effect (standardized)	Indirect effect (standardized)
Leisure time	Value engagement	-.05	---	Leisure satisfaction	Value engagement	.17***	---
	Value diversification	-.03	---		Value diversification	.13**	---
	Value balancing	-.10 <sup>†</sup>	---		Value balancing	.15***	---
	Value disengagement	-.05	---		Value disengagement	.27***	---
	Life affirmation	.00	-.04		Life affirmation	.14***	.11***
	Life vibrancy	-.06 <sup>†</sup>	-.04		Life vibrancy	.07 <sup>†</sup>	.10***
Leisure participation	Value engagement	.30***	---	Leisure valuation	Value engagement	.36***	---
	Value diversification	.25***	---		Value diversification	.36***	---
	Value balancing	.27***	---		Value balancing	.30***	---
	Value disengagement	.16***	---		Value disengagement	.36***	---
	Life affirmation	.02	.16***		Life affirmation	.18***	.22***
	Life vibrancy	.11**	.17***		Life vibrancy	.08 <sup>†</sup>	.21***

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , based on the bootstrap results

coefficients were approaching the .05 level: leisure time's effects on (a) value balancing ( $b^* = -.10, p = .08$ ) and (b) life vibrancy ( $b^* = -.06, p = .09$ ). As such, if anything, leisure time had minimal, negative effects on the pursuit of valued experiences. Leisure participation had significant, positive effects on all the *ikigai* variables, except for its non-significant, direct effect on life affirmation. Leisure satisfaction also had significant, positive influences on all the *ikigai* variables, except for its approaching, direct effect on life vibrancy. An interesting pattern emerged: Leisure participation and satisfaction exerted strong effects on different *ikigai* variables. Namely, leisure participation had stronger impacts on value engagement, diversification, and balancing as well as life vibrancy than leisure satisfaction, while leisure satisfaction's effects were larger on value disengagement and life affirmation. Leisure valuation, in general, had the strongest effects on the *ikigai* variables, except for its approaching, direct influence on life vibrancy.

In addition to these direct effects, leisure variable's indirect impacts on the *ikigai* perceptions through the *ikigai* processes were also scrutinized based on the bootstrap analysis results (see Table 4.14). All the indirect effects on both life affirmation and vibrancy were significant, except for leisure time's influences. Following Nitzl, Roldan, and Cepeda's (2016) recommendations, the ratio of these indirect effects to the corresponding total effects—or VAF—was computed. Leisure participation had VAF ratios of 84.2% and 58.6% for life affirmation and vibrancy, respectively. Leisure satisfaction had the ratios of 44.0% and 62.5% for the outcome variables. Leisure valuation had VAF ratios of 55.0% and 72.4%. Thus, all the significant indirect effects exceeded the VAF ratio of 20%, which Nitzl et al. considered as the threshold for an indirect effect to be considered seriously.

The information on  $R^2$ ,  $f^2$ ,  $Q^2$ , and  $q^2$  in this model is summarized in Table 4.15. In terms

Table 4.15 A Summary of Effect Sizes in the Leisure and Valued Experiences Model

Effect size	Predictor variable	Outcome variables					
		Value engagement	Value diversification	Value balancing	Value disengagement	Life affirmation	Life vibrancy
$R^2$	---	.43	.35	.33	.38	<b>.61</b>	<b>.53</b>
$f^2$	Leisure time	.01	.00	.01	.00	.00	.01
	Leisure participation	.12	.07	.08	.03	.00	.02
	Leisure satisfaction	.04	.02	.03	.10	.04	.01
	Leisure valuation	<b>.16</b>	<b>.15</b>	.10	<b>.16</b>	.05	.01
	---	.22	.29	.27	.28	.45	.38
$Q^2$ $q^2$	Leisure time	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00
	Leisure participation	.05	.05	.06	.02	.00	.01
	Leisure satisfaction	.01	.01	.02	.07	.02	.00
	Leisure valuation	.06	.12	.08	.10	.03	.00
	---	.22	.29	.27	.28	.45	.38

*Note.* According to Hair et al. (2017), the evaluation criterion for  $R^2$  is .25, .50, and .75 for weak, moderate, and substantial effects, respectively. The cut-off points for  $f^2$  and  $q^2$  are 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 for small, medium, and large effects.  $Q^2$  values greater than zero have predictive relevance. Values that are medium in size are bolded.

of variance explained in the outcome variables  $R^2$  values in the model ranged from small to medium size (i.e., from .33 for value balancing to .61 for life affirmation; Hair et al., 2017). Basically, the findings regarding  $f^2$  mirrored the results of structural paths. Leisure time's effect sizes were negligible across the endogenous variables. Leisure participation was found to have a small effect on the outcome variables, except for life affirmation. Leisure satisfaction, in contrast, had a small-size influence on the target variables, except for life vibrancy. Leisure valuation had a medium-size impact on value engagement, diversification, and disengagement, while exerting a small effect on value balancing and life affirmation. Its effect on life vibrancy was minimal.

The blindfolding analysis revealed that the model had good predictive relevance as all the  $Q^2$  values substantially departed from zero. In terms of each predictor's importance in this predictive ability,  $q^2$  values suggested that leisure time's relevance was negligible. Leisure participation had small effects on the predictive relevance, in terms of value engagement, diversification, balancing, and disengagement, while leisure satisfaction exerted a small effect on the model's ability to predict value balancing and disengagement as well as life affirmation. Comparatively, leisure valuation exhibited the strongest effects, except for its negligible effect on predicting life vibrancy.

Because of a large number of indicators included in this model, only latent variable level IPMA results are shown in Figure 4.12 (Hair et al., 2017; Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). Across the endogenous variables, leisure valuation was identified as a promising intervention point due to its high importance (i.e., a large total effect). Also noteworthy was that leisure participation had relatively low performance or mean while maintaining high importance for life vibrancy, value engagement, and value balancing.



Figure 4.12. The IPMA results of the leisure and valued experience model.



**Leisure and authentic relationships.** The relationship between the leisure variables and the *ikigai* variables in the authentic relationships model was tested (Figure 4.13). Statistical properties of the leisure variables' measurement models are shown in Table 4.16. The issue of multicollinearity was absent as the maximum VIF score was 2.47. In terms of outer weights, leisure participation mainly consisted of social activity, relaxing activity, sport events attendance (inverse weight), volunteer activity, outdoor recreation activity, and travel activity. The average free time over the weekday had a larger weight in determining leisure time. Although all the four dimensions had significant weights in forming the higher-order variable of leisure valuation, leisure effort's contribution was clearly weaker than the other three sub-dimensions.

In terms of the structural model, collinearity was not an issue given the maximum VIF of 3.59 (Hair et al., 2017). Standardized direct and indirect effects are summarized in Table 4.17, with their significance based on the bootstrap results. Overall, leisure time's impacts on the *ikigai* variables were not significant. Leisure participation had significant, positive effects on all the *ikigai* variables. Especially their effects appeared stronger for experiencing together and sharing experiences ( $b^* = .33$  and  $.30$ , respectively). Leisure satisfaction also had significant, positive influences on all the *ikigai* variables. However, its effects on the two *ikigai* processes ( $b^* = .09$  and  $.10$ , respectively) seemed far more attenuated than leisure participation's effects. Leisure valuation, in general, had the strongest, direct effects on the *ikigai* variables.

In addition to these direct effects, leisure variable's indirect impacts on the *ikigai* perceptions through the *ikigai* processes were also inspected based on the bootstrap analysis results (see Table 4.17). All the indirect effects on both self-authenticity and genuine care were significant, except for leisure time's influences. As per Nitzl et al.'s (2016) recommendations,

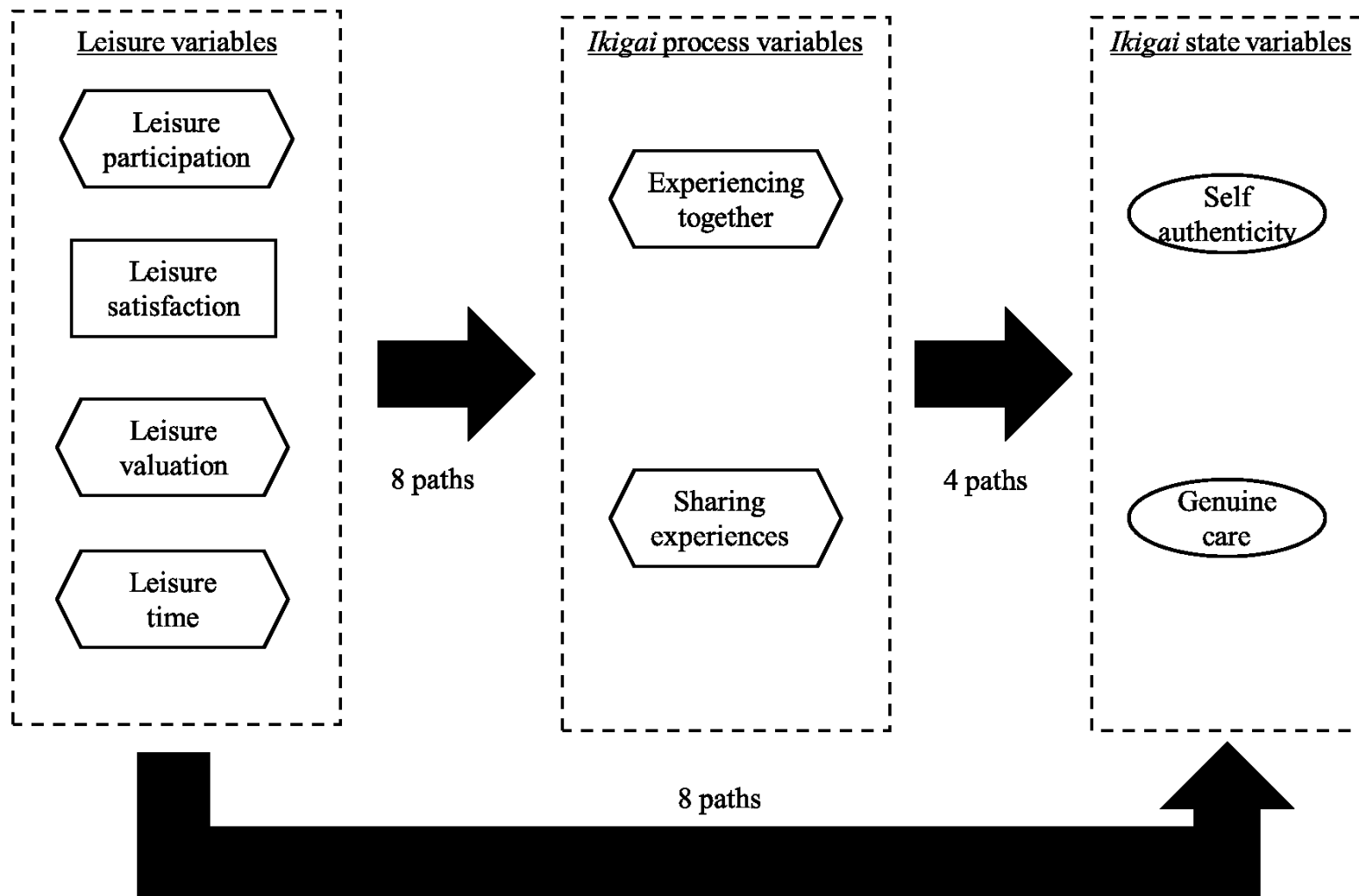


Figure 4.13. The PLS-SEM model of the leisure and authentic relationships model.

An oval indicates a reflectively identified measurement model. A hexagon is a formatively identified measurement model. A rectangular means a single-item measurement model.

Table 4.16 Properties of the Leisure Variable Measurement Models in the Authentic Relationships Sub-Model

Latent variable	Lower-order variable	Indicator	VIF	Weights	Loadings
Leisure time		Weekday	1.91	1.20	.97**
		Weekend	1.91	-0.33	.50
Leisure participation		Artistic & creative	1.31	0.12†	.45***
		Exercise	1.57	0.03	.33***
		Gambling	1.65	-0.05	.09
		Game	1.09	-0.10	.05
		Media	1.31	0.03	.31***
		Outdoor recreation	1.73	0.21**	.48***
		Relaxing	1.21	0.23**	.41***
		Social	1.32	0.64***	.87***
		Sport events	2.17	-0.23**	.14†
		Sports	1.75	0.11	.28***
		Travel	1.35	0.19**	.52***
		Volunteer	1.68	0.22**	.36***
Leisure valuation	Leisure enjoyment	Leisure enjoyment 1	2.30	3.08***	.87***
		Leisure enjoyment 2	2.39	---	.86***
		Leisure enjoyment 3	2.40	---	.86***
	Leisure effort	Leisure effort 1	1.93	2.59***	.85***
		Leisure effort 2	1.67	---	.82***
		Leisure effort 3	1.88	---	.84***
	Leisure stimuli	Leisure stimuli 1	2.33	3.09***	.88***
		Leisure stimuli 2	2.12	---	.86***
		Leisure stimuli 3	2.15	---	.85***
	Leisure comfort	Leisure comfort 1	2.37	3.06***	.87***
		Leisure comfort 2	2.39	---	.88***
		Leisure comfort 3	2.47	---	.87***

†  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$  based on the bootstrap results

Table 4.17 Structural Paths and Their Bootstrap Significance in the Leisure and Authentic Relationships Model

Predictor variable	Outcome variable	Direct effect (standardized)	Indirect effect (standardized)	Predictor variable	Outcome variable	Direct effect (standardized)	Indirect effect (standardized)
Leisure time	Experiencing together	.02	---	Leisure satisfaction	Experiencing together	.09*	---
	Sharing experiences	-.02	---		Sharing experiences	.10**	---
	Self-authenticity	.00	.01		Self-authenticity	.08*	.05*
	Genuine care	-.04	.00		Genuine care	.10**	.05*
Leisure participation	Experiencing together	.33***	---	Leisure valuation	Experiencing together	.29***	---
	Sharing experiences	.30***	---		Sharing experiences	.31***	---
	Self-authenticity	.09*	.18***		Self-authenticity	.10*	.16***
	Genuine care	.09*	.18***		Genuine care	.13**	.17***

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , based on the bootstrap results

the VAF ratios of these indirect effects to the corresponding total effects were calculated. Leisure participation had VAF ratios of 66.6% and 69.2% for self-authenticity and genuine care, respectively. Leisure satisfaction's VAF ratios were 38.4% and 31.2% for the respective outcome variables. Leisure valuation had VAF ratios of 61.5% and 56.6%. Although all the significant indirect effects exceeded the threshold VAF ratio of 20% (Nitzl et al., 2016), leisure satisfaction's values were notably lower than the other leisure variables'. This indicates that while leisure satisfaction tended to exert direct impacts on the *ibasho* perceptions, leisure participation and valuation's effects were mediated by experiencing together and sharing experiences.

The information on  $R^2$ ,  $f^2$ ,  $Q^2$ , and  $q^2$  in this *ibasho* model is presented in Table 4.18. With regard to variance explained in the outcome variables,  $R^2$  values were small in their size (i.e., from .34 for experiencing together to .49 for genuine care; Hair et al., 2017). The findings regarding  $f^2$  followed the same pattern as the structural path results. Leisure time's effect sizes were virtually non-existent across the endogenous variables. Leisure satisfaction had only one small effect on genuine care. Leisure participation had a small effect on experiencing together and sharing experiences, while its influence on the *ibasho* perceptions was negligible. The same pattern was seen for leisure valuation.

The blindfolding analysis suggested that the entire model had good predictive relevance as all the  $Q^2$  values substantially deviated from zero (Hair et al., 2017). Among the predictors,  $q^2$  values indicated that leisure time and satisfaction had no effect on the model's predictive relevance. Both leisure participation and valuation had a small influence on the predictive capability, although their impacts on the prediction of self-authenticity and genuine care were negligible.

Table 4.18 A Summary of Effect Sizes in the Leisure and Authentic Relationships Model

Effect size	Predictor variable	Outcome variables			
		Experiencing together	Sharing experiences	Self-authenticity	Genuine care
$R^2$	---	.34	.35	.45	.49
$f^2$	Leisure time	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Leisure participation	.12	.10	.01	.01
	Leisure satisfaction	.01	.01	.01	.02
	Leisure valuation	.09	.11	.01	.01
	---	.24	.24	.33	.35
$Q^2$ $q^2$	Leisure time	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Leisure participation	.08	.06	.00	.00
	Leisure satisfaction	.00	.01	.01	.01
	Leisure valuation	.06	.06	.01	.01
	---				

*Note.* According to Hair et al. (2017), the evaluation criterion for  $R^2$  is .25, .50, and .75 for weak, moderate, and substantial effects, respectively. The cut-off points for  $f^2$  and  $q^2$  are 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 for small, medium, and large effects.  $Q^2$  values greater than zero have predictive relevance.

Again, because of a large number of indicators included in this model, only latent variable level IMPA results are shown in Figure 4.14 (Hair et al., 2017; Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). Leisure valuation exhibited the most importance for genuine care, experiencing together, and sharing experiences. With that being said, for the latter two *ikigai* processes, leisure participation was also highly important and showed somewhat lower performance, which signifies the potential room for intervention.

**Leisure and directionality.** Lastly, the relationship between the leisure variables and the *ikigai* variables in the directionality model was tested (Figure 4.15). Characteristics of the leisure variables' measurement models are summarized in Table 4.19. Multicollinearity was not an issue in the measurement models as the maximum VIF score was 2.58. With regard to outer weights, the indicators that played significant important roles in forming leisure participation were: social activity, volunteer activity, exercise activity, game activity (inverse weight), travel activity, and media activity. Again, it was the average free time over the weekday that had a larger weight in determining leisure time. Although all the four dimensions had significant weights in forming the higher-order variable of leisure valuation, leisure stimuli made the largest contribution, followed by leisure effort.

In terms of the structural model, the collinearity issue was absent given the maximum VIF of 3.59 (Hair et al., 2017). Standardized direct and indirect effects are summarized in Table 4.20, with their significance based on the bootstrap results. Overall, leisure time had significant, negative effects on cognitive and behavioural associations, as well as life momentum. Leisure participation had significant, positive effects on the two directionality associations and life legacy. Especially the effects appeared stronger for cognitive and behavioural associations ( $b^* = .25$  and  $.27$ , respectively). Leisure satisfaction also had significant, positive influences on

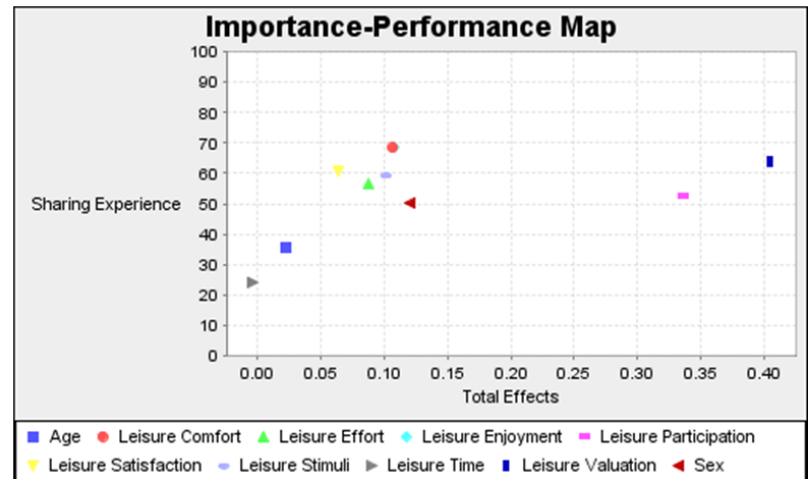
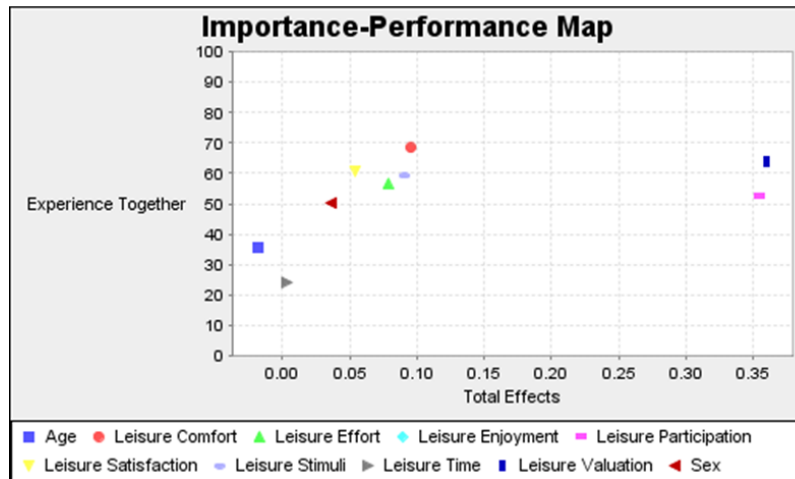
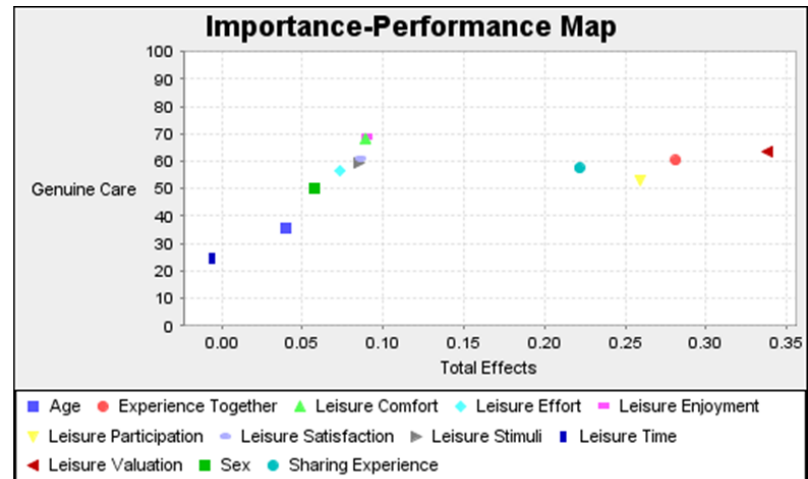
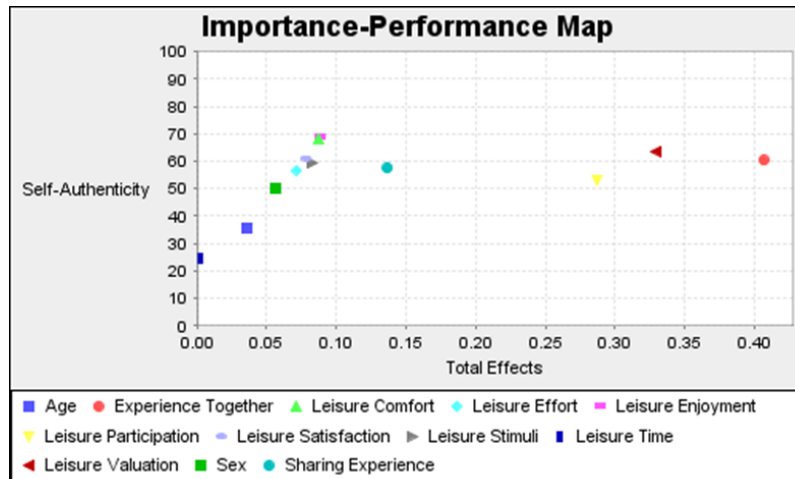


Figure 4.14. The IPMA results of the leisure and authentic relationships model.



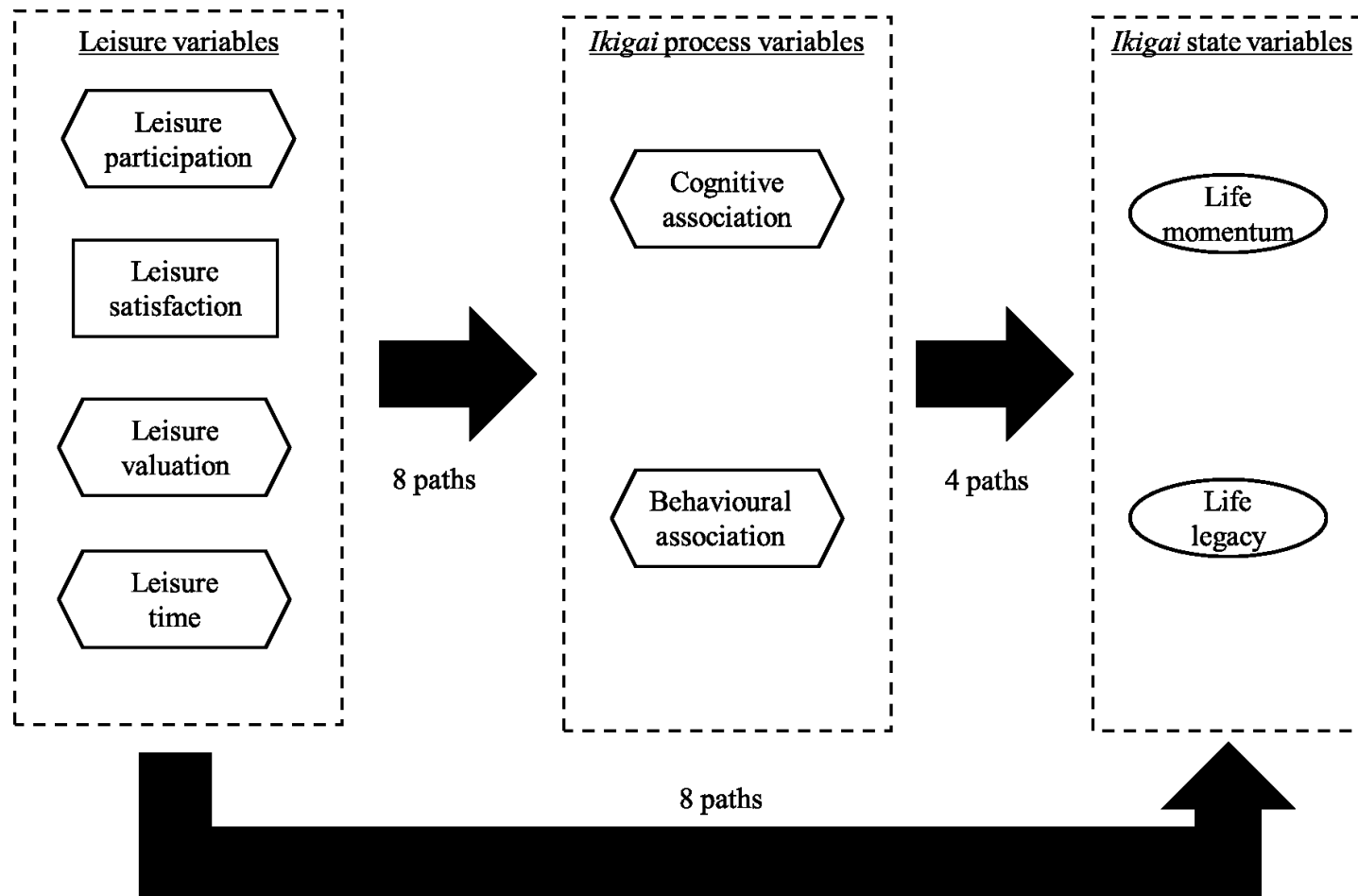


Figure 4.15. The PLS-SEM model of the leisure and directionality model.

An oval indicates a reflectively identified measurement model. A hexagon is a formatively identified measurement model. A rectangular means a single-item measurement model.

Table 4.19 Properties of the Leisure Variable Measurement Models in the Directionality Sub-Model

Latent variable	Lower-order variable	Indicator	VIF	Weights	Loadings
Leisure time		Weekday	1.91	0.81*	.98***
		Weekend	1.91	0.25	.81***
Leisure participation		Artistic & creative	1.313	0.15†	.51***
		Exercise	1.569	0.20*	.55***
		Gambling	1.653	-0.09	.22**
		Game	1.092	-0.19**	-.02
		Media	1.313	0.16*	.31***
		Outdoor recreation	1.733	0.15†	.58***
		Relaxing	1.213	0.11	.27***
		Social	1.322	0.49***	.76***
		Sport events	2.169	-0.01	.40***
		Sports	1.754	0.12	.43***
		Travel	1.354	0.17*	.55***
		Volunteer	1.676	0.28**	.54***
Leisure valuation	Leisure enjoyment	Leisure enjoyment 1	2.30	2.89***	.87***
		Leisure enjoyment 2	2.39	---	.86***
		Leisure enjoyment 3	2.40	---	.86***
	Leisure effort	Leisure effort 1	1.93	3.17***	.85***
		Leisure effort 2	1.67	---	.81***
		Leisure effort 3	1.88	---	.84***
	Leisure stimuli	Leisure stimuli 1	2.33	3.09***	.88***
		Leisure stimuli 2	2.12	---	.86***
		Leisure stimuli 3	2.15	---	.85***
	Leisure comfort	Leisure comfort 1	2.37	2.89***	.87***
		Leisure comfort 2	2.39	---	.88***
		Leisure comfort 3	2.47	---	.87***

†  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$  based on the bootstrap results

Table 4.20 Structural Paths and Their Bootstrap Significance in the Leisure and Directionality Model

Predictor variable	Outcome variable	Direct effect (standardized)	Indirect effect (standardized)	Predictor variable	Outcome variable	Direct effect (standardized)	Indirect effect (standardized)
Leisure time	Cognitive association	-.09*	---	Leisure satisfaction	Cognitive association	.07 <sup>†</sup>	---
	Behavioural association	-.09**	---		Behavioural association	.11**	---
	Life momentum	-.07*	-.05**		Life momentum	.08*	.06*
	Life legacy	.00	-.04**		Life legacy	.13***	.04*
Leisure participation	Cognitive association	.25***	---	Leisure valuation	Cognitive association	.35***	---
	Behavioural association	.27***	---		Behavioural association	.34***	---
	Life momentum	.07 <sup>†</sup>	.15***		Life momentum	.15***	.20***
	Life legacy	.07*	.12***		Life legacy	.21***	.17***

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , based on the bootstrap results

behavioural association as well as life momentum and legacy. Leisure valuation, in general, had the strongest, direct effects on all the directionality variables.

In addition to these direct effects, leisure variable's indirect impacts on the *ikigai* perceptions through the *ikigai* processes were also examined based on the bootstrap analysis results (see Table 4.20). All the indirect effects on both life momentum and life legacy, including leisure time's influences, were significant. Leisure time had VAF ratios of 41.6% and 93.3% for life momentum and legacy, respectively. Leisure participation's VAF ratios were 68.1% and 60.0% for the target variables, respectively. Leisure satisfaction had VAF ratios of 42.8% and 22.2% for the respective outcome variables. Finally, leisure valuation's VAF ratios were 58.8% and 44.7%. Although all the significant indirect effects exceeded the threshold VAF ratio of 20% (Nitzl et al., 2016), leisure satisfaction's effect on life legacy was mostly through its direct effect.

The information on  $R^2$ ,  $f^2$ ,  $Q^2$ , and  $q^2$  in this directionality model is presented in Table 4.21. With regard to variance explained in the outcome variables,  $R^2$  values ranged from small to medium in their size (i.e., from .30 for cognitive association to .52 for life momentum; Hair et al., 2017). The findings regarding  $f^2$  mirrored the structural path results. Leisure time's effect sizes were minimal across the endogenous variables. Leisure participation had a small-size effect on cognitive and behavioural associations, while their impacts on life momentum and legacy were negligible. Leisure satisfaction had a small effect on behavioural association and life legacy. Leisure valuation exerted the strongest effects in general, compared to the other leisure variables.

The blindfolding analysis indicated that the whole model had good predictive relevance as all the  $Q^2$  values substantially deviated from zero (Hair et al., 2017). Among the predictors,  $q^2$  values suggested that leisure time and satisfaction had none-to-minimal effect on the model's

Table 4.21 A Summary of Effect Sizes in the Leisure and Directionality Model

Effect size	Predictor variable	Outcome variables			
		Cognitive association	Behavioural association	Life momentum	Life legacy
$R^2$	---	.30	.34	<b>.52</b>	<b>.50</b>
$f^2$	Leisure time	.01	.01	.01	.00
	Leisure participation	.07	.09	.01	.01
	Leisure satisfaction	.01	.02	.01	.03
	Leisure valuation	.13	.13	.03	.06
	---	.20	.24	.39	.36
$Q^2$ $q^2$	Leisure time	.00	.01	.00	.00
	Leisure participation	.04	.05	.00	.00
	Leisure satisfaction	.00	.01	.01	.01
	Leisure valuation	.08	.08	.01	.03
	---				

*Note.* According to Hair et al. (2017), the evaluation criterion for  $R^2$  is .25, .50, and .75 for weak, moderate, and substantial effects, respectively. The cut-off points for  $f^2$  and  $q^2$  are 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 for small, medium, and large effects.  $Q^2$  values greater than zero have predictive relevance.

predictive relevance. Both leisure participation and valuation had a small influence on the model's ability to predict cognitive and behavioural associations.

Due to a large number of indicators included in this model, only latent variable level IMPA results are shown in Figure 4.16 (Hair et al., 2017; Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). Leisure valuation had the highest importance score (i.e., total effect) across the endogenous variables.

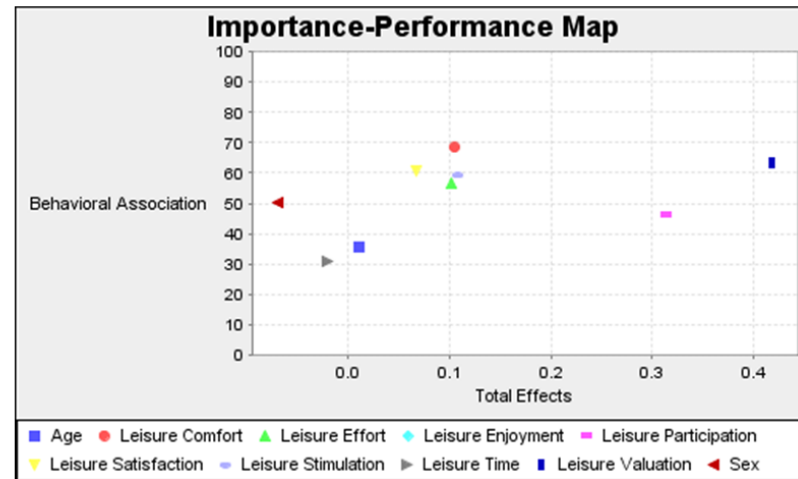
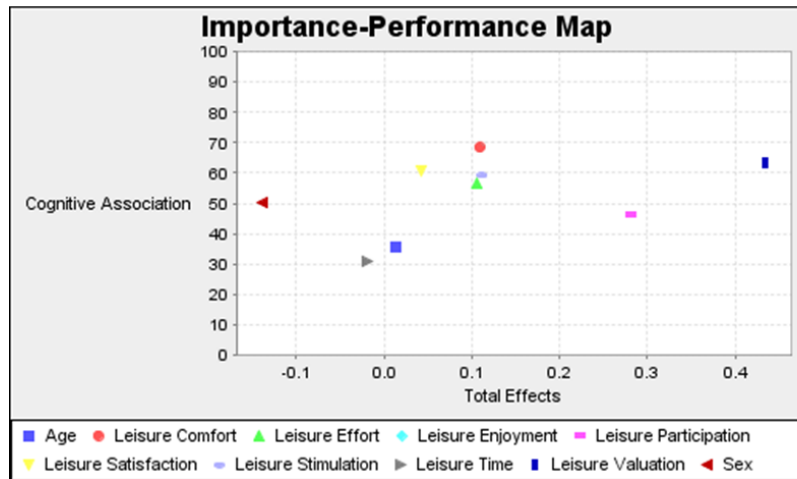
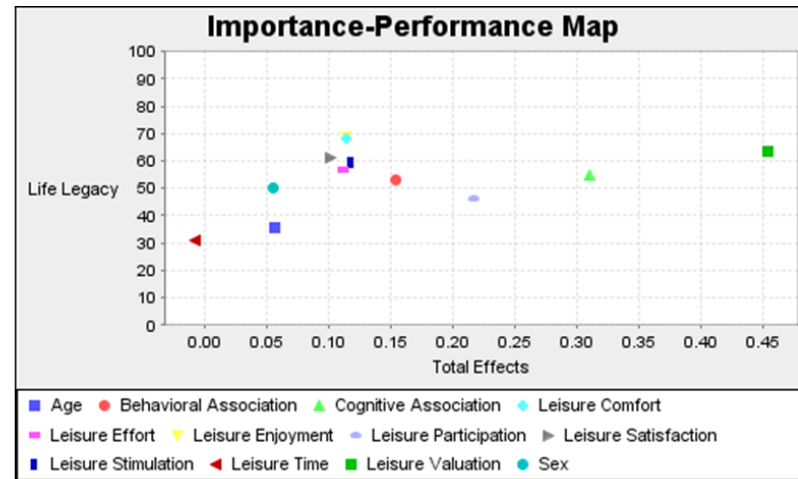
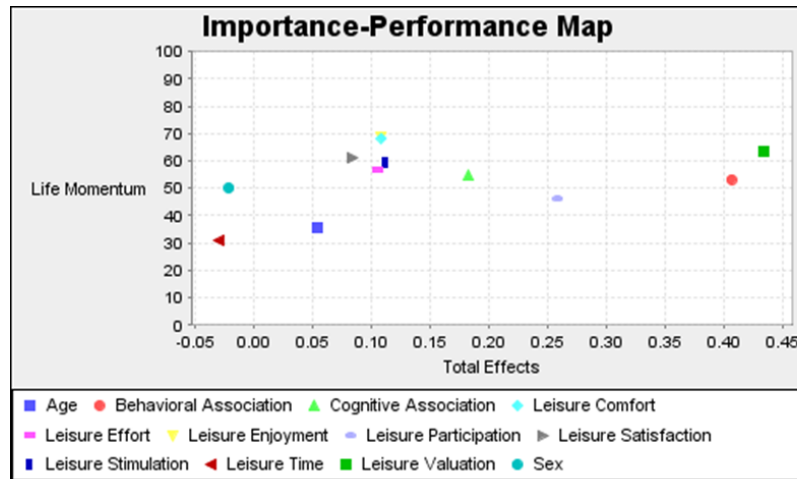


Figure 4.16. The IPMA results of the leisure and directionality model.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of my dissertation research was to develop a theory of the relationship between leisure and a life worth living, or *ikigai* in Japanese, within the population of Japanese university students. To achieve this goal, I have employed a mixed methods research (MMR) design, specifically sequential exploratory variant (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The first qualitative study guided by grounded theory (GT; Corbin & Strauss, 2015) based on photo-elicitation interviews (PEI; Tinkler, 2013) resulted in the development of the three substantive theories of *ikigai*: valued experiences (*keiken*), authentic relationships (*ibasho*), and directionality (*houkou-sei*). Moreover, the qualitative findings also indicated that leisure experience is relevant to each of these three sub-theories. The second quantitative study provided empirical support for the substantive *ikigai* theories, using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM; Hair et al., 2017) based on online survey data from a national sample. Furthermore, the quantitative results confirmed the relevance of leisure to each of the three dimensions of students' *ikigai*.

In the remainder of this chapter, I focus on the three *ikigai* sub-theories within the qualitative results and the corresponding quantitative results. I employ this structure because these are the places where the qualitative and quantitative findings intersect each other. Further, the discussion is organized in the order of the research questions (p. 14) rather than sequentially (i.e., from qualitative to quantitative results) because: (a) the majority of the research questions are mixed-methods in nature, and (b) the current format is likely to encourage discussions about the convergences and divergences between the qualitative and quantitative findings (i.e., what is called meta-inference in the MMR literature; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

### 5.1 RQ1: What Consists of Perceived *Ikigai* for Japanese University Students?



My qualitative findings suggest that the perception of *ikigai* or life worthiness among Japanese university students greatly depends on which of the three dimensions of *ikigai* experience is pertinent: valued experiences, authentic relationships, or directionality. When students engage in valued experiences, they perceive that their daily lives are worth living (i.e., life affirmation) and that they are full of energy and motivation (i.e., life vibrancy). When students interact with their close others with whom they have authentic relationships, they feel true to their real selves (i.e., self-authenticity) and that they are being genuinely cared for (i.e., genuine care). When students associate their present experiences with the future or past, they believe their current lives are leading them to the desired future (i.e., life momentum) and that their past has meaningfully contributed to their present experiences, life, and self (i.e., life legacy).

The measures of these constructs—reviewed by eight scholars who specialize in *ikigai* and Japanese well-being research—provided empirical support for this conceptualization of perceived life worthiness. Specifically, the quantitative findings indicated the reliability and the convergent, discriminant, and criterion-related validities of each of the six *ikigai* perceptions (see Tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, & 4.8) was acceptable. Moreover, the confirmatory factor analyses of the competing *ikigai* perception models favoured the six-factor solution over the one-factor model or any other theoretically plausible models, thus indicating the multifaceted nature of the *ikigai* perception.

My conceptualization of the *ikigai* perception has both similarities to and differences from the way that this construct has been theorized in the extant literature on *ikigai* and well-being research. Some *ikigai* scholars have proposed multi-dimensional models of perceived life worthiness. For example, Kondo and Kamata's (1998) scale for university students identifies

four factors: (a) satisfaction with a current life, (b) life enjoyment, (c) existential value, and (d) motivation. Kumano (2012, 2013) maintained that the psychological state of *ikigai* consists of four factors: (a) life affirmation, (b) meaning in life, (c) life fulfilment, and (d) existential value. At a surface level, Kondo and Kamata's notion of satisfaction with a current life and Kumano's life affirmation seem to resemble my definition of life affirmation. Nonetheless, close scrutiny of their scale items reveals important differences. Kondo and Kamata's subscale includes a variety of well-being concepts, such as satisfaction, happiness, peacefulness, and enjoyment, whereas Kumano's subscale seems to merely duplicate Diener et al.'s (1985) life satisfaction items.

One important conceptual distinction between life satisfaction and life affirmation is that the latter is more value-laden. For instance, Martela and Steger (2016) characterized the significance sub-component of meaning in life (MIL)—which they closely associated with *ikigai*—by its “value-laden evaluation of one's life as a whole regarding how important, worthwhile, and inherently valuable it feels” (p. 535). It is possible, for example, that one perceives value in his or her life because of work responsibilities, although the state of his or her work life or overall life is not quite satisfying. George and Park (2017) developed a tripartite measure of MIL and their significance (or “mattering”) subscale appears empirically distinct from life satisfaction indicators. The follow-up analysis of life affirmation and life satisfaction items (Diener et al., 1985) within the current quantitative study revealed that these constructs shared 41.5% of variance (i.e.,  $r = .644$ ). As such, my argument is congruent with the MIL literature in that life affirmation is fairly distinct from life satisfaction because of its value-laden nature.

On the other hand, the other consequence of valued experiences—life vibrancy—does not appear in the MIL literature. The motivational aspect of MIL has been limited to purpose and

future goals (e.g., George & Park, 2017; Martela & Steger, 2016; Park & George, 2013). My conceptualization of life vibrancy is more aligned with Kondo and Kamata's (1998) subscale of motivation (e.g., "I have motivation for the things I am doing".) and Kumano's (2013) measure of life fulfilment (e.g., "I am living everyday lively"). This consistent finding of perceived vibrancy and motivation in *ikigai* studies, including the current studies, and the lack thereof in the MIL research, are noteworthy. This may indicate that *ikigai* perception is related to, yet distinct from, MIL. Moreover, my sub-theory of valued experiences explains why this motivational aspect is an integral part of *ikigai* perception: Strong motivation toward specific valued experiences carries over into one's evaluation of a life as a whole. A similar argument is put forth in the research on subjective vitality (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Interestingly, a series of studies by Huta and colleagues (e.g., Huta, Pelletier, Baxter, & Thompson, 2012; Huta & Ryan, 2010) suggest that this construct is related to both eudaimonic and hedonic pursuits. This appears consistent with my study as it identifies life vibrancy as a consequence of valued experiences, including effortful and enjoyable pursuits. This may be the reason why the existing theory of MIL lacks concepts like vibrancy or vitality, as MIL has only been associated with eudaimonic well-being in the past (Huta & Waterman, 2014). Having said this, it is fair to note that evidence for the discriminant validity between life vibrancy and life momentum—the future-oriented temporal aspect of *ikigai* perception—was not particularly strong (see p. 203; see also Figure 4.4). This finding leaves the possibility that the difference between these two constructs is not so clear at an empirical level, and there is room for measurement improvements.

The existing conceptualization of *ikigai* perception has been largely individualistic in nature, presumably because of the strong influence of psychology (e.g., Kamiya, 2004; Kumano, 2012). A notable exception is Kondo and Kamata's (1998) scale based on lay definitions of

*ikigai*: One of its subscales measures perceived existential value in relation to how one thinks that she or he is valued by others. Imai and colleagues' (2009, 2012) *ikigai* scale for older adults also identifies interpersonal issues (e.g., "I feel being needed by something or someone".) in relation to the perception of existential meaning. As such, existing interpersonal *ikigai* scales share a common feature in that they refer to other people as a reference point regarding one's existential value. My conceptualizations of self-authenticity and genuine care do not do so; they are instead concerned with the perceived quality of interpersonal relationships, that is, authenticity. Moreover, the scope of self-authenticity and genuine care is limited to one's close others and not *any* others. These differences may have been due to the value of collectivism somewhat eroding in Japan, especially among young adults, as Kondo and Kamata's data were collected in 1996 (Hamamura, 2012). Imai et al.'s reference to existential value assessment based on others may also indicate the erosion of collectivism is also relevant to older Japanese adults.

Some eudaimonic well-being researchers have advocated for interpersonal dimensions to be a core part of this broader conceptualization of well-being. For example, Ryff's (1989b) psychological well-being scale explicitly measures positive relationships with others that are operationalized as "warm, satisfying, trusting relationships" in which one is "concerned about the welfare of others" and "capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy" (p. 1072). Keyes (1998) developed a five-factor model of social well-being, with the social acceptance sub-dimension referring to people who "trust others, think that others are capable of kindness, and believe that people can be industrious" (p. 122). Although the definitions of self-authenticity and genuine care herein (Appendix C) are not exactly the same as these existing constructs, the literature suggests that it is plausible that people consider a life with such positive interpersonal elements to be eudaimonic or a good life.

Lastly, it is important to note that the relatively minor status of interpersonal relationships in the well-being research may have been because of the influence of Western individualism. Cultural psychological research has provided insights into interpersonal or social dimensions of well-being (Kitayama & Marcus, 2000). For example, Kitayama et al. (2006) empirically discerned that Japanese tend to feel socially engaged emotions (e.g., respect, indebted) more than socially disengaged emotions (e.g., proud, angry), whereas this trend was reversed for Americans. Moreover, general happiness among Japanese was better predicted by their socially engaged, positive feelings. Hitokoto and Uchida (2015) developed the Interdependent Happiness Scale (IHS), which includes items like “I feel that I am being positively evaluated by others around me”. They also found that IHS scores better predicted overall SWB than did self-esteem among Japanese. Although my findings concerning the interpersonal aspects of *ikigai* perception among Japanese students lend credence to this systematic cultural pattern, there is an important difference: My studies were focused on the Japanese indigenous concept of *ikigai* while the said cultural psychology projects focused on happiness. There is evidence that *ikigai* is different from happiness or *shiawase* in Japanese (Kumano, in press). Future cross-cultural studies can benefit from utilizing indigenous concepts, including *ikigai*, to investigate culturally unique aspects of well-being.

The consequences of the temporal aspects of *ikigai* perception—life momentum and life legacy—seem largely consistent with the existing literature. For example, Kamiya (2004), the founder of *ikigai* research, essentially equated the perception of *ikigai* to purpose in life. Kondo and Kamata’s (1998) scale has some items to measure what they called “motivation” that appear to tap into purpose and goal issues (e.g., “I have goals and things I want to achieve”). Eudaimonic researchers have also considered purpose in life to be an important part of well-

being, broadly construed (e.g., Ryff, 1989b). Recently, researchers have maintained that purpose is a distinct sub-dimension of MIL (e.g., George & Park, 2017; Martela & Steger, 2016). One noteworthy difference between life momentum and purpose in life is that the former is focused on the *connection* between the present and future whereas the latter is limited to the presence of future goals. This difference raises an important question: Can one feel worthiness or meaning in life by only having a purpose and not finding a link between a current life and that future state? I argue that this depends on how we conceptualize “life”. If we are to consider life as one’s entire life, it is plausible that merely having future goals infuses meaning and value in it. However, when we are to feel our daily life is valuable, it appears necessary to be able to link a current life and experiences in it to future goals. To be fair, MIL scholars have noted the importance of direction in life, beyond mere purpose (George & Park, 2017; Martela & Steger, 2016), which implies the connection between different time points in life. Findings regarding life momentum in my dissertation reinforce this point.

Compared to the salience of purpose as a future-oriented aspect of *ikigai* and well-being perception, the literature is notably absent on the importance of a past life. Among *ikigai* scholars, Kondo and Kamata’s (1998) scale is an exception in that it contains some items under the existential value subscale that appear pertinent to life legacy (e.g., “I feel that I have grown as a human being”). In the context of meaning research, Martela and Steger (2016) stated, “Purpose refers specifically to having *direction*” (p. 534, emphasis added); although direction could potentially encompass both past and future, they narrowed this down to its future dimension. As such, my finding that life legacy is an integral part of *ikigai* perception challenges the conceptualization of *ikigai* as well as eudaimonic well-being. From a developmental psychology perspective, and using autobiographic methods, Birren and Birren (1996) contended,

“You don’t know where you are going unless you know where you have been” (p. 299). This quotation succinctly illustrates that within a life course, it is important to consider both the past and future and not just one or the other. My *ikigai* theory concurs in that what one has done in his or her past life adds value to his or her current life, as much as his or her future goals do. Hence, it is directionality that matters: the link between the past, present, and future.

In conclusion, the present studies identified six distinct dimensions of *ikigai* perception among Japanese university students: life affirmation, life vibrancy, self-authenticity, genuine care, life momentum, and life legacy. Each is closely related to the *ikigai* sub-theories in my dissertation. The distinctiveness of these constructs was supported by both my qualitative and quantitative findings, suggesting the multi-faceted nature of *ikigai* perception. Although one can find similar constructs to each of these six sub-dimensions within the existing *ikigai* and well-being literature, the new concepts that I have identified also exhibit important theoretical differences.

## **5.2 RQ2: What Aspects of Leisure, If Any, Relate to Japanese University Students’ Perceived *Ikigai*?**

Based on my qualitative study findings, the resultant grounded theory indicates that leisure contributes to the pursuit of *ikigai* depending on the extent to which leisure experiences are considered as part of valued experiences, or *keiken*, by the participants. This is because valued experiences are the core category in my *ikigai* grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Beyond its apparent core status in the sub-theory of valued experiences, these experiences are shared with students’ close others with whom students have authentic relationships. In terms of directionality, valued experiences in the past, present, and future (or goals) are the building blocks of this temporal connection.

Moreover, my qualitative findings suggest that leisure is a life domain where students can engage in all four experience values: enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and comfort. Thus, my grounded theory postulates that when leisure experiences are valued as enjoyable, effortful, stimulating, and/or comforting, they enhance students' *ikigai* perception. My quantitative findings corroborated this hypothesis (see Table 4.10). Namely, leisure experience valuation based on the four experience values positively predicted *ikigai* perception while controlling for three other aspects of leisure: leisure time, leisure participation, and leisure satisfaction.

The finding that valued leisure experiences are an important predictor of *ikigai* perception adds to both the *ikigai* and leisure literature. In the former body of knowledge, leisure has been identified as a major source of life worthiness among the general public (e.g., COGJ, 1994, 1997; CRS, 2012) and within the university student population (e.g., Nishizako & Sakagami, 2004b; Takashige, 1985). My grounded theory identifies the underlying mechanism through which these effects exist: Leisure pursuits improve participants' *ikigai* perception as far as these experiences are valued by them as enjoyable, effortful, stimulating, and/or comforting. Past *ikigai* surveys pinpointed hobbies as a particularly robust source of *ikigai* (e.g., COGJ, 1994; CRS, 2012; Nishizako & Sakagami, 2004b). Hobbies are a unique type of leisure in that as serious leisure research suggests (Stebbins, 2007, 2015) they require significant personal efforts; the experience value of which may not be readily found in more casual leisure experiences (e.g., watching television).

From a more theoretical perspective, Kumano (2012) maintained that a personal value system plays a key role in the processes through which *ikigai* sources impact the psychological state of *ikigai*. Two processes she identified are: value assignment and value acceptance. However, the former was equated to four psychological processes—commitment to positive



situations, coping with negative situations, goal setting, and meaning making of the past—while leaving it unclear how exactly personal values influence these processes. Moreover, Kumano seems to assume that value acceptance occurs when one accepts values of life events. Contrarily, the current grounded theory, especially the valued experiences sub-theory, suggests that the experience valuation process is inherently transactional and involves both value assignment and acceptance. My qualitative findings (see p. 115) indicated that although individual students had some discretion in regard to which value(s) they attached to their experiences, characteristics of experiences also influenced what value(s) they identified within experiences (e.g., present-focused experiences for enjoyment, and challenging experiences for effort). Therefore, these results led me to theorize the valuation process as a transaction and interaction between individuals and their environment, rather than their internal psychological process based on a personal value system. Furthermore, my studies specify the four types of experience values that connect leisure experiences and life worthiness, whereas Kumano's theory does not offer such specificity.

My quantitative findings further suggest that this subjective valuation of leisure experiences outperforms several other aspects of leisure (i.e., leisure time, leisure participation, and leisure satisfaction) as a predictor of *ikigai* perception. This finding is somewhat consistent with past studies that discerned subjective aspects of leisure (e.g., satisfaction) relate to well-being indicators more strongly than objective counterparts (e.g., time, activity participation frequency) (e.g., Kuykendall et al., 2015; Wang & Wong, 2014). Obviously, the focus on leisure valuation is unique to my dissertation research, but there are a few comparable concepts that have previously been discussed in the leisure literature. Among these constructs is leisure attitude, that is, personal beliefs toward leisure encompassing cognitive, affective, and

behavioural aspects (Ragheb & Beard, 1982). Small- to medium-size positive correlations have been documented between leisure attitude and leisure satisfaction (e.g., Ragheb, 1980; Ragheb & Tate, 1993; Riddick, 1986; Siegenthaler & O'Dell, 2000). However, when Lloyd and Auld (2002) used this variable to predict overall well-being while controlling for leisure participation and satisfaction, the effect was non-significant. This null-finding may indicate that leisure attitude's impact on well-being is limited to the domain level (e.g., leisure satisfaction) and its effect on overall well-being is confounded with leisure satisfaction. Moreover, there is an important theoretical distinction between leisure attitude and leisure valuation: Leisure attitude is concerned with leisure in general, whereas leisure valuation refers to individuals' own leisure experiences. This difference may explain why leisure satisfaction (or any other leisure variables) did not account for leisure valuation's effect on *ikigai* perception in the current quantitative results, as it did for leisure attitude. As such, leisure valuation may be related to leisure attitude, and yet they are two distinct constructs especially when it comes to their impacts on *ikigai* perception and well-being.

Another noteworthy part of these quantitative findings (see Table 4.10) is that leisure valuation was no longer the strongest predictor when the dependent variable was switched to a different, more hedonic well-being indicator. Instead, leisure satisfaction had the strongest effect on life satisfaction, happiness, and negative affect, whereas leisure participation most strongly influenced positive affect. These results are largely consistent with past longitudinal findings that found leisure satisfaction serves as a robust predictor of overall well-being (e.g., Kuykendall et al., 2015; Shin & You, 2013; Walker & Ito, 2017). Theoretically, this predictive role of the domain life satisfaction is consistent with the bottom-up model that posits daily leisure engagement impacts participants' leisure satisfaction and affect balance in this life domain,

which in turn influences their global well-being (Newman et al., 2014). The fact that leisure valuation had a stronger effect than leisure satisfaction on *ikigai* perception requires a different explanation than is currently provided for in existing theories within the bottom-up paradigm. To elaborate on the conceptual difference between the current leisure valuation process and relevant theoretical frameworks, I now discuss the findings of the four experience values in relation to the leisure and well-being literature.

Previous research on leisure and well-being has identified themes similar to the four experience values, although they have not been framed as values per se. First, my studies have discerned that leisure is a primary life domain wherein students experience a great deal of enjoyment, which is largely consistent with the existing literature. Specifically, my findings suggest that these amusing leisure experiences are often intrinsically valuable and trigger a strong level of absorption into present moments. Researchers have identified enjoyment of nature (e.g., Driver et al., 1991) as well as personal enjoyment and flow (Wankel & Berger, 1991) as among leisure's benefits. The serious leisure perspective (SLP) defines casual leisure based on sheer enjoyment and intrinsic reward, and notes that even serious leisure leads to the benefit of self-gratification (Stebbins, 2015). From the meaning-making perspective, Iwasaki et al. (2015) argue that leisure serves as a pathway by which a person can pursue a joyful life.

In spite of these seeming similarities, these scholars appear to conceptualize enjoyment as outcomes of the leisure experience. Contrarily, my qualitative findings suggested that the students valued their leisure experiences *as* enjoyable, as opposed to appreciating subsequent positive emotional states. This is a theoretically important distinction between valuing an experience itself and valuing a positive emotional outcome. By extension, by giving enjoyment a value status—which inherently involves a certain level of cognition, the current findings also

challenge the Western, emotion-focused conceptualization of enjoyment. Enjoyment, or more precisely Japanese *tanoshimi*, may be more than a mere transient emotion. Namely, *tanoshimi* is one of the major criteria by which students evaluate the value of their experiences, which in turn influences their perceived life worthiness. Consistent with this assertion, Kono and Shinew (2015) discovered that in a post-disaster context, Japanese survivors considered some of their leisure experiences as *tanoshimi*, which helped them stay optimistic and find continuity in their lives.

Second, my findings also indicate that students consider leisure as a life domain in which they can make a significant level of personal efforts. Specifically, my studies identify two sub-types of efforts as important factors that influence students' *ikigai*: accomplishments focused on external goals and self-enhancement driven toward internal growth. The leisure literature has been explicit in the relationship between well-being and leisure-based effort, or its consequences such as accomplishments. For example, the benefits approach identifies achievement as one of major positive outcomes of leisure, which leads to an increased level of well-being (e.g., Driver et al., 1991). More recently, Newman et al. (2014) attributed this effect to satisfaction of the need for mastery or competence from a self-determination theory perspective (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Whereas these scholarly works appear to emphasize externally driven efforts, researchers ground in the meaning-making perspective have contended that leisure experiences facilitate participants' personal growth and transformation, which in turn makes their lives more meaningful (Iwasaki, 2017). Having noted the above, Stebbins's (2015) SLP has championed the idea that personal efforts through serious leisure impacts participants' well-being. The SLP model explains this effect by identifying distinct rewards of serious leisure, such as self-actualization. Stebbins argues that serious leisure enhances well-being to the extent these

rewards surpass associated costs (e.g., frustration). This point differentiates the SLP from the current valued experiences sub-theory. My qualitative results suggested that the students valued—perhaps not initially, but after some time—parts of an effortful leisure experience that they disliked (see p. 117). As such, the leisure valuation thesis eschews the dichotomy of rewards and costs and the comparison between them. My interviewees suggested that costs were also valuable in the context of effortful experiences, which in turn enriches their life worthiness. This point also separates the leisure valuation thesis from the benefits approach that explicitly states the need for a benefit-disbenefit comparison (e.g., Driver et al., 1991b; Driver & Burns, 1999).

Third, my studies also indicate that stimuli or *shigeki* are an important aspect of leisure experience values. My findings further specify that there are two sub-types of stimulating leisure experiences based on their novelty level: daily stimulating leisure that “spice up” participants’ everyday lives, and extraordinarily stimulating leisure that fundamentally alters individuals’ values and perspectives. Some benefit-focused scholars have examined stimulating aspects of leisure, and outdoor recreation in particular, using concepts such as excitement seeking and meeting new people (e.g., Driver et al., 1991). Iso-Ahola (1982, 1983; also Snepenger, King, Marshall, & Uysal, 2006) theorized that “the desire to leave the personal and/or interpersonal environment behind oneself” (1983, p. 45) is a major driver of leisure behaviour, and travel especially. More recently, Sirgy et al. (2017) further hypothesized that leisure experiences allow participants to satisfy their needs for sensation and sensory stimulation, which in turn increases their overall well-being. All of these studies seem to parallel my finding of the “spicing-up” effect of stimulating leisure experiences, but they do not address how more profoundly stimulating leisure experiences can enhance people’s well-being. The latter unique contribution of the current studies may have been because of its focus on *ikigai* perception as an endpoint,

which is arguably more eudaimonic than the conventional definition of well-being used in the above studies (cf. Kumano, in press). Thus, exposing oneself to life-changing experiences through leisure appears to improve life worthiness. However, doing so may neither maximize positive emotions as very novel experiences could make individuals uncomfortable nor increase life satisfaction as revised perspectives might no longer be aligned with their current lifestyle.

Fourth, my interviewees also valued some of their leisure experiences as comforting, especially when their activities offer a (a) safe space where they need not be concerned about others' judgment and (b) basis for their secure identity. Benefits research has held that leisure can satisfy the security need to "make a safe and secure, long-term commitment free of bothersome change" (Driver et al., 1991, p. 267). Iso-Ahola's (1982, 1983; Snepenger et al., 2006) leisure need theory also posits that leisure travellers satisfy their need to escape from both personal and interpersonal concerns, which in turn boosts their well-being (Sirgy et al., 2017). These arguments appear consistent with my finding that comforting leisure is a space free of daily concerns and judgment, despite the difference in the underlying mechanisms (i.e., benefits or need satisfaction vs. valuation of experiences per se). More importantly, the current theorization of comforting leisure differs from the above need for leisure-based escape in that the former involves the proactive pursuit of positivity whereas the latter involves the avoidance of negativity. Related to identity-related comfort, Hutchinson and Kleiber (2005) put forth an argument based on the SLP (Stebbins, 2007) that engaging and re-engaging in familiar, casual leisure activities allow participants to maintain a sense of self during negative life events. The current findings extend this assertion by indicating that the value of comforting leisure experiences is not limited to negative life circumstances, but applied to everyday life.

In short, there are themes in the leisure and well-being literatures that pertain to each of

the four experience values identified in the current research studies: enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and comfort. However, the leisure valuation process—the process through which one values their leisure experiences—differs from extant theoretical explanations such as the benefits approach, needs theories, the serious leisure perspective, and meaning-making. Moreover, the present findings offer sub-categories within each of the four experience values that add theoretically important nuances to the literature. Lastly, the extant literature has been largely based on the conventional conceptualization of hedonic well-being; hence, the current results extend the existing arguments to the realm of *ikigai* perception and eudaimonic well-being.

### **5.3 RQ3: How Important Is Leisure in Terms of Explaining Japanese University Students' Perceived *Ikigai* Relative to Other Life Domains?**

To answer this quantitatively focused question, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted predicting *ikigai* perception by using a set of life domain satisfaction variables and leisure variables (see Table 4.9). After controlling for academic, health, economic, relationship, and family satisfaction, two leisure variables remained significant: leisure participation and valuation. Notably, leisure valuation was the strongest predictor of *ikigai* perception. Beyond the explanatory power of all of the control variables, the set of leisure variables accounted for an additional 10.8% of variance in perceived life worthiness. Among the control life domains, relationship, academic, and family satisfaction positively predicted the dependent variable.

In general, leisure's importance to life worthiness compared to other life domains is consistent with the *ikigai* literature. For instance, COGJ (1994) reported that the three most frequently chosen sources of *ikigai* were family (and children), hobbies and sports, and work. A similar pattern was seen in a national survey conducted by CRS (2012). Among college students, Nishizako and Sakagami (2004b) found that both leisure and relationships are important sources

of their *ikigai*. My findings reinforce this descriptive literature by (a) statistically controlling for overlapped effects of multiple life domains and (b) measuring multiple aspects of a leisure life. The latter has important implications because different leisure variables affected perceived life worthiness to varying degrees. Compared to the regression results only with the leisure variables (see Table 4.10), it appeared that leisure variables' significant effects were attenuated by their shared variance with the relationship, family, and academic satisfaction variables. Notably, leisure satisfaction seemed influenced the most and was no longer a significant predictor of *ikigai* perception. One possible explanation for this null-finding is that because many leisure activities are done with others (e.g., friends, family, and partner), feeling satisfied with their leisure also meant students felt satisfied with their relationship and family lives. This speculation is congruent with a follow-up zero-order correlation analysis between leisure satisfaction and relationship/family satisfaction ( $r = .42$  and  $.43$ , respectively). Having said this, it is noteworthy that the effects of leisure participation and valuation were not lessened as much. This may have been because these two variables captured two distinct aspects of *keiken* or valued experiences: behaviour and cognition. That is, frequent leisure participation meant that students *did* leisure while the higher leisure valuation indicated that students *valued* their leisure engagement. As such, the above findings appear consistent with the *keiken* sub-theory.

Lastly, some discussion of satisfaction with the non-leisure life domain is necessary. The significant effects of relationship and family satisfaction, even after controlling for the leisure variables, can be explained by the importance of *ibasho* or authentic relationships in the pursuit of *ikigai*. As my qualitative findings suggested, close friends, partners, and family members are those with whom students establish comradery and/or "family"-type relationships. The other significant predictor—academic satisfaction—may have represented a life domain characterized



by the experience value of effort, which was less highlighted within a leisure life. The null-finding of economic satisfaction is generally in line with past well-being studies that found only a small correlation between income and well-being (e.g., Haring et al., 1984; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2000), especially among those with higher income levels (e.g., Diener, Ng, & Tov, 2008). The extant literature has also found that job satisfaction influences well-being more strongly than income level (e.g., Bowling, Eschleman, & Wang, 2010; Tait, Padgett, & Baldwin, 1989). This may be because, like academics, work represents an effort-oriented life domain, although income itself does not correspond to any particular experience value. The finding that health satisfaction did not have a significant impact was surprising, based on the previous well-being research that identified health as a robust predictor of well-being (e.g., Okun et al., 1984a; Roysamb, Tambs, Reichborn-Kjennerud, Neale, & Harris, 2003). This might have been because a healthy life, especially when it is interpreted as a life without major health issues, is not necessarily worthwhile in itself; rather, it is what one does with such a life in terms of leisure, studies, and relationships. As such, the non-significant effect of health satisfaction may signal an important distinction between *ikigai* perception and other subjective well-being indicators.

#### **5.4 RQ4: How Do Japanese University Students Experience Perceived *Ikigai*?**

Beyond what *ikigai* perception is (pp. 154, 200, & 225), my dissertation research also attempted to theorize *how* or the process through which Japanese students pursue this state. The three sub-theories that represent distinct mechanisms were developed based on the qualitative findings, and then they were subsequently tested using PLS-SEM. The following sub-sections discuss each of these sub-theories based on both the qualitative and quantitative results.

##### **5.4.1 The sub-theory of valued experiences**

The first sub-theory is centred on *keiken* or valued experiences. The qualitative results

suggested that the students engaged in experiences that they valued as enjoyable, effortful, stimulating, and/or comforting (i.e., value engagement). My interviewees further diversified the types of experience values they engaged in both across and within their experiences (i.e., value diversification). Moreover, it was found important for them to balance competing experience values, that is, enjoyment versus effort, and stimuli versus comfort (i.e., value balancing). Lastly, when my informants felt overwhelmed by often effortful experiences, it was crucial to disengage from those experiences by indulging in casual, enjoyable activities (i.e., value disengagement).

The PLS-SEM results largely supported these hypotheses (see Figure 4.6): Each of the four mechanisms had significant effects on both life affirmation and life vibrancy—the *ikigai* perceptions within the *keiken* sub-theory—except for the non-significant impact of value disengagement on life vibrancy. Even after controlling for the other mechanisms' influences, value engagement remained the most powerful predictor, while the influence of value balancing on life vibrancy was notably comparable to that of value engagement. Overall, the four mechanisms together explained more than 50 percent of variance in life affirmation and vibrancy.

The concept of value engagement indicates that the pursuit of *keiken* is the interaction or transaction between individual agents (and their conscious mind) and their external environments. That is to say that the value engagement process—actually experiencing an activity and valuing the experience in accordance with a particular experience value—requires both potentially valuable activities (e.g., challenging activities for effort; external environment) and an internal, cognitive appraisal mechanism. Moreover, the qualitative findings suggested that my informants often identified an experience value(s) while actually going through the experience, as opposed to knowing how valuable it was going to be before involvement.

These characteristics of value engagement make it distinct from other *ikigai* processes as well as determinants of eudaimonic well-being. Within the limited theorization of *ikigai* processes, Kamiya (2004) proposed that people perceive life worthiness when a variety of psychological needs are met. A few needs seem similar to the experience values I have identified (e.g., the needs for self-actualization and change, and the values of effort and stimuli, respectively). However, there may be certain caveats with employing the needs satisfaction thesis generally to explain students' *ikigai* pursuits. First, needs theories seem to presuppose that needs satisfaction directly and automatically lead to enhanced well-being. Although Kamiya did not offer a detailed account of how she theorized psychological needs, Deci and Ryan (2000) defined them as: "innate psychological nutriments that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being" (p. 229). If Kamiya were to agree with this definition, therefore, people should feel *ikigai* perception as long as their activities meet their needs, even if they are not aware of the activities' values. Contrarily, my informants were conscious of their experiences' values, even though value appraisal might have occurred after actual experiences. Thus, the value engagement process appears to emphasize the importance of cognitive appraisals more than needs theories.

Second, needs theories presuppose that psychological needs precede human behaviour, which may or may not satisfy their needs (Kamiya, 2004; cf. Deci & Ryan, 2000). Although my qualitative findings suggested that the students had some idea of experience values before involvement, there were many instances where they strengthened their appreciation of experiences and even learned unexpected values of experiences during or after engagement. As such, values emerge from experiences. Hence, value engagement appears to be a more dynamic and emergent process than needs satisfaction.

Third, the underlying premise of needs theories is that unmet needs drive human behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 2000) or in this case *ikigai* pursuits (Kamiya, 2004). A theoretical issue arises when individuals even hypothetically meet all needs: These people should stop *ikigai* pursuits and thus eventually perceive a lower level of life worthiness. However, my interviewees shared a different story: Current valued experiences often led to future goals of doing them again or even pursuing more valuable experiences (see, for example, pp. 178, 181, and 187). Therefore, value engagement does not have a “saturation point”, and students can theoretically keep valuing and partaking in experiences, although doing so within only one value type could harm value balance eventually.

Another *ikigai* theorist integrated psychological processes from different theoretical roots. Among Kumano’s (2012) *ikigai* pursuit processes, absorption into positive situation appears most pertinent to value engagement. Measured by items such as “I often lose a track of time while being very absorbed in things” (Kumano, 2013), this construct is based on Seligman’s (2011) engagement and originally Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990, 2014) concept of flow. Seligman noted: “thought and feeling are usually absent during the flow state, and only in retrospect do we say, ‘That was fun’ or ‘That was wonderful’” (p. 17). This statement points to a theoretically important distinction between absorption/engagement/flow and value engagement (and its enjoyment sub-category): While the former focuses on the experience in which an actor’s consciousness is subsumed, the latter emphasizes the importance of explicitly associating such experiences with the value of enjoyment (or other values). Kumano (2012) considered the four mechanisms including absorption as value assignment processes, which relates to actor’s personal value system and requires his or her consciousness (p. 148). This clearly causes theoretical inconsistency at least in the case of absorption. Kumano’s (2013) empirical findings

suggested that absorption had a weaker effect than other processes that were arguably more cognitively focused. Conversely, my quantitative findings, especially IMPM analysis (see Figure 4.7), indicated that enjoyment engagement was one of the most influential *ikigai* mechanisms.

Within the literature on eudaimonic well-being, some theorists have identified the processes to pursue eudaimonia similar to the aforesaid *ikigai* scholars, such as Baumeister (1991) and needs theories and Vittersø (2004) and flow theory (see Huta & Waterman, 2014, for review). Ryan and colleagues (Ryan et al., 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan et al., 2008) contended that what makes pursuits eudaimonic is the motivation behind the behaviour, or the reason why individuals behave as they do. Namely, intrinsically worthwhile behaviour that “is not reducible to other values” or “does not exist for the sake of another value” (Ryan et al., 2008, p. 148) qualifies as a source of eudaimonic well-being. Whereas my informants seemed to value enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and comfort for their own sake, the fact that values sometimes emerged during experiences casts doubt on Ryan et al.’s motivational eudaimonic theory: Do we often know what value dictates our behaviour? Whereas Ryan et al.’s motivational thesis emphasizes an actor’s consciousness *before* her or his behaviour, value engagement here focuses on an actor’s cognitive assessment *during* and even *after* her or his experiences.

Waterman (1993a, 2008), in his identity-based theory, considered self-actualization as a main source of eudaimonic well-being: the mechanism through which one identifies his or her full potentialities and makes efforts to achieve them. Although such effortful pursuits seem to correspond to engagement in effortful experiences, my qualitative findings did not suggest that the identification of the best in self was a precursor of personal efforts. Rather, the interviewees made efforts when they faced external challenges (see p. 117). Partially, this departure may have been because the current studies focused on emerging adults whose identity was arguably still

being established (Arnett, 2000).

The sub-theory of valued experiences specifies that after value engagement, the second step to pursue *ikigai* is to diversify experience values. This hypothesis predicts that identifying more experience values in one's daily life has positive impacts on his or her *ikigai* perception beyond the mere sum of individual experience values. This thesis was strongly supported by my PLS-SEM results that revealed significant effects of value diversification on both life affirmation and vibrancy even after controlling value engagement (and the other two mechanisms).

Among the few related notions in the well-being literature is the premise of basic psychological needs theory that all of the needs for autonomy, competence, and interpersonal relatedness should be satisfied for one to achieve optimal well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Deci and Ryan contended, "Psychological health requires satisfaction of all three needs; one or two are not enough" (p. 229). Discussing needs satisfaction from a meaning perspective, Baumeister and Vohs (2002) argued, "People's lives usually draw meaning from *multiple sources*, including family and love, work, religion, and various personal projects" (p. 611, emphasis added). Furthermore, Baumeister and Vohs identified two benefits of having diverse sources of meaning: Doing so (a) makes individuals more resistant to and resilient from meaninglessness and (b) reduces pressure on each source as a way to meet all psychological needs. The former explanation is consistent with part of the reason why my interviewees diversified their experience values: "risk management" in that the more diversified their sources of *ikigai* were, the less likely they would lose life worthiness at once, especially during life transitional periods. Having said this, my diversification thesis also proposes the synergistic effect of diversified values, not only the risk management effect. This is especially so when identifying one value makes students more appreciative of another value(s) (e.g., making efforts in studies allows one

to fully enjoy socialization with friends on days off). Consistently, Turban and Yan (2016) found that workers who identified both eudaimonic (e.g., growth) and hedonic (e.g., fun) values in their jobs reported stronger work commitment, more prosocial behaviour, and a higher level of responsibility.

The third step in the valued experiences sub-theory is to balance competing experience values (i.e., enjoyment vs. effort, and stimuli vs. comfort). The concept of balance has been studied, albeit scarcely, in needs satisfaction research particularly by those who adopt a self-determination theory perspective. Sheldon and Niemiec (2006) empirically demonstrated that the balance among autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs satisfaction has a small yet significant impact on hedonistic well-being indicators (e.g., life satisfaction, happiness), after controlling for the effects of individual needs satisfaction. Milyavskaya et al. (2009) found that adolescents who achieved a better balance in satisfying their basic needs across their life domains, such as school, home, and friends reported a higher level of well-being than those who lacked such balance. It is important to note that these different life domains may have represented different types of experiences and experience values (e.g., effort at school and enjoyment with friends). The current value balancing hypothesis proposes the importance of balance in the context of *ikigai* research and eudaimonic research, more broadly. Moreover, the current quantitative findings are methodologically unique in that value balance was *not* computed by individual value indicators, *but* measured by items solely focused on the balancing issue. Although the past studies that adopted the former approach (e.g., Milyavskaya et al. 2009; Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006) detected only marginal effects, the effects of value balancing were robust especially on life vibrancy. Beyond the methodological difference, this finding may have been because of the outcome variable's nature: Having both enjoyable and effortful experiences

and maintaining a good balance between them infuses positive changes in one's daily life and perceived vitality, as life vibrancy is operationalized.

Related to both value diversification and balancing, another important explanation for why my Japanese informants emphasized these processes is their cultural background. Some of the interviewees' accounts of value diversification were linked to their concern about the possible future where they might lose sources of *ikigai* over life transitional periods of time (e.g., college graduation). This prediction of the potential negative future, after the positive present (i.e., perceiving a certain level of life worthiness), appears consistent with the concept of dialecticism that is more prevalent in East Asian cultures (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). With this lay concept, East Asian people tend to accept apparent contradictions, holistic relationships, and perpetual changes (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Pertinent to the last principle, Ji et al. (2001) found that Chinese students, compared with their American counterparts, tended to choose nonlinear graphs over linear graphs to represent how their happiness level would shift along the life course. Similarly, Uchida and Kitayama (2009) discovered that the Japanese lay notion of happiness was characterized by their transcendental attitudes (e.g., happiness as elusive, not lasting long). It is plausible that the Japanese students in my studies also foresaw nonlinear changes in their *ikigai* level in their future, which drove them to diversify sources of *ikigai* as a defence mechanism.

With regard to value balancing, contradiction acceptance or the first principle of dialecticism (Peng & Nisbett, 1999) seems to play a role. Cross-cultural studies of emotions have converged on the point that East Asians, including Japanese, tend to experience positive and negative emotions in a balanced manner—thus achieving an emotionally neutral point over time—compared to their North American counterparts (Mesquita & Karasawa, 2004; Oishi, 2002; Scollon et al., 2005). Miyamoto et al. (2010) discovered that this tendency toward mixed



emotion was salient within positive situations compared to negative- or mixed-emotional situations. Hence, my study participants may have adopted dialectic thinking especially in the context of valued experiences—predominantly positive—which led them to seek a balance among experience values. Moreover, it is possible that compared to positive versus negative emotions, the perceived importance of balance was heightened with regard to different types of experience values that are essentially all positive in some ways.

The fourth and last step in the pursuit of valued experiences is to disengage from overwhelming (often effortful) experiences through casual enjoyable activities so that one can regain energy and re-engage with the former. This hypothesis seems novel within the *ikigai* and well-being literature in a few theoretically important ways. On the one hand, it suggests that the pursuit of *ikigai* through valued experiences is *not* a simple linear progression in which the more valued experiences are always the better. This is because effortful experiences—an important part of the four types of valued experiences—tend to overwhelm and exhaust people when the intensity and duration of effort become considerable. Although the well-being literature seems limited in regard to this type of phenomena, Kiviniemi, Snyder, and Omoto's (2002) longitudinal studies suggested that volunteers with multiple types of motivation, including effortful motives (e.g., personal development), perceived more stress than those with a single motivation type. Thus, the road to well-being may be more dynamic than previously thought: A high level of engagement to the pursuit of well-being could overload individuals and incur an emotional toll, which needs to be addressed for further pursuit of wellbeing.

On the other hand, the concept of value disengagement offers a new mechanism that links hedonic and eudaimonic pursuits. Although these two types of behaviour with distinct motives have been conceptualized differently (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Ryan et al., 2008), there is evidence

that positive affect (as a primary outcome of hedonia) is a robust predictor of meaning in life (as an indicator of eudaimonic well-being) (e.g., Hicks, Schlegel, & King, 2010; King, Hicks, Krull, & Del Gaiso, 2006). Likewise, positive affect induced by casual enjoyably activities may help people pursue, and keep pursuing, their *ikigai*. This thesis mirrors a rare account of the role of positive affect in stress coping process: “Under stressful conditions, when negative emotions are predominant, positive emotions may provide psychological break or respite, support continued coping efforts, and replenish resources that have been depleted by the stress” (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000b, p. 649; see also Lazarus, Kanner, & Folkman, 1980). An important distinction is that value disengagement applies this “respite” role of positive emotions to the pursuit of positive state, namely life worthiness. From a more positive psychology perspective, Fredrickson’s (1998, 2013) broaden-and-build theory—especially the “broaden” sub-component—suggests that positive affect widens “momentary thought-action repertoires” (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005, p. 314). Such broadened repertoires of cognition and behaviour might help people (re)organize overflowing thoughts and add a new perspective to challenging situations, which in turn facilitates them to re-engage with once overwhelming, effortful experiences.

Having noted these discussion points, it is now necessary to speculate on why value disengagement had a non-significant effect on life vibrancy in the quantitative study. This null-finding prompted me to revisit the interview accounts on value disengagement (see p. 136), which identified an important condition where this mechanism exerted an effect: The students felt overwhelmed by their effortful experiences. Quantitatively speaking, this condition can be a moderator or a factor that changes the strength or even direction of association. In other words, value disengagement may impact life vibrancy only when they perceive overwhelmed by an

amount or duration of effort they face. Unfortunately, my quantitative dataset does not include this effort overload variable or even stress measures. However, it does contain two high-arousal negative affect indicators: nervousness and fear. Consequently, I ran statistical models in which each of these negative emotions moderated the link between value disengagement and life vibrancy based on the model in Figure 4.6 (i.e., two-stage approach; Hair et al., 2017, p. 254). The bootstrap procedures discerned that nervousness significantly moderated this linkage ( $b^* = 0.07$ ,  $SD = 0.03$ ,  $p = .038$ , 95% CI  $[-.001; .123]$ ). The simple slope analysis, shown in Figure 5.1, illustrated that value disengagement had a positive effect on life vibrancy among nervous students, while the directionality was negative among less nervous counterparts. As such, this moderating effect of value disengagement adds further support to my argument that the pursuit of *keiken*, and *ikigai* broadly, is not a simple progression but rather a dynamic process that depends on situational factors (e.g., effort overload). Nonetheless, this follow-up evidence should be considered to be tentative because (a) nervousness is only a proxy for effort overload or stress, (b) a single item measure of nervousness lacks measurement rigor as a moderator, and (c) the CI was at the borderline. Future investigation of this moderation effect is highly important.

In summary, the sub-theory of valued experiences identifies four related mechanisms to pursue *ikigai* perception: value engagement, value diversification, value balancing, and value disengagement. These constructs fill up the gap in the literature regarding *how* people pursue *ikigai*. The current theory posits that this process involves distinct behaviour (i.e., doing an activity) and cognition (i.e., valuing an activity). Apart from this concept of value engagement, the additional three processes provide a more detailed, complex picture of *ikigai* pursuit, which contributes to the existing literature on *ikigai* and well-being.

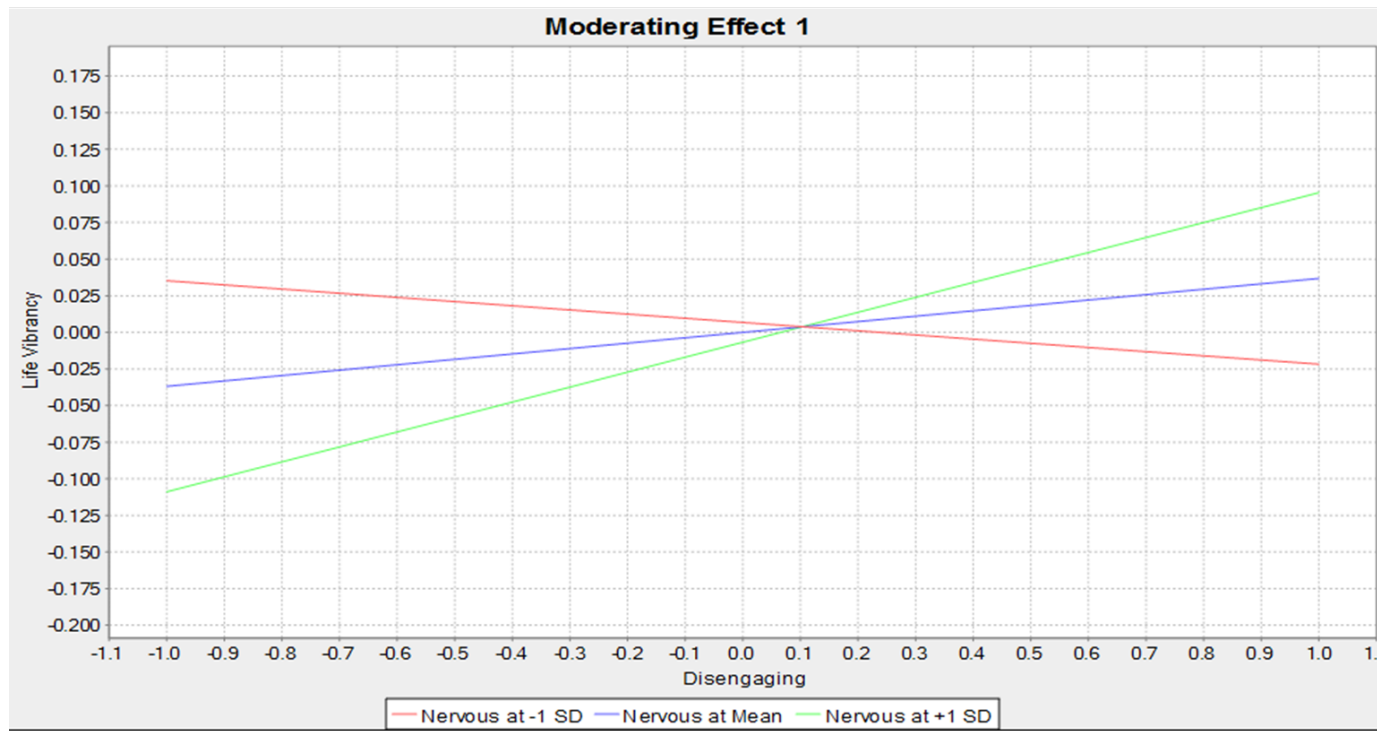


Figure 5.1. A simple slope analysis of nervousness's moderating effect on the relationship between value disengagement and life vibrancy.

### 5.4.2 The sub-theory of authentic relationships

The second mechanism students pursue *ikigai* through is their *ibasho* or authentic relationships. In these relationships, students feel being able to be true to self and receive genuine care from their close others. The two sub-types of relationships identified in my qualitative study were: (a) comradery representing students' relationships with their close others who were also involved in their current valued experiences, and (b) "family" meaning the relationships with close others who did not directly engage in students' *keiken*. These sub-types of *ibasho* had direct implications for the processes through students pursued *ikigai* in their interpersonal lives.

First, students *experienced together*, or engaged in their valued experiences with their close others, especially comrades. Doing so fostered their perception of authentic relationships, namely self-authenticity and genuine care, while it also made their experiences more valuable than solitary activities. Specifically, my interviewees emphasized the importance of enjoying together and making effort together with their close others. These hypotheses were confirmed by PLS-SEM results (see Table 4.12). Notably, experiencing together had small-to-medium size effects on the two outcome variables. The IMPM analysis added that enjoying together seemed to have greater impact than effortful counterparts (see Figure 4.11).

Past *ikigai* studies have identified interpersonal relationships, especially close relationships, as a robust source of life worthiness. For example, a national survey conducted by COGJ (1994) reported that the most prevalent source of *ikigai* was family and children (38.7%). Similar trends have been observed among young adults (e.g., Kamiya & Sudo, 1980; Kumano, 2002; Nishizako & Sakagami, 2004b). Beyond such descriptive evidence, Kondo and Kamata (2004) found that the presence of a spouse and friends positively predicted *ikigai* perception

among older adults in a regression context, after controlling for other predictors. However, “what to do” with these close others in order to achieve *ikigai* has remained unknown until recently. CRS’s (2012) large-scale survey discovered that among those who thought they had *ikigai*, 38.8% considered active *interactions* with friends as its source, while 37.4% considered *communications* with their family and pet as a source. Kumano’s series of studies (2005, 2008, 2009) revealed that positive interpersonal events, including enjoying activities together, had positive impacts on different dimensions of *ikigai* perception (e.g., purpose in life, life affirmation, meaning in life, and existential value) among college students. My discovery of experiencing together expands on these earlier findings, suggesting that communal effortful experiences as well as shared enjoyable experiences contribute to *ikigai* perception. More broadly, my results indicate that it is not merely joint enjoyment that is important, but rather shared experience values that matter. Whereas the former orientation may ultimately reduce the effect to emotional regulation and treat interpersonal interactions as a mere context, the latter position deems the process of experiencing together—acting on and appraising a particular experience value together—as the core of this effect.

*Ikigai* scholars who take sociological and anthropological perspectives have theorized the importance of close relationships in the pursuit of *ikigai* somewhat differently. For example, Mathews (1996), an anthropologist, argued that one of the two major processes to pursue *ikigai* is commitment to relationships and groups (e.g., family, company). Similarly, a sociologist (Y. Takahashi, 2001) observed that East Asian individuals perceived life worthiness through their belonging to their close, often interdependent relationships with their family members: especially offspring. It is important to note that this type of commitment to and dependence on others is not congruent with the current findings of experiencing together with comrades, as the latter form of

relationships appears more equal than hierarchical. Moreover, my results do not agree with the importance of embedding self into collectives as a way to attain *ikigai* perception. This may have been because the collectivistic culture in Japan has somewhat eroded since Mathews's and Y. Takahashi's research teams collected their data in 1980s and 90s. Insights from cultural psychology seem to support this speculation (Hamamura, 2012). Indeed, Y. Takahashi also conjectured that the ways Japanese people perceive *ikigai* may have shifted from a collectivistic to an individualistic mechanism; namely, Japanese people began, he argued, finding *ikigai* within associational groups of independent individual members rather than collectivistic groups in which interdependence of members was assumed. Approximately three decades since their studies, my informants appeared to assume equal status among their comrades (see p. 152).

Another *ikigai* sociologist (Mori, 2001) provided a theory that appears more individualistic and thus consistent with the current findings. He deemed self-affirmation or feeling okay to be oneself in social contexts as the core of *ikigai* perception, which was in turn theorized to be attained through everyday social interactions. Further, Mori predicted that both quantity and quality of resultant relationships influence perceived life worthiness. This is a point of departure from the present results. My interviewees emphasized the importance of experiencing together with their close others, which by nature limited the number of such close relationships. For that matter, the entire sub-theory of *ibasho* is focused on close relationships. Their interview accounts did not suggest the benefit of having many relationships, beyond developing the two types of *ibasho*: comradeship and "family".

The well-being literature also offers some interesting insights with regard to the findings of experiencing together as a process to pursue *ikigai*. Social activity has been long acknowledged as a predictor of well-being (Cooper, Okamura, & Gurka, 1992). Okun, Stock,

Haring, and Witter's (1984b) meta-analysis discovered that the average correlation between social activity and hedonic well-being was .15; moreover, formal social activity (e.g., activity through volunteer associations) was more strongly associated with well-being than was informal social activity (e.g., activity with friends). Conversely, more recent studies have identified companionship of friends (e.g., Demir, Özdemir, & Weitekamp, 2007; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007) and of romantic partner (e.g., Demir, 2008) as a robust well-being predictor. Such companionship has been operationalized as positive interactions with others via social activity (Demir, 2008; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007). As such, the present finding of experiencing together, especially enjoying together, as a predictor of *ikigai* perception lends support to these recent studies. It also extends the importance of social activity to the realm of eudaimonic well-being. Having said this, this line of literature seems void of how effortful social activity contributes to well-being. This may have been because the above studies have focused on hedonic well-being that by definition requires less effort. In addition, the current findings based on comradery versus "family" challenges the utility of the conventional typology of relationships, such as family, friends, and romantic partner. My qualitative findings suggested that depending on situations, all of family members, friends, and partner can become comrades (or "family"). Future quantitative studies can discern the relative importance of different ways to operationalize relationships.

In terms of a theoretical explanation for the link between social activity and well-being, there are a few alternative rationales (Demir et al., 2013). First, activity theory posits that frequent social activity, especially of an informal type, offers opportunities to establish role identities and confirmation of them from others, which in turn leads to positive self-concept and well-being (Lemmon et al., 1972). Another theoretical orientation is to attribute social activity's effect on well-being to its role in satisfying the need for interpersonal relatedness (Baumeister &



Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Based on their literature review, Baumeister and Leary identified two aspects of the need for belonging: pleasant interactions with other individuals and perceived bond with those others. These theories depart in a few important ways from my thesis of experiencing together. First, again, by focusing on “informal” social activity and “pleasant” interactions, these theories seem to overlook the importance of effortful, sometimes even unpleasant (at least immediately) social interactions. Second, both theories directly relate the effect of social activity to an internal psychological mechanism, whether it is role identity and self-concept or need satisfaction. Conversely, my findings suggest that experiencing together both reassures the authentic nature of participants’ relationships and reinforces its authenticity, which in turn enhances the perceived value of their lives. Although such increased value needs to be appraised by individuals (thus, going through an internal mechanism eventually), the focus is on relationships and a life rather than internal state.

The other interpersonal mechanism students use to pursue *ikigai* was *sharing experiences*, or disclosing information about one’s valued experiences with close others who were not involved in the pursuits. This often took place within “family” relationships. This process consisted of two sub-categories: updating close others about one’s *keiken* and seeking consultation and support from them. Not surprisingly, the statistical analyses indicated that sharing experiences was more closely (and positively) related to genuine care than to self-authenticity (see Table 4.12). In particular, the IMPM analysis identified an updating variable (i.e., Share\_Exp2) as a promising candidate for improvement in genuine care through sharing experiences.

The two sub-processes of updating and seeking support are akin to the concept of social support. In the *ikigai* literature, Aoki (2015) found that social support (and social network)

positively impacted perceived life worthiness among older adults. The well-being research has identified perceived social support as a robust predictor of hedonic well-being in various segments of society (Diener et al., 1999; Lakey, 2013), including college students (e.g., Diener & Fujita, 1995). Among studies he reviewed, Lakey observed small positive correlations ( $r = .20$  to  $.40$ ) between perceived social support and life satisfaction or positive affect. Although my quantitative results seem to corroborate these past findings, it is important to note that *sharing experiences* is an active pursuit of support, *not* passive reception of it or just perception of support. This distinction is important because a series of studies have shown that the association between social support and well-being is explained by the nature of a given interpersonal relationship, not enacted support (e.g., Barrera, 1986; Bolger, Zuckerman, & Kessler, 2000; Lakey & Cohen, 2000). A potential explanation for this difference may be that positive emotion arising from perceived support suffices the pursuit of hedonic well-being, whereas the pursuit of *ikigai* or life worthiness requires actual help and subsequent successful experiences.

Comparing *sharing experiences* with theoretical underpinnings of the linkage between social support and well-being reveals some unique contributions of the current findings. One of the widely used explanations of social support's effects on well-being is stress coping. In particular, the buffering thesis postulates that the more social support one perceives, the less likely he or she feels stressed (Lakey, 2013). However, this model has not been well supported empirically (e.g., Lakey & Cronin, 2008; see Coleman, 1993, for an exemplar in leisure studies). More importantly, stress coping as a way to address distress and negative affect seems to have less relevance to perceived *ikigai* (Kumano, 2013), when the latter is conceptualized as positive life assessment.

Lakey and Orehek (2011) proposed a promising theoretical orientation called relational

regulation theory. This theory holds that “people regulate their happiness through ordinary, yet affectively consequential conversation and shared activities” (Lakey, 2013, p. 853). There is emerging evidence for this hypothesis, showing that the relationships between perceived support and positive affect are explained by ordinary conversations and shared activities (e.g., Lakey et al., 2016; Woods et al., 2016). My finding of *sharing experiences* (as well as *experiencing together*) indicates that a similar mechanism applies to the pursuit of *ikigai* and more broadly eudaimonic well-being. Having stated this, a few unique contributions of my studies are: (a) when it comes to eudaimonic well-being such as life worthiness, it is *not* any supportive conversations and activities, *but* those related to people’s *keiken* or valued experiences that matter; and (b) such support is especially important when people face overwhelmingly effortful experiences. In terms of the latter, Feeney and Collins (2015) recently discussed the thriving aspect of social support and its relevance to broadly construed well-being, including the eudaimonic dimension. One fundamental difference is that Feeney and Collins assumed life adversity preceded such thriving-focused support. The current findings suggest that people require support for their effortful experiences on a regular basis, without particular negative life events.

In addition to consultation and support seeking, the sub-component of updating about and reporting on experiences is worth discussing in terms of its theoretical implications. Gable and Reis (2010) theorized “capitalization” or the process through which people share their positive life events with others. Capitalization has been found to positively correlate with positive affect and life satisfaction (Gable et al., 2004), happiness (Demir, Doğan, & Procsal, 2013), and increased intimacy among dyads (Ott et al., 2015). The concept of capitalization echoes the premise of reporting about *keiken* in that sharing information about one’s positive life events

with close others, and receiving positive feedback, magnifies their impacts on his or her well-being. However, the idea of reporting experiences also suggests that such communication does not have to be limited to clearly demarcated “events”, such as the end of a study abroad program, but can be applied to on-going, daily important experiences.

In sum, the sub-theory of *ibasho* or authentic relationships adds the interpersonal dimension to my grounded theory of *ikigai*. Namely, two types of relationships matter: comradery, in which students engage in valued experiences together with close others, and “family”, where students update close others about their experiences and seek their consultation and support. These two interpersonal processes—experiencing together and sharing experiences—positively impact students’ perception of the authenticity of their close relationships: self-authenticity and genuine care.

#### **5.4.3 The sub-theory of directionality**

The third and final mechanism through which Japanese students attained perceived life worthiness is directionality or *houkou-sei*. To realize this perceived association between the present and the past/future, students engage in either cognitive or behavioural associative actions. Cognitively, people relate existing current experiences with their past events or future goals, while behaviourally they strategically choose experiences that seem more relevant to their past or future over other experiences without clear relevance. The quantitative results supported these hypotheses. Cognitive and behavioural associations together explained 48 and 41 percent of the variances in life momentum and life legacy, respectively. Interestingly, the effect sizes suggested that cognitive association seemed to impact life legacy more strongly, while behavioural association appeared to have a stronger influence on life momentum (see Table 4.13).

First, the *ikigai* and well-being literatures have many theories that suggest the importance

of having positive attitudes toward one's future. For example, Kamiya (2004) identified satisfaction of the need for a "bright future" as a mechanism to perceive *ikigai*. However, as her work was focused on people suffering negative life events, she conceptualized bright future as a silver lining amid difficult current situations; in other words, the connection between the present and future was not deemed as a key. Baumeister (1991) considered fulfilment of the need for purpose as a pathway to gain meaning in life. In so doing, he defined the state of having purpose as "interpret[ing] one's current activities in relation to future" (p. 32). As such, his theorization is more consistent with my finding of a cognitive association in that both explicitly refer to the *connection* between present experiences and desired future.

Having said this, the literature is void of references to the role of past experiences in the pursuit of *ikigai* and well-being more generally. An important exception is Kumano's (2012) *ikigai* theory in which meaning-making of the past life events serves as a means to feel life worthiness. This proposition was later empirically supported (Kumano, 2013). Nonetheless, a review of survey instruments to measure this construct (e.g., "I have some past experiences that have contributed to who I am now".) reveals that the scale targets the state in which one perceives a better connection between the past and the present life, rather than the process through which he or she pursues this association. As such, I argue that Kumano (2013) actually measured what I call life legacy, an aspect of *ikigai* perception rather than cognitive association. Thus, the present findings are the first empirical evidence of the importance of cognitive association in the context of *ikigai*.

Another noteworthy line of research related to the concept of cognitive association is meaning-focused coping (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000a; Park, 2010; Park & Folkman, 1997). This framework views that stress arises from the discrepancy between global meaning (e.g.,

beliefs toward the world and self, higher-order goals) and situational meaning (i.e., perceived meaning of a particular environmental encounter). When a gap exists, individuals strive to reduce it by engaging in a range of meaning-making processes, most of which can be considered to be cognitive in nature (Park, 2010). If we are to make an analogy that situational meaning resembles meaning of present experiences and global meaning is akin to one's past, we can make theoretically meaningful comparisons between the meaning-making processes and cognitive association. For instance, Folkman (1997) identified one of four meaning-focused coping strategies as positive reappraisal, that is, "cognitive strategies for reframing a situation to see it in a positive light" (p. 1212). One way to do so is the search for significance or seeing value and worth in seemingly negative, stressful life event (Janoff-Bulman & Frantz, 1997; Park, 2010; Taylor, 1983). If a person can do this, arguably it is easier to reappraise past valuable experiences and draw connections between them and one's current life. Unfortunately, empirical evidence seems lacking in terms of a relationship between meaning-making and well-being. One exception is a study (Alea & Bluck, 2013) that found cognitive meaning-making efforts had a positive impact on optimistic future attitudes among American young adults. It is interesting to note that my findings suggested a stronger relationship between cognitive association and life legacy, or past-present association. A potential explanation is that my Japanese students were culturally past-oriented whereas Americans tend to be more future-oriented—an explanation preferred by some cross-cultural researchers (e.g., Earley, 1997). However, this view has been criticized (Fang, 2003). Future cross-cultural studies can clarify this point.

Second, one can also see theoretical assertions similar to the other mechanism used to pursue directionality, behavioural association, in the relevant literature. For instance, Kumano (2012) referred to the selection of "the way to live" as part of her *ikigai* development theory.

Although she speculated that this process is influenced by one's personal value system, it remains unclear what values specially impact this process and how one should modify his or her way of living to gain increased *ikigai* perception. The present findings specify individual's past experiences and future goals are important reference points for such behavioural changes, and underscore the importance of choosing current life experiences that are consistent with the past and/or future. This issue of consistency along one's life history has been acknowledged in autobiographic research on meaning in life. Essentially, the more coherent a life narrative is, the more meaning one can find in his or her life (Beike & Crone, 2012; McAdams, 2006). Although autobiographic research usually examines a person's past life story, the findings that behavioural association related more strongly to life momentum suggest the relevance of such action to the present-future linkage. Also noteworthy is that Alea and Bluck (2013) explored the relationship between well-being and what they termed "directing behaviour" as a part of meaning-making processes. This construct refers to the use of one's "past to guide future goals and behaviour" (p. 48; also Bluck & Alea, 2011). This variable was found to be positively associated with psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989a, b) among Trinidadians. While my findings provide further credence to this relationship, they expand on it in that future goals also guide present behaviour.

Another important theoretical framework that seems pertinent to behavioural association is self-determination theory (SDT), especially one of its sub-theories called goal contents theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theoretical stance holds that people who pursue intrinsic goals (e.g., personal growth, community) tend to report a higher level of well-being and functioning than those who prefer extrinsic aspirations (e.g., money, appearance) (Ryan et al., 2008). There is ample evidence that supports this positive relationship between intrinsic goals

and well-being (e.g., Niemiec et al., 2009; Nix et al., 1999; Sebire et al., 2009). Moreover, from a meaning in life perspective, Dittmann-Kohli (1991, as cited in Weinstein, Ryan, & Deci, 2012, p. 90) argued that a more coherent life course can be achieved by “making ongoing choices that are in accordance with values, engaging in actions fully, and working to integrate meanings with one’s sense of self”. Thus, the association between intrinsic aspirations and well-being appears applicable to meaning as part of eudaimonic well-being, beyond its relevance to hedonic well-being. My results corroborate this point. To what extent experiences aligned with past events or future goals are perceived as intrinsically motivating is an issue to be explored further; perhaps, it is *not* any past events or future goals that foster successful behavioural association *but* instead things that are intrinsic in nature (e.g., continuing one’s growth than holding on to one’s past fame). It is noteworthy that goals need not be fully intrinsic or autonomous to impact eudaimonic well-being; goal pursuits constrained by external factors can enhance one’s well-being as long as their values are reflectively and thoughtfully endorsed (Ryan et al., 2008, pp. 157-158). It is likely that such reflexive endorsement occurs when one engages in behavioural association by carefully choosing current experiences in relation to the past or future.

In summary, the above discussion illustrates that one can identify theoretical assertions and supporting evidence in the literature on *ikigai* and well-being similar to each of the three processes to pursue *ikigai*. These processes include: value engagement, diversification, balancing, and disengagement within the sub-theory of valued experiences, experiencing together and sharing experiences within the sub-theory of authentic relationships, and cognitive and behavioural association within the sub-theory of directionality. However, also evident herein is that each of these processes is different from existing mechanisms in theoretically meaningful ways, as the former was grounded within the rich qualitative data. Furthermore, it is important to



note that my studies are the first attempt to elaborate on *ikigai* processes at this level of specificity. Finally, the current grounded theory of *ikigai* is unique in that it encompasses these various theoretical tenets.

### **5.5 RQ5: What Precedes the Processes that Japanese University Students Engage in to Pursue *Ikigai* Perception?**

My fifth research question asked: what precedes the processes that Japanese university students engage in to pursue *ikigai* perception? The importance of this question is twofold. First, identification of these conditions places the aforementioned *ikigai* states and processes in a wider theoretical network. This in turn helps to determine the validity of the entire theory and each category, especially the *ikigai* processes as the predecessors directly predict these intervening mechanisms. Second, the addition of the *ikigai* conditions also increases the room for potential interventions in future research or theory-based practice. For instance, if one does not know how to find and engage in potentially valuable experiences, she or he may try to explore its precursors. As such, the following discussion of *ikigai* conditions has both theoretical and practical implications.

#### **5.5.1 The sub-theory of valued experiences**

Within the sub-theory of valued experiences, or *keiken*, two major conditions were qualitatively identified: value understanding and action. The former refers to the state in which students understand what type(s) of experience is valuable for themselves in a given life context. The latter signifies students' ability to act on an opportunity for a potentially valuable experience without hesitation. My quantitative findings suggested that both conditions had a significant impact on value engagement, which in turn influenced the other *ikigai* processes (i.e., value diversification, balancing, and disengagement). Although action exerted a medium-size effect on

value engagement, the effect of value understanding was small in size.

The concept of value understanding seems similar to the idea of autonomous motivation in self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Namely, when one is cognizant of the potential value of an upcoming experience, she or he is more likely to be motivated for the sake of the experience itself. Indeed, Reeve (2006) argued, in relation to autonomy support or an environment conducive to autonomous regulation, that people tend to internalize motivation for a certain behaviour when its value, utility, and rationale are clearly explained (e.g., Reeve & Cheon, 2014; Reeve, Jang, Hardre, & Omura, 2002). The outcome of such explaining is that even though people may not find a given behaviour intrinsically interesting or enjoyable, they are likely to identify with the behaviour, persist in it, and perform it better (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is also important to note that this type of value explanation occurs in social contexts, such as children-parent, student-teacher, and athlete-coach relationships (Ntoumanis, Quested, Reeve, & Cheon, in press). This appears consistent with the current qualitative findings that Japanese students learned the values of experiences they were involved in or about to embark on through their social interactions (see, for example, p. 142).

Having noted the above, it was surprising to find, based on my quantitative results, that value understanding only had a small effect size impact on value engagement. A possible explanation is that understanding important experience values in a certain life circumstance may make students aware of what they are doing wrong as much as things they are doing right. For example, a student may be engaged in a series of enjoyable experiences however, as a fourth year student, she or he may also come to realize there is a need to engage in more effortful experiences. In this situation, the better value understanding may prohibit her or him from valuing the ongoing enjoyable experiences and thus hamper value engagement. Another

possibility is that understanding the value of experiences is not sufficient for students to undertake them. This is consistent with the following findings of action as a stronger predictor of value engagement.

In contrast to value understanding as a cognitive precursor, action is a trait-like condition in that some interviewees attributed how active they were to their personality or life motto (see p. 143). Therefore, a similar psychological concept may be openness to experience. As one of five major personality traits (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1992; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003; Kleiber et al., 2011), openness to experience concerns, for example, the degree to which an individual is willing to try new things. As such, it makes intuitive sense why students with a higher level of openness to experience are more likely to “act on” opportunities for potential experiences and, as a result, report a higher level of value engagement. However, the existing evidence of the relationship between personality traits and well-being indicates that extraversion and neuroticism are stronger predictors of hedonic well-being than openness to experience (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1980; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Hayes & Joseph, 2003; Steel, Schmidt, & Schulz, 2008). Conversely, past studies on eudaimonic well-being have suggested the relevance of openness to experience (e.g., Keyes et al., 2002; Schmutte & Ryff, 1997). The present studies provide a simple explanation for these seemingly inconsistent finds: Openness to experience, like action, disposes people toward value engagement, which in turn enhances their perceived *ikigai* (i.e., life affirmation and vibrancy, specifically) and eudaimonic well-being more broadly. However, acting on many opportunities and trying new experiences may also lead one to encounter boring or even unpleasant situations, which undermines his or her hedonic well-being.

In brief, the two conditions within the valued experiences sub-theory—value understanding and action—showed some preliminary potential to predict value engagement and

the other mechanisms. They also appear to have interesting relationships with existing, major psychological constructs (i.e., autonomous motivation and openness to experience).

### **5.5.2 The sub-theory of authentic relationships**

The sub-theory of authentic relationships, or *ibasho*, identifies two important conditions: value echoing and trust. The former is the awareness that individuals have personal values similar to those of their close others with regard to what experiences are valuable. The latter refers to perceived trust with close others. My qualitative findings suggested that value echoing would facilitate experiencing together while trust would lead to more frequent sharing experiences. Nonetheless, my quantitative results indicated that trust predicted both interpersonal mechanisms better than value echoing (see Table 4.12). Additionally, as the core category of the entire *ikigai* theory, value engagement also served as a condition for experiencing together and sharing experiences.

The literature on *ikigai* appears to be at a rudimentary stage when it comes to understanding the role of interpersonal relationships in the pursuit of life worthiness. Past studies usually listed distinct types of relationships such as family, friends, and significant other as sources (either process or condition) of *ikigai* (e.g., Hasegawa et al., 2015; Kumano, in press). Objective measures of relationship status and number of relationships were also used to predict *ikigai* perception (e.g., Kondo & Kamata, 2004). The well-being literature has, however, long acknowledged that it is relationship quality, and less so quantity, that strongly influences our well-being (e.g., Demir et al., 2013; Lakey, 2013). For example, perceived social support—a robust predictor of well-being—has been found to be positively correlated to perceived similarity between support providers and recipients (e.g., Lakey et al., 2002; Lakey, Ross, Butler, & Bentley, 1996; Neely et al., 2006). This perceived similarity seems akin to the concept of value

echoing. My findings confirm a similar mechanism in the *ikigai* context, where value echoing gives rise to sharing experiences (including support for experience struggles), which in turn impacts people's perceived life worthiness. Moreover, the present findings also indicate that such perceived similarity also promotes social activities, or experiencing together, to a certain extent. However, these effects appear limited once the other condition of trust is taken into account.

Although the importance of trust has not been well recognized within the *ikigai* literature, the construct has recently gained substantial attention in the well-being literature. For example, several national and international large-scale survey studies have reported positive correlations between trust and (hedonic) well-being both at an individual and national level (e.g., Growiec & Growiec, 2014; Helliwell & Wang, 2011; Tokuda, Fujii, & Inoguchi, 2010). This relationship has been replicated within the Japanese population (e.g., Kuroki, 2011; Yamamura, Tsutsui, Yamane, Yamane, & Powdthavee, 2015). A few important differences between my dissertation's studies and these past studies should be noted. First, many previous trust studies focused on general trust and/or trust with strangers (e.g., Helliwell & Wang, 2011; Yamamura et al., 2015), whereas my work underscored the import of trust with students' close others. Second, the current studies extend this association between trust and well-being to the realm of *ikigai* and more eudaimonic well-being. The literature on trust and well-being appears to be at an early stage of development and lacking in well-supported theoretical explanations regarding this linkage. Many studies have used some type of social capital framework (e.g., Yip et al., 2007). Although this framework clearly delineates pathways to generate trust and social capital (e.g., Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000), its explanatory power seems weak when it comes to well-being as a consequence of social capital. This is particularly true when trust is operationalized and measured in relation to general others or strangers who may not interact with individuals on a daily basis. Certainly,

the present studies are not the first documentation of trust in combination with social activities and support. For instance, the widely used McGill friendship questionnaire contains subscales that measure reliable alliance, part of which is assessed by trust items, stimulating companionship, and help (Mendelson & Aboud, 2012). What my findings do is to add causality to the association among these variables: Namely, increased trust among individuals within a close relationship facilitates them to engage in shared valuable activities and support one another, which in turn enhance their perceived life value.

To summarize, two conditions appear to lead to the interactions within authentic relationships: value echoing and trust. Quantitative results indicated that the latter antecedent in particular played a key role. Similar constructs have been identified as predictors of hedonic well-being in the literature. My dissertation's main contributions are that it: (a) clarifies the relevance of the antecedents to *ikigai* perception as a form of eudaimonic well-being, and (b) offers clear theoretical mechanisms by relating the conditions to experiencing together and sharing experiences.

### **5.5.3 The sub-theory of directionality**

Lastly, the sub-theory of directionality or *houkou-sei* specifies two important conditions, each of which is concerned with a specific time point: (a) defining past and (b) clear goals. The former antecedent refers to the state of having important past experiences that substantially impact one's values, perspectives, and sense of self. The latter is the situation in which people set clear goals. The quantitative results supported the positive associations between these conditions and the two directionality mechanisms: cognitive and behavioural association. Interestingly, clear goals appeared to have larger effects on both mechanisms than defining past (see Table 4.13). This may have been because value engagement was included as another condition: It is

logical that defining past experiences would lead to the current valued experiences, and thus they share some common variance. This speculation is consistent with the zero-order findings that defining past had a stronger correlation with value engagement than clear goals ( $r = .56$  and  $.38$ , respectively; see Table 4.8).

Concepts similar to defining past have been discussed by researchers who employ autobiographic research. Beike and Crone (2012) defined self-defining memories as “personally significant”, “high points or key scenes in the life story” that “can arouse emotion that is similar in type and intensity to the original experience” (p. 318). They further contrasted such influential memories with closed memories that may be less impactful and emotional, yet can be flexibly recollected depending on needs of a current life. Past studies have identified positive relationships between certain types of self-defining memories and eudaimonic well-being. For example, McLean and Lilgendahl (2008) found that high-point memories (i.e., experience of very positive emotions either high- or low-arousal) recalled to understand the self were positively correlated to personal growth and purpose in life. Moreover, they revealed that low-point memories positively affected eudaimonic well-being as long as they contained redemptive narratives (i.e., transition from negativity to positivity). After reviewing the relevant research, Bauer, McAdams, and Pals (2008) also argued that those who live eudaimonically tend to emphasize personal growth, transformation, and redemption stories within their defining memories. This positive relationship between certain self-defining memories and eudaimonia may be explained by associated striving success (Moffitt & Singer, 1994); in other words, people who experienced successful events or turned initially negative incidents into positive ones in the past can strive better and more persistently such that they are better able to succeed in current experiences. This mechanism is somewhat analogous to the link between defining past and

behavioural association.

Alternatively, the perceived impact of such self-defining memories can induce largely cognitive, meaning-making process (Wood & Conway, 2006), which is more akin to the relationship between defining past and cognitive association. However, Beike and colleagues proposed an intriguing antithetical perspective in which self-defining memories with vividly lingering emotional experiences offer less room for (re)interpretation, and therefore are less conducive to meaning-making than closed memories (Beike, Adams, & Wirth-Beaumont, 2007; Beike & Crone, 2012; Beike & Wirth-Beaumont, 2005). Although the current findings did not allow this level of specificity regarding whether students have closure on their defining past experiences, the qualitative data did indicate that the interviewees often spoke to experiences with a clear end (e.g., study abroad program, varsity; see p. 186). Perhaps psychological closure could explain the relatively small effects of defining past on cognitive/behavioural association in the quantitative results.

The literature on *ikigai* and well-being has extensively discussed the importance of goals. For instance, Kumano (2012) specified that goal setting was one of five *ikigai* processes, with a subsequent empirical study finding that this process was the strongest predictor of life worthiness perception (Kumano, 2013). In the well-being literature, goals are differentiated from purpose in that the former is concrete, relatively short-term, and involves achievable targets, whereas the latter is long-term, abstract, and can involve an unattainable ideal future state (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009; Shin & Steger, 2014). It seems that well-being researchers have often subsumed goals under purpose, while emphasizing the latter more as well as limiting the importance of goals to goal pursuits as a process to seek and maintain purpose. However, Emmons's (1992) studies discerned that a level of generality of goals was (a) positively correlated to negative



affect, and (b) unrelated to goal attainment, although it had a positive effect on striving effort. Somewhat congruent with Emmons's findings, my interviewees articulated the importance of setting *clear* or concrete goals in their pursuit of *ikigai*. It appeared that concrete goals served as a more solid basis for cognitive and behavioural association for my participants than abstract purpose.

Consistent with the above, Klinger (2012) proposed a construct called "current concern" or "a goal-specific state that lasts until the goal is either reached or relinquished" (p. 40). This state influences people's emotional response to external stimuli, which in turn affects their cognition and behaviour. In other words, current concern drives people to attend to, recall, think of, and do things related to their goals. Klinger suggested that this mechanism forms meaning in life. My findings indicate that current concern may also explain the strong linkages between clear goals and cognitive/behavioural association identified in my quantitative study.

Moreover, developmentally speaking, my participants might not yet have formulated a global, higher-order purpose in their lives. Most of them fell into the developmental category called emerging adults (i.e., 18 to 25 years old), which is characterized by a great deal of identity and role exploration (Arnett, 2000). As such, it is natural that these emerging adults had not yet determined their long-term purposes. Future research in different age groups may find the clarity of goals is less important for, say, older adults' *ikigai* pursuit.

In summary, the two *ikigai* conditions identified within the sub-theory of directionality—defining past and clear goals—were found to positively impact both cognitive and behavioural association. Although clear goals seemed to be more important than defining past, this may have to do with the age group examined in my studies.

## **5.6 RQ6: How Do Different Aspects of Leisure Link to the Relationship among the**

## Processes to and Perception of *Ikigai*?

The last and most important research question asked is: how do different aspects of leisure link to the relationship among the processes to and perception of *ikigai*? This query speaks directly to *how* leisure, if at all, enhances *ikigai* perception. The following discussion is organized based on the three sub-theories and the qualitative and quantitative results that inform and support each.

### 5.6.1 Leisure and the sub-theory of valued experiences

The qualitative findings for the sub-theory of valued experiences or *keiken* indicated that leisure experiences are relevant to all the four *ikigai* processes and, in turn, to life affirmation and vibrancy. Specifically, my analysis suggested that leisure was a life domain where participants could engage with each of the four experience values: enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and comfort. In addition, the students identified their leisure activities as an opportunity for value diversification, either in relation to other (non-leisure) experiences or within a particular leisure engagement. Moreover, leisure activities helped them restore a balance between competing values: enjoyment versus effort, and stimuli versus comfort. Finally, and not surprisingly, casual leisure activities allowed the students to disengage from overwhelming experiences, and regain emotional and physical energy to re-engage with them.

These hypotheses were largely supported by the quantitative findings, with positive relationships being found between four of the *ikigai* processes and the leisure variables (with the leisure time variable being the one exception). The significant leisure variables' effects showed interesting patterns: leisure valuation—the construct specifically developed for this *ikigai* model—had the largest impact on the *ikigai* processes, followed by leisure participation and satisfaction. Importantly here is that the majority of the significant total effects of the leisure

variables on life affirmation and vibrancy were mediated by the *ikigai* processes.

First, with regard to leisure's relevance to value engagement, the existing literature on leisure and well-being offers ample support for this relationship. From a benefits approach, past studies have identified themes related to enjoyment (e.g., enjoyment of nature and of flow), effort (e.g., achievement), stimuli (e.g., excitement seeking and meeting new people), and comfort (e.g., security) as distinct outcomes of leisure and recreation (e.g., Driver et al., 1991; Wankel & Berger, 1991). The enjoyment-effort continuum appears to roughly correspond with Stebbins's (2015) framework, whereby serious leisure experiences offer rewards like self-actualization and casual leisure experiences infuse enjoyment into participants' lives. The stimuli-conform contrast is akin to Iso-Ahola's (1982, 1983; see also Sirgy et al., 2017) leisure needs theory, as he postulated that leisure participants either seek to stimuli or escape from daily concerns.

What distinguishes my dissertation research is that the sub-theory of valued experiences specifies the four values to be pursued both cognitively and behaviourally *through* leisure experiences, not to be distinctive outcomes of leisure participation (Kono, Walker, Ito, & Hagi, in press). Benefits researchers have theorized properties of leisure experiences separately from leisure benefits (Driver et al., 1991; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986). The same premise can be seen in the conceptualization of "reward" in the serious leisure perspective (Stebbins, 2015). As such, my *ikigai* sub-theory identifies that valued leisure experiences itself as a predictor of life worthiness, not leisure's outcomes.

In terms of needs theories, my findings have led me to take issue with the current conceptualization of the need satisfaction process. Needs-based studies assume that satisfaction follows a certain type of leisure behaviour (e.g., the need for seeking stimuli is satisfied by

travel; Iso-Ahola, 1982, 1983). This assumption grants participants with the role to choose a type of activity that can satisfy unmet needs, yet does not elaborate on their roles during actual participation. Contrarily, my qualitative findings indicated that the students were dealing with many potentially valuable leisure experiences at a given time; however, only those in which they thought and behaved accordingly with a certain value (e.g., focus on present moments for enjoyment) qualified as *keiken*. This assertion seems consistent with the quantitative findings that leisure participation was positively related to value engagement, but not as strongly as leisure valuation. Just participating in different types of activities does not produce a high level of value engagement. Subjective valuation of such activities should coincide with participation, or follow participation, or both. This proposition appears to provide a more active role for leisure participants in the pursuit of *keiken*, compared to the needs satisfaction mechanism, during and after their leisure involvement.

The meaning-making perspective also emphasizes more active roles for leisure participants (Iwasaki, 2017; Porter et al., 2010). Porter et al. defined leisure meaning as “a socially and contextually ground[ed] psychological/emotional experience that holds inner significance for an individual that evolves from, or within, the context of leisure” (p. 172). As such, leisure meaning-making, like leisure valuation, largely depends on participants’ subjective evaluation of a particular experience. Moreover, the above definition also suggests that as with leisure valuation, the focus of the meaning-making perspective is on leisure experiences per se, *not* on distinct outcomes. Thus, I maintain that there are more conceptual similarities than differences between the meaning-making approach and my *ikigai* theory. Indeed, past meaning-making studies have identified similar themes as the four experience values described in my dissertation. For example, Iwasaki listed personal growth/transformation and healing as distinct

meaning-making processes, while the former contains effortful-like features and the latter coincides with the term my Japanese interviewees used to describe comfort, *iyashi*. Iwasaki et al. (2015) found that people with mental illness achieved joyful and discovered lives through meaning-making, which had elements of enjoyment and stimuli, respectively. Having noted these similarities, I hold that there is an important theoretical distinction in the ways these frameworks conceptualize underlying mechanisms to pursue well-being. Specifically, the meaning-making framework lists various, seemingly independent “themes” of meaning-making processes (e.g., Iwasaki, 2017; Porter et al., 2010), whereas my *keiken* sub-theory focuses on the four values and elaborates on a few related, dependent mechanisms (i.e., diversification, balancing, and disengagement). Each of these unique mechanisms is discussed more fully below.

In relation to value diversification, many past studies of leisure and well-being list multiple leisure-based benefits, satisfied needs, or meanings and seem to assume—although implicitly—that multiple factors possess a greater influence than any single factor (e.g., Driver et al., 1991; Iwasaki, 2017; Sirgy et al., 2017). My diversification thesis articulates the synergistic effect of engagement with multiple values: A multitude of experience values identified within or across individual experiences have an impact on participants’ perceived *ikigai* above and beyond the mere sum of effects of individual values. The qualitative findings suggested, for example, that serious leisure commitments (e.g., varsity, hobby) often offered effortful experiences, as well as occasional enjoyment (see p. 132). This means that students can diversify values *within* a particular leisure experience. Alternatively, having enjoyable leisure experiences (e.g., hanging out with friends) during effortful studies allowed students to value both types of experiences more than they would have otherwise. The quantitative study identified a significant linkage between leisure valuation and value diversification. Although the non-significance of the other

leisure variables' effects on this *ikigai* process might seem disproving, it should be noted that the effect of value engagement on diversification was taken into account. As such, it appears that the significant effect of leisure valuation on diversification is highly robust.

My qualitative analysis also indicated that a diversity of valued leisure experiences served as a safeguard against losing a dominant experience value during life transitions and diminishing *ikigai* perception drastically. This explanation appears congruent with the theory of substitutability in leisure studies (Brunson & Shelby, 1993; Iso-Ahola, 1986). This theory postulates that the greater one's repertoire of leisure activities and the interchangeability among them in terms of gratifying participants' needs are, the better adjusted the participants are. My diversification thesis expands on this substitutability hypothesis: Substitution does not only rely on characteristics of leisure activities, but also depend on participants' ability to partake in and associate activities with different experience values. This is especially true given the significant impact of leisure valuation on value diversification.

My value balancing hypothesis holds that students who balance enjoyment with effort and stimuli with comfort perceive a higher level of life worthiness, and that leisure helps doing so. The concept of balance appears in the literature on leisure and well-being. And yet, its conceptualization appears to be at a rudimentary stage. For example, Iwasaki (2017) discusses leisure's role in maintaining harmony and balance in life from the meaning-making perspective, but what needs to be balanced remains unclear. The current studies provide preliminary evidence that the two sets of competing values—enjoyment vs. effort, and stimuli vs. comfort—as important targets for balancing. Stebbins (2015, 2016) contends that the balance between serious and casual leisure is the key to an optimal leisure lifestyle. This serious-casual continuum can roughly correspond to the effort-enjoyment contrast; as such, the present findings give credence

to his assertion. Having stated this, my thesis advances Stebbins's thesis in that it extends the importance of leisure-based balancing to the overall life worthiness, beyond an optimal leisure lifestyle. This argument is congruent with the significant indirect effects of leisure valuation, participation, and satisfaction on life affirmation and vibrancy through value balancing.

Lastly, my dissertation studies have demonstrated the relevance of leisure to the value disengagement process through which students detach themselves from overwhelming, often effortful experiences. This value disengagement, or *ikinuki* in the original Japanese expression that denotes "taking a breather", resembles the role of leisure as a breather amid negative life events (Hutchinson, Loy, Kleiber, & Dattilo, 2003; Kleiber, Hutchinson, & Williams, 2002). In the context of everyday life stressors, the leisure stress coping framework (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000a) has indicated that escape-oriented palliative coping helps people mitigate negative effects of stress, which in turn positively impacts overall well-being indicators (e.g., subjective health) (e.g., Iwasaki, 2003, 2006). Hutchinson and Kleiber (2005) underscored the importance of casual leisure in providing stress-buffering effects, which corroborates my qualitative findings. The concepts of stress coping and value disengagement, I further argue, indicate subtle but theoretically important nuances. The stress coping approach assumes that a source of stress is detrimental to one's well-being and coping efforts are to resolve the problem or alleviate its negative influence. Conversely, the value disengagement perspective posits that engaging with effortful experiences itself is benign, but it sometimes becomes "too much" and has an emotional toll depending on their duration and intensity. As such, the purpose of disengagement is *not* to terminate effortful experiences as a source of stress *but* rather to re-engage with them.

It is important to note that according to the initial quantitative results, value disengagement had only a significant effect on life affirmation, and not on life vibrancy.

However, the follow-up analysis revealed that the latter link was moderated by nervousness (see Figure 5.1). This moderating effect appears consistent with the above stress coping literature in that leisure's role in disengagement becomes more salient in stressful life situations. Also noteworthy is that disengagement was the only mechanism on which leisure satisfaction had a larger impact than participation. This may be because the aggregated leisure participation variable confounded leisure activities strongly related to disengagement and other activities weakly correlated to it. A follow-up bivariate correlation analysis between individual leisure activity participation and value disengagement suggested that social leisure had a stronger correlation ( $r = .32$ ) than other types of leisure activity ( $r = .04$  to  $.25$ ). Consistent with the above, Hutchinson and Kleiber (2005) identified casual socialization during leisure as a robust stress buffer.

Beyond this relevance of leisure to the *ikigai* processes, it is important to note that the quantitative results identified several direct, significant effects of the leisure variables on life affirmation and vibrancy. Namely, leisure valuation and satisfaction had a direct effect on life affirmation, whereas leisure participation directly impacted life vibrancy. This may have to do with the fact the former predictors relate to more cognitive aspects of leisure experience, while the latter pertain more to its behavioural aspect. Similarly, one can argue that life affirmation—assessment of how valuable a daily life is—is more cognitively focused than life vibrancy as evaluation of energy and motivation within a current life. It is not surprising to find that *doing* leisure activities frequently can increase positive changes in one's life, with such changes being reflected in the life vibrancy measurement. These direct effects are noteworthy because they remained significant even after controlling for the four *ikigai* processes. These findings add support to my contention that leisure is robustly related to the pursuits of *ikigai* within the valued



experiences dimension.

In brief, both qualitative and quantitative findings revealed that leisure is relevant to the pursuit of life affirmation and vibrancy, especially through the four key mechanisms: value engagement, diversification, balancing, and disengagement. It appears that leisure valuation, participation, and satisfaction consistently and positively influence these mechanisms, while leisure time is virtually unrelated to the processes.

### **5.6.2 Leisure and the sub-theory of authentic relationships**

My studies' findings indicate that leisure is also pertinent to the sub-theory of authentic relationships, or *ibasho*, in which students feel they are able to be true to self and to receive genuine care from close others. The two sub-types of relationships are (a) comradery representing students' relationships with their close others who are also involved in their current valued experiences, and (b) "family" meaning the relationships with close others who do not directly engage in students' *keiken*. Before examining leisure's relevance to interactions within these relationships, it is important to discuss the relationship between leisure and these two specific types of authentic relationships in the extant literature.

On the one hand, it appears that comradery is similar to the social world that serious leisure participants create and maintain based on their unique ethos, values, and norms (Stebbins, 2007; e.g., Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2002; Hunt, 2004). These individuals, by definition, share their serious leisure experiences with other participants. For example, Brown (2007) discovered that serious shag dancers emphasized the importance of comraderies with other dancers as part of maintaining their long-term involvement. In particular, the shared activity made their relationships more enduring than other typical friendships. The serious leisure framework posits that such social interactions with other serious leisure participants lead to the

formation of relationships bound by certain unique social norms and values as well as to various interpersonal rewards, including group accomplishment (Stebbins, 2007, 2015). Certainly, cases like the varsity teams and hobbyist groups in my qualitative study are akin to these serious leisure-based relationships. Having said this, it is important to note that my informants also formed comraderies based on non-leisure experiences, such as study buddies and classmates. Yet, the students engaged in leisure activities with these non-leisure comrades, including travelling with study buddies, which in turn had an impact on their *ikigai* pursuit process and *ikigai* perception. As such, my findings suggest that leisure scholars need to expand the conceptualization and observation of comradery to include relationships not centred on extensive leisure involvement. People have different comraderies, some of which are not based on their leisure pursuits. This, however, does not mean that occasional social leisure activities do not take place within these relationships and that such leisurely socialization is irrelevant to their well-being.

On the other hand, it appears that many of “family”-like relationships have been studied under the family leisure framework in the literature (e.g., Trussell, 2016). Leisure researchers have shown that family leisure can be generally divided into two types: (a) core leisure, which is ordinary low-cost activity; and (b) balance leisure, which is infrequent, novel activity that requires greater resource investment (Kelly, 1999; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). These two types of family leisure are found to have inconsistent effects on family satisfaction (e.g., Agate, Zabriskie, Agate, & Poff, 2009; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). One reason why the evidence regarding well-being is conflicting may be that research focused primarily on the biological, nuclear family relationship is too limited (Trussell, 2016). From the *ibasho* perspective, my qualitative study offers a broader conceptualization of “family” that is based on “caring and

enduring intimate relationships regardless of legal or blood ties” (Baker, 2001, p. 9, as cited in Trussell, 2016, p. 192). My young adult interviewees were more independent of their parents than the children and youth often studied in the literature, and thus more inclined to cultivate their caring relationships with others. In the context of leisure-based affiliation and well-being, Newman et al. (2014) speculated that “the people with whom one affiliates during leisure activities may influence the types of benefits experienced” and that “leisure time with friends increases immediate well-being, while leisure time with a spouse increases global well-being” (p. 569). My findings suggest that at least in the context of *ikigai*, a more relevant distinction in relationships is between comradery and “family”, the social distance from individuals’ current valued experiences.

In terms of how students interact within their authentic relationships, there appears to be two main modes of interactions: (a) *experiencing together*, through which students and their close others engage in and value the same experience (mostly enjoyable and effortful); and (b) *sharing experiences*, through which students inform their close others of their valued experiences. The qualitative results showed that group-based serious leisure activities (e.g., sports, music) facilitated comrades to make efforts together, while authentic interactions in a relaxed leisure context boosted enjoyment among comrades. My informants also updated their close others about how their valued experiences were going and often obtained emotional and instrumental support from them through leisurely communications. The quantitative results partially supported these hypothesized linkages. Although the effects of leisure time and satisfaction were limited to non-significant and minimal respectively, leisure participation and valuation had medium-size effects on both interpersonal mechanisms. Not surprisingly, social activity participation had a much higher impact on the *ikigai* processes than other types of leisure

participation. Somewhat counterintuitive was that the effortful aspect of leisure valuation had the weakest effect on experience together and sharing experiences, although effortful experiences appeared to consist of important part of these processes.

The relationship between leisure and *experiencing together* appears partially consistent with activity theory (Havighurst, 1961; Lemon et al., 1972; Rodríguez et al., 2008). This theory states that frequent participation in and socialization through an informal activity—mostly leisure—leads to greater attachment to social relationships around the experience, which in turn enhances participants’ social identity, roles, and well-being. Past studies have indirectly supported this hypothesis by identifying positive correlations between social leisure participation and well-being (e.g., Brajša-Žganec et al., 2011). There are a few other theoretical explanations with regard to why social interactions during leisure improves well-being, including satisfaction of the need for interpersonal relatedness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000; e.g., Amato, Lundberg, Ward, Schaalje, & Zabriskie, 2016; Walker & Kono, 2018), and the meaning of connection and belonging (Iwasaki, 2017; Porter et al., 2010). Although subtle, an important difference here is that whereas these theories directly attributes positive effects of social leisure to some form of internal, psychological mechanism, the *ibasho* sub-theory holds that such interactions reinforce authentic relationships among comrades. In these enriched relationships, students feel they are being truer to a version of authentic self and cared about by close others. Thus, the *ibasho* theory identifies a social life that shared leisure activities foster acts as a mechanism that improves well-being.

Moreover, the qualitative findings also suggested that the existence of comrades increased the perceived value of interpersonal leisure experiences. Close comradeship makes leisure activities that are otherwise dull highly entertaining, whereas comradeship within

challenging leisure experiences keeps one motivated to continue them. This phenomenon appears to parallel the relationship between the need for relatedness and intrinsic motivation within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When one can satisfy the need for interpersonal relatedness (e.g., feeling understood, connected, and loved) within a certain activity, he or she tends to feel motivated toward the activity itself. Often, the consequences of such intrinsically motivated behaviours are increased enjoyment and better performances (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of leisure, Walker (2008) discovered that relatedness satisfaction fostered intrinsic motivation toward leisure behaviour, especially among female British Canadians (compared with their male counterparts and Chinese Canadians). As such, future research should discern whether the interaction between comradery and valued experiences is limited to certain demographic groups.

Research on the relationship between leisure and *sharing experiences* is also rare in the leisure and well-being literature. One framework that appears relevant to this discussion is social support, or an exchange of resources both emotional and tangible to enhance recipients' well-being (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). Leisure has been identified as a context in which people provide and receive social support, and form a belief that social support is available (Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993; Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000a). Empirical evidence suggests that leisure-based social support is positively related to well-being (e.g., Iso-Ahola & Park, 1996; Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000b). In the current studies, part of sharing experiences was identified as students' interactions to seek both emotional and instrumental support from their close others, especially "family" members. As such, the *ibasho* sub-theory suggests that leisure-based social support is germane not only to hedonic well-being (on which past studies were focused), but also to *ikigai* and eudaimonic well-being broadly. Furthermore, my qualitative findings indicate that

beyond a directly impact of such support on perceived self-authenticity and genuine care, leisure-based support can help students' valued experiences, especially when they face failure and negative emotions related to effortful experiences. This latter moderation hypothesis is somewhat consistent with the extant leisure research that has been focused on social support's buffering effect (e.g., Iso-Ahola & Park, 1996).

The other important part of *sharing experiences* concerns students' attempts to keep their close others informed about their valued experiences. My findings suggest that leisure pertains to this mode of interaction by offering a space for relaxed communication. A similar phenomenon has been studied in terms of social capital (i.e., resources that are formed and maintained through social relations among individuals; Glover, 2016; Glover & Hemingway, 2005). Social capital involves various interaction modes, although “bridging”—“relations of respect and mutuality between people who know that they are not alike in some sociodemographic (or social identity) sense (differing by age, ethnic group, class, etc.)” (Szreter & Woolcok, 2004)—may be particularly pertinent in terms of sharing experiences. Specifically, the students in my qualitative study reported that they kept their parents, mentors, and old friends aware of their experience situations. Noteworthy here, however, is that their parents and mentors often belonged to socio-demographic groups different from that of the students (e.g., older, richer). As such, their updating interactions can be seen as a version of bridging. Regardless of this conceptual similarity, social capital has been rarely studied in relation to well-being in the leisure literature (a notable exception is Son, Yarnal, & Kerstetter, 2010). My findings, therefore, make a unique contribution to this literature by suggesting the relevance of leisure-based social capital to participants' well-being, especially through the act of bridging and updating.

Leisure has been found to be an important context that promotes sociability among

people and thus fosters social capital formation (Glover & Parry, 2008). Consistently, the students in my qualitative study appeared to use relaxed, leisurely interactions (e.g., eating out, chatting via social network applications) as a means to maintain their relationships with, or bridge with, their “family” members who by definition had less daily interactions with them.

Before concluding this subsection, it is important to note that leisure participation, leisure valuation, and leisure satisfaction had significant and direct impacts on both self-authenticity and genuine care. Moreover, the analysis of indirect-to-total effect ratios (i.e., VAF) suggested that while the majority of leisure participation’s and valuation’s effects were mediated by the interpersonal *ikigai* processes, leisure satisfaction’s effect was largely direct. This indicates that leisure satisfaction, or cognitive evaluation of one’s satisfaction with a leisure life, is relatively independent of the *ikigai* processes within the *ibasho* sub-theory.

In summary, both qualitative and quantitative findings converged on the point that leisure is relevant to the development of *ibasho* or authentic relationships through experiencing together and sharing experiences. Moreover, the different aspects of leisure also influence perceived self-authenticity and genuine care both directly and indirectly through the above mechanisms. Specifically, the quantitative results pinpointed leisure activity participation and valuation as two important contributors. Given the largely social nature of contemporary leisure (Kelly, 1983; Newman et al., 2014), this *ibasho* sub-theory suggests a few important processes through which leisure helps people pursue *ikigai* perception.

### **5.6.3 Leisure and the sub-theory of directionality**

Lastly, the relationship between leisure and the sub-theory of directionality or *houkou-sei* was also supported by both my qualitative and quantitative results. Qualitative findings suggested that the students both cognitively and behaviourally constructed associations between

the present and the past/future, often in the context of long-term leisure activities, such as volunteering, sport and cultural clubs, and hobbies. My informants spent a significant amount of time and other resources on these leisure experiences, where they developed a sense of self, meaningful relationships, and desirable goals. Quantitative results revealed that although leisure time and satisfaction had minimal effects on the directionality association processes, leisure participation and valuation had small-to-medium impacts on them. Among leisure activities, participation in social, volunteer, and exercise activities had relatively larger weights when predicting cognitive and behavioural association. These outcomes were consistent with my qualitative findings. Finally, it was somewhat surprising to find that valuing the stimulating, rather than the effortful, aspect of leisure had a larger weight within leisure valuation in the context of predicting these *ikigai* processes.

The above description of long-term leisure based on the qualitative findings corresponds to Stebbins's (2007, 2015) notion of serious leisure. Specifically, some of my interviewees were amateurs (e.g., varsity athletes, musicians, photographers), hobbyists (e.g., gamers, idol group fans), and volunteers, which are considered as prototypical types of serious leisure enthusiasts (Stebbins, 2007). Leisure career, one of the defining qualities of serious leisure, refers to the trajectory of one's leisure participation over an extended period of time through which he or she evolves from neophyte to expert while cultivating knowledge, skills, relationships, and reputation. This sustained engagement makes one's current serious leisure inevitably associated with his or her past experience of the same activity, while allowing him or her to identify future goals related to this long-term pursuit. As such, my qualitative findings strongly indicate the relevance of serious leisure to the pursuit of directionality and better *ikigai*. Having acknowledged this, the effortful aspect of leisure valuation was relatively less impactful than



other aspects, which contradicts the proposition that serious leisure is often characterized by a high level of personal effort (Stebbins, 2007). One possible explanation is that serious leisure itself only provides participants with “ingredients” of association, or experiences in the present and past and future goals. Having these building blocks, however, does not necessitate association among them. As such, they need to further engage in the following processes to make these connections.

Beyond serious involvement, how does leisure relate to the process of *cognitive association* to foster better directionality? Insights from autobiographical research indicate that people may learn better from their past experiences and better make sense of them in social contexts (Reker, Birren & Svensson, 2012). As some leisure scholars argued for the importance of relationships in meaning-making (e.g., Hopper & Iwasaki, 2017), social leisure and resultant positive relationships may facilitate participants to engage in cognitive association more effectively and creatively. This speculation is in line with the quantitative finding that social leisure participation had a relatively larger weight in predicting cognitive (and behavioural) association. Perhaps, other people can help seeing the benefits or significance of a past event that individuals have failed to see. Such a new perspective can facilitate a reappraisal of past experiences that is otherwise implausible.

Apart from social activities, the relevance of enjoyable, comforting, and stimulating leisure experiences to cognitive association may be explained by Fredrickson’s (1998, 2013) broaden-and-build theory. The broadening part of this theory posits that positive emotions, such as joy, contentment, and interest, widen individuals’ thought-action repertoire. Contentment, Fredrickson (1998) maintained, urges people to “integrate recent events and achievements into their overall self-concept and world view” (p. 306). This appraisal is akin to cognitive

association through which one draws clearer and stronger connections between current experiences and the past/future. It is not surprising that enjoyable, comforting, and stimulating leisure experiences produce joy, contentment, and interest. There is emerging evidence that leisure experience, especially in its playful form, generates positive emotions, which in turn yields this broadening effect (e.g., Mitas et al., 2011). As such, positive emotions may explain the linkage between leisure valuation and cognitive association. The positive relationship between positive emotions and meaning in life has been observed in both general (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008) and leisure contexts (Zhang, Shi, Liu, & Miao, 2014).

The relationship between leisure and *behavioural association* indicates that leisure participation is not merely opportunistic, but sometimes strategically arranged action, and that doing so helps participants pursue directionality and a worthy life. A collection of potentially relevant theories appears in the literature on leisure and development/aging (Burnett-Wolle & Godbey, 2007; Kleiber, 2016). Among them, continuity theory predicts that people—especially older individuals—who maintain their favourite leisure activities and associated relationships can maintain well-being (Atchley, 1989). This is especially so when they can maintain perceived continuity in a sense of self and life story, or internal continuity. Studies of leisure and negative life events have shown that people who chose leisure experiences symbolizing the continuity of their past selves and lives often better adapted to stressful situations (Hutchinson et al., 2003; Kleiber et al., 2002). Choosing one's favourite leisure activities involves decision making based on reflections on one's past, and thus qualifies as a type of behavioural association.

The selective optimization with compensation (SOC) framework implies that more strategic decision making is necessary for older adults to maintain well-being (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Burnett-Wolle & Godbey, 2007). Selection refers to “the judicious use of limited

resources, such as energy or time” focusing on courses of action that are consistent with refined goals (Burnett-Wolle & Godbey, 2007, p. 501). Optimization occurs when one maximizes his or her performance by capitalizing on internal and external resources, and compensation describes the process through which one adapts to factors that intervene his or her goal pursuits. Hence, the SOC processes, like behavioural association, require modifications in one’s action in reference to his or her past or future. Specifically, the SOC framework identifies changes in internal and external resources and desired goals among older adults, as factors that prompt behavioural modifications. Evidence shows that older people use SOC in their leisure lives (e.g., Janke, Son, & Payne, 2009). My qualitative findings suggested that my student informants were also aware of their limited resources and the need to wisely use them in their pursuit of directionality. Namely, some interviewees noted that they did not have a luxury of time to indulge themselves to many enjoyable experiences (p. 154). In addition, they were experiencing changes in their goals as they were attempting to determine their long-term goals (e.g., career). Thus, my studies indicate that the behavioural changes the SOC framework identifies are relevant to young adults, and that such changes impact not only hedonic well-being, but also *ikigai* perception and eudaimonic well-being.

Lastly, it is important to note that based on my quantitative results, the leisure variables had several significant, direct effects on both life legacy and momentum: the outcome states of directionality. Specifically, an interesting pattern emerged where the ratios of these direct effects to the corresponding total effects were larger for life legacy than for life momentum (except for leisure time). This means that the two *ikigai* processes here—cognitive and behavioural association—relay leisure’s influences to life momentum or perceived present-future link better.

To conclude this subsection, both qualitative and quantitative results indicate that

cognitive and behavioural associations as mechanisms channel leisure's effects into life legacy and momentum, or the outcome states of directionality. Although the qualitative findings identified leisure episodes akin to serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007) as sources of directionality, the relatively lower relevance of effortful leisure to cognitive and behavioural association left some room for discussion and future investigation. It appeared that it is one thing to become serious about one's leisure pursuits, but it is another thing to make connections between his or her present leisure experiences and past/future.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The overall purpose of my dissertation was to develop a viable theory that explains how leisure, if at all, influences *ikigai* among Japanese university students. To achieve this goal, I conducted sequential, explanatory mixed method research (MMR; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Guided by grounded theory (GT) methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), the first, qualitative, study developed a substantive theory regarding *ikigai* and leisure, based on 27 photo-elicitation interviews (Tinkler, 2013) with Japanese university students. In the second, quantitative, study, I tested this grounded theoretical model of *ikigai* and leisure with a national sample of 672 Japanese students by using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM; Hair et al., 2017).

The overall results suggest that Japanese university students experience *ikigai* in three distinct ways: *keiken* (valued experiences), *ibasho* (authentic relationships), and *houkou-sei* (directionality). According to the first mechanism of *keiken*, (a) students perceive that their daily lives are worth living and full of vibrancy, (b) when they engage in an enjoyable, effortful, stimulating, or comforting experience, diversify these experience values, make a good balance between competing values (e.g., enjoyment vs. effort), and disengage from an overwhelming experience. These *ikigai* processes are further conditioned by (c) their ability to act on opportunities for potentially valuable experiences and understanding of what values are needed in a given situation. In the second mechanism of *ibasho*, (a) students perceive that they can be who they really are and can receive genuine care within their close relationships, (b) when they engage in enjoyable or effortful experiences with their close others and they share with these others the information on what they are experiencing. These interactions are further conditioned by (c) shared experience values between students and their close others, as well as their trust of

those others. Finally, through the third mechanism of *houkou-sei*, (a) students perceive that their daily lives are moving toward the desired future state and grounded on the meaningful past, (b) when they either cognitively or behaviourally associate their present experiences with their past or future. These actions are further conditioned by (c) their defining past experiences as well as clear future goals. Different aspects of leisure—specifically leisure activity participation, leisure valuation, and leisure satisfaction—were found to relate to each of these *ikigai* mechanisms.

In the following sections, I elaborate on the practical implications and limitations of my dissertation, and recommend future research directions. I also conclude my dissertation with a few final remarks. Theoretical implications are not discussed here as the foregoing Discussion section addressed this topic already, due to the heavily theoretical nature of this dissertation.

## **6.1 Practical Implications**

My dissertation has important practical implications for both policy makers and practitioners. First, my findings regarding *ikigai* and leisure can inform policy makers at multiple levels, ranging from national to local. For decades, *ikigai* has been part of the political discourse in Japan, under the name of *ikigai seisaku* (or *ikigai* policy) specifically for older adults (e.g., Kuroiwa, 2001; Uehara, 2005). Often, this discourse mimics neoliberalist logic by suggesting that by enhancing *ikigai* among older adults, we can keep them functioning as active, productive members of society (e.g., healthy, working) and thus save a myriad of social welfare costs (cf. Uehara, 2005). Recently, the Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office (GEBCO; 2016) began shifting the *ikigai* policy's focus from older adults to their middle-aged counterparts. Based on 2012 survey results conducted by COGJ, GEBCO recommended that men be provided with reduced work hours and better vacation systems so that they can more actively participate in housework, child rearing, elder care, and community activities. Their logic was that men's active

involvement in housework and parent would improve the living conditions among women, which then could lead to a society with better gender equity as well as *ikigai*.

Within this *ikigai* policy discourse, the meaning of *ikigai* is often left ambiguous. For example, GEBCO (2016) did not clearly define what they meant by this term. Uehara (2005), in her essay on *ikigai* policies, equated *ikigai* perception to self-actualization. However, this does not correspond to the multi-faceted nature of this construct identified in past studies (e.g., Kondo & Kamata, 1998, 2003; Kumano, 2001, as cited in Kumano, 2012) as well as my dissertation. As such, one major practical contribution of this dissertation is that its findings clarify how *ikigai* feels (e.g., life affirmation, self-authenticity, life momentum) and provide valid measures of these constructs. Moreover, my dissertation pinpointed specific mechanisms through which people can pursue *ikigai* perception (e.g., value engagement, sharing experiences, behavioural association). Past *ikigai* policies merely identified relevant life domains, such as family, work, and leisure (Kuroiwa, 2001, p. 225), while what individuals need to do in these areas was left unclear. Based on my findings, policies can for example suggest that people identify the four experience values—enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and comfort—within their leisure and work experiences while also discussing their valuable experiences with their family members.

Based on the robust relationship between leisure and *ikigai* discovered in this research, I propose that GEBCO (2016) modify their recommendations; that is, reduced work hours among men, as well as women, should not only be used toward different types of work (e.g., housework), but also toward enrichment of their leisure experiences. This is particularly important because *keiken*—or valued experiences as the core category of my *ikigai* theory—suggests that having a variety of experience values and maintaining a good balance among them is the key to a life full of *ikigai*. Leisure appears to be a unique life domain where people can

pursue the different types of experience values, depending on life circumstances. Work, in contrast, seems to be a life domain where effort is dominant, as an academic life was so for my student participants.

Clearly, the political discourse has ignored the relevance of *ikigai* for young adults, including university students (e.g., Kuroiwa, 2001; Uehara, 2005). However, my qualitative findings indicated that today's college students may be an age and cohort group that faces unique issues related to *ikigai*. For example, job hunting at the end of college life forced the vast majority of students to reflect on values of their experiences. At the same time, students could graduate from their universities without obtaining major valuable experiences (e.g., study abroad, extracurricular activity, varsity athletics) if they did not reach out to do so by themselves. In terms of *ibasho*, many informants felt that they were often surrounded by *inauthentic* relationships, where they were concerned about how others viewed their behaviours and remarks for their own sake. Perhaps, this inauthentic mode of interactions was not a critical issue in the past, as previous, more collectivistic generations assumed dependence and interdependence among group members (e.g., Mathews, 1996). In a collectivistic culture, the notion of self-authenticity is "fuzzy" as one can present different aspects of self across social situations (e.g., Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus, 2001). However, my interviewees seemed to presuppose more independent relationships with their close others, even with their family members. Within this individualistic mode of relationship, self-authenticity was found to be a key issue. With regard to *houkou-sei*, students in general have less valued experiences compared with their older counterparts, which may indicate that this age group struggle with finding past-present associations. In contrast, their *ikigai* experience may be more future-focused than their older counterparts.



My dissertation's findings also indicate that it is practical to foster *ikigai* from younger age. The sub-theory of *houkou-sei* dictates that influential experiences in the past are important building blocks for cognitive and behavioural associations, which then results in life legacy. As such, exposing college students to many potentially valuable experiences seems to be an effective way to increase levels of *ikigai* in a society over the long run. The sub-theory of *ibasho* also supports this long-term *ikigai* development policy as arguably it takes time to nurture authentic relationships. Hence, my findings strongly suggest that *ikigai* policies should: (a) extend their scope to young adults including university students to achieve sustainable, long-term growth in *ikigai*, (b) identify leisure as a unique life domain where a variety of experience values and a balance among them can be achieved, and (c) delineate the multifaceted nature of *ikigai* perception as well as a multitude of mechanisms through which people can achieve this state.

The second practical implication arising from my dissertation is the provision of the substantive *ikigai* theory, and its relationship with leisure, supported by the theory and empirical evidence. An important background is the issue of theory- and evidence-based practice in both mental health and leisure fields (e.g., Hemingway & Parr, 2000; Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, & Anton, 2005). Based on my focus on university students, the current theory appears most useful for professionals who work with this population. One such profession is campus recreation. The central role of *keiken* and the four experience values in my *ikigai* theory suggest that it is imperative to educate students about these specific values, and to provide information on where students can find a certain type of experience they may be missing. This can be done within the context of leisure education, or “a developmental process through which an individual develops an understanding of leisure, of self in relation to leisure, and of the relationship among leisure, lifestyle, and society” (Dieser, 2013, p. xv; see also Dattilo, 2015). Often, leisure education

programs include a stage in which participants are encouraged to reflect on values of leisure experiences (e.g., Caldwell, Baldwin, Walls, & Smith, 2004; Dattilo & Hoge, 1999). Campus recreation practitioners can impart this information on the experience values and the importance of balance among the different values to their student clients.

In addition to this information dissemination, another important practice will be to design a campus recreation program in such a way that there will be opportunities to pursue different values. Again, doing so will facilitate student participants to pursue different experience values that are missing in their leisure or other life domains, and find a better balance among them. For example, in a relatively competitive intramural sport program, campus recreation managers can also provide opportunities for participants to enjoy casual social interactions before and after games (e.g., party, game activities). Doing so will provide both effortful and enjoyable experiences. Another strategy is to ensure opportunities for different experience values across different programs and to inform clients of these other programs. For instance, in addition to having long-standing comfort-inducing activities (e.g., yoga course, art class), practitioners may want to have a semester-long program in which each weekly session features different activities. These different programs will serve as sources of comfortable and stimulating experiences. The challenge will be to guide a group of students who partake in one type of programs to other activities. Arguably, some students may be more oriented toward a certain experience value (e.g., competitive students who pursue many effortful experiences). Thus, in addition to educating students about the importance of having different types of experiences, practitioners may consider providing some incentives. For example, offering the first couple of sessions in various programs for free will help students sample different types of experiences. One may create a campaign in which students who tried at least one from each of the four categories of programs

will have a chance to win a lottery, where the categorization is based on the four experience values.

Beyond the sub-theory of *keiken*, the other two sub-theories can also guide practice to improve *ikigai* among university students. In terms of *ibasho*, it is imperative for universities to create a campus environment in which students nurture authentic relationships. One way to do so is to support student group activities. Student groups range from very formal (e.g., student union) to informal (e.g., cultural and sport groups). Perhaps, formal types of student groups may involve more effortful experiences as part of their activities, and, as such, lead student members to form comradery-type relationships. In contrast, informal student groups may offer relaxing atmospheres like “family” relationships over time, where members can discuss challenges they are facing in their effortful experiences outside of these groups (e.g., academic difficulties). The key is to facilitate both of these different types of relationships. Higher education institutions should provide incoming and existing students with the information on various types of student groups and nature of relationships among members.

With regard to *houkou-sei*, it is particularly important to encourage students to periodically reflect on their past experiences, present experiences, and future goals. This can be done by, for example, introducing an online survey, like a course evaluation system, that asks students to reflect on their semester at the end. Instead of focusing only on academics, this survey should prompt students to evaluate a variety of undertakings, including student group activities, daily leisure activities, and interpersonal relationships, in relation to the four experience values. In addition, the survey should ask students to briefly write about their future goals (e.g., career, personal life) at the present moment. The online system should be designed in such a way that students can review their past responses and how their college lives have evolved

through different undertakings. In this manner, this online system will track students' experiences and students can make better connections between their present experiences and their past or future.

Higher education institutions, and campus recreation units in particular, should seriously consider the above recommendations, because again my findings indicate that students may be especially vulnerable to the loss of *ikigai*. Moreover, university students are the population in which mental health issues, such as depression and suicide, persist (e.g., Nishimura et al., 2009; Uchida, 2010). Although we must wait for future research to determine if *ikigai* has preventative and protective effects against mental health issues, the negative correlation between *ikigai* perception and negative affect found in my quantitative study is promising. What is unique about *ikigai* perception compared with existing well-being concepts is that it shifts the focus from purely internal, psychological states (e.g., positive and negative emotion, happiness) to the interaction between mind and external conditions, namely life worthiness. In other words, the question of *ikigai* is not about whether individuals are happy or depressed, but rather about whether they feel they have a life worth living. Valued experiences are the bedrock of this life worthiness. Hence, from an *ikigai* perspective, mental health practice for students should not only be limited to counselling, but also incorporate experiential components. Here is the potential collaboration between student counsellors and campus recreation practitioners. Having students who suffer from mental health issues try some recreation activities, perhaps to lower dosages than other students, may help them realize the value of these experiences and their lives. The support from mental health professionals is imperative here in order to prevent any backlash effects.

In summary, findings from my dissertation deserve attention from both policy makers

and practitioners who work with university students. *Ikigai* policies that focus on *ikigai* among college students and its relationship with leisure can systematically enhance this positive life state in a wider society and community. Campus recreation programs and service delivery systems should be changed so that students can pursue the different experience values.

## 6.2 Limitations

There are several noteworthy limitations inherent in my dissertation. First, my research was focused on the student population. As such, it remains unknown to what extent the current findings apply to different demographic groups. College students are a somewhat unique group in that they tend to be young and come from higher socio-economic status. Second, the present research project was also focused on Japanese students. Although this was a logical decision given that *ikigai* is deeply rooted in the Japanese culture and language (e.g., Kamiya, 2004), some scholars have argued that *ikigai* is applicable to cultures and people outside of Japan (e.g., Mathews, 1996; Wada & Takahashi, 2001). It is unclear to what extent the current findings apply to non-Japanese individuals. Third, my samples for both qualitative and quantitative studies may have been a somewhat biased representation of this targeted population. My qualitative study was limited to students from one private university, while the quantitative study was constrained to students who registered as online survey panelists. Although these different sample characteristics complemented one another, it is possible that both samples were somewhat biased.

There are also at least two important limitations related to other aspects of my studies. Fourth, the first grounded theory study could have benefitted from an extended period of data collection and analysis. This might have been especially so for the sub-theories of *ibasho* and *houkou-sei*. Based on the interpersonal nature of authentic relationships, I could have conducted

interviews with students' parents, friends, and supervising professors to examine whether this authenticity held true for these close others. Doing so would have been consistent with the logic of theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Having said this, I made a decision that the current *ikigai* theory was about students' own *ikigai* and I theorized that as long as students believed in the mutuality of their authentic relationships, these *ibasho* could benefit students' life evaluation. In terms of *houkou-sei*, I could have conducted multi-wave interviews over an extended period of times (e.g., three interviews with the same students over one year) to see whether current experiences become their defining past and lead to achieving future goals. Although not rigorous as this type of multi-wave interviews, the delayed member-checks played the role of follow-up interviews in which many informants referred to the experiences they were going through during the original interviews as important past experiences, or the future goals they had described a year ago as their current experiences.

Fifth, although the new scales developed for the quantitative study went through the expert review procedures (Dunn et al., 1999), their validity and reliability are admittedly still at an early stage. The *ikigai* perception scales went through more rigorous validation process, wherein correlations between these scales and extant well-being scales were scrutinized (Diener et al., 1985; Kondo, 2003; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; Tsai, 2007). However, it is important to further examine how these scales behave in relation to existing eudaimonic well-being scales (e.g., Ryff, 1989a, b; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). The leisure valuation scale did not undergo the same level of scrutiny. It is important to empirically validate this scale in relation to relevant scales, such as the serious leisure inventory (e.g., Gould, Moore, McGuire, & Stebbins, 2008), the Leisure Satisfaction Scale (Beard & Ragheb, 1980), and the leisure meanings gained scale (Porter, 2009). Sixth, my quantitative study was also limited in terms of the number of

leisure-related variables (i.e., leisure time, activity participation, satisfaction, and valuation). Although it would have been theoretically interesting to explore the relationship between *ikigai* and serious leisure, leisure meaning-making, and leisure needs satisfaction, my survey questionnaire was already long due to a large number of *ikigai*-related items. Because of the concern about respondent fatigue and decreased data quality, I decided to focus my survey on the basic leisure variables.

Lastly, my quantitative study was correlational in its nature. Although this study was aimed at testing the explanatory power of my grounded theory, longitudinal and interventional studies will be necessary to examine causal inferences of the current *ikigai* theory more rigorously.

### **6.3 Future Directions**

The above limitations also suggest that there are a number of important and exciting avenues for future research. First, applications of the current *ikigai* theory and its relationship with leisure to different age and cultural groups will substantially advance this line of research. In so doing, future researchers should be aware of a few important issues. In terms of age groups, young adults in the current research may have had different values from their older counterparts. As such, enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and comfort may not be the only types of experiences that middle and older adults consider as valuable. To explore experience values unique to different age groups, qualitative methods will remain effective and necessary for future studies of *ikigai* and leisure. Culture can cause a similar type of variation in experience values. For example, values of affective autonomy—characterized by pleasure and exciting life—are prevalent in English speaking countries (Schwartz, 2014). Based on the well-established high-arousal preference in North America (e.g., Tsai, 2007), Canadians and Americans may, for instance,

value stimuli more than East Asians do, whereas the opposite may be the case for comfort.

Another potential issue with age group is concerned with *houkou-sei* or directionality. Arguably, the older one becomes, the less time he or she has for the future. On the contrary, he or she has more past experiences than younger adults. Thus, among older adults, the past (e.g., defining past) may play a more important role in the pursuit of *ikigai*. Also an interesting possibility is that older adults may consider next generations as their future. As such, the issue of generativity, or “the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (Erickson, 1950, p. 267, as cited in McAdams, 2013), may become paramount among older adults’ directionality. These theoretical possibilities should be explored in the future research. Indeed, McAdams, de St. Aubin, and Logan’s (1993) cross-generational study found that although generativity in general was more salient among middle-aged adults than younger or older counterparts, generativity commitments—characterized by goals and plans related to generativity—were more prominent among older adults.

Other cultural variations may exist in terms of *ibasho* or authentic relationships as well. Insights from cultural psychology suggest that historically Westerners have emphasized the importance of individualistic relationships and consistency in self across different social roles and situations (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kanagawa et al., 2001). As Hamamura (2012) empirically demonstrated, my Japanese university students may have adopted this mode of interactions and relationships as they were exposed to Western values. This raises a question of whether the current *ikigai* theory is applicable to people who live in a more collectivistic culture and have interdependent relationships with others. It is possible that within interdependent relationships, for example, self-authenticity loses its relevance as individuals are allowed to present inconsistency in self across different social roles. Future research should consider this



possibility.

Beyond exploring different segments of the population, there are several interesting, methodological options for future research. First, the longitudinal and interventional research designs will allow future investigators to rigorously examine the causal implications of the current *ikigai* theory and its relationship with leisure (e.g., the *ikigai* processes impact *ikigai* perception, and leisure valuation enhances *ikigai* perception). A good starting point may be to conduct a prospective survey study with college students, where valued experiences, interactions within authentic relationships, and directionality associations from previous time points are used to predict *ikigai* perception in the future. This type of research will clarify temporal limitation of *ikigai* processes' predictive power. For example, a potential research question here could be: Do *ikigai* processes predict their outcomes within a period of months and/or years? A more microscopic analysis into this temporal issue is possible by using experience sampling method (ESM; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 2014; Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007). With technological advancement, now researchers can create a smartphone application that can be installed into their participants' phones; usually, they randomly “buzz” several times a day for a few weeks to collect *ikigai* and leisure data at the moments. Comparing survey data with ESM data will clarify the accuracy and memory bias of retrospective *ikigai* measurement. All these longitudinal designs will further help determine temporal stability of *ikigai* and its relationship with leisure.

Intervention research in the future can address a crucial question of whether we can improve people's *ikigai* perception, especially through leisure experiences. To do such interventions, the leisure education framework (e.g., Caldwell et al., 2004) can be very helpful. Given the fact that value engagement—the basis of *keiken* or valued experiences—involves both

cognitive and behavioural aspects, leisure-based intervention programs should also focus on these two issues. The cognitive aspect of identifying one's leisure experiences with the four values requires educational sessions in which participants are familiarized with the theory. Paralleling with these educational sessions, intervention participants should be given opportunities to engage in different types of leisure activities, each of which is focused on a certain value(s).

In terms of *ibasho* or authentic relationships, an interesting question remains unaddressed: does mutuality of perceived authenticity matter? In other words, does it matter whether both student A and B feel authentic within their friendship in terms of their *ikigai* perception, or is it just each student's subjective evaluation of mutuality that matters? A novel approach to exploring this question would be to adopt social network analysis (e.g., Scott, 2017). We can both qualitatively and quantitatively assess *ibasho* perception among people who are involved in a web of social relations, as well as their *ikigai* perception level and shared leisure participation. It is possible that people who have many mutually authentic relationships tend to have a higher level of shared leisure engagement as well as *ikigai* perception.

To further inspect *houkou-sei* or directionality, it will be important to conduct multi-wave longitudinal interview-based interviews (e.g., Bauer, 2016). By doing so, researchers can obtain an in-depth understanding of how directionality evolves in one's life, how it impacts his or her overall *ikigai* perception, and what roles leisure plays in this process. Of particular interest will be groups of people who are going through life changing events (e.g., school graduation, retirement, marriage/divorce, widowhood, traumatic injuries/diseases). During these transitional periods, people can lose, maintain, and/or enhance connections between the past, present, and future. Extant research suggests that leisure plays pivotal roles in helping people adjust to and

even grow from these life events (e.g., Hutchinson et al., 2003; Kleiber et al., 2002; Kono & Shinew, 2015). As such, it is not too surprising if these roles of leisure extend to people's *ikigai* perception through the mechanism of directionality.

It is also important for future studies to further validate the new scales of *ikigai* and leisure valuation developed in my dissertation. Clearly, it is worth comparing my new *ikigai* scales with existing *ikigai* scales (e.g., Kondo & Kamata, 1998; Kumano, 2013), although I noted some limitations of these extant instruments (see pp. 33 & 261). Additionally, it is noteworthy that each of my *ikigai* perception subscales has similar constructs in the eudaimonic well-being literature. For example, life affirmation may be akin to the significance sub-dimension of meaning in life (MIL), defined as “sense of life’s inherent value and having a life worth living” (Martela & Steger, 2016, p. 534; see also George & Park, 2017, for its measures). Life vibrancy seems to resemble the concept of subjective vitality, or “one’s conscious experience of possessing energy and aliveness” (Ryan & Frederick, 1997, p. 530). Self-authenticity and genuine care may be similar to Ryff’s notion of positive relations with others, where one “has warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others” (2014, p. 12). Life momentum may be aligned with the idea of purpose in life discussed by different eudaimonic theorists (Martela & Steger, 2016; Ryff, 2014). Finally, life legacy may mirror personal growth as Ryff (2014, p. 12) defines it as “a feeling of continued development” and “improvement in self and behavior over time”.

One way to statistically discern whether these similar variables are the same is to use confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Strong correlations at the latent variable level indicate that these similar constructs may mean the same thing at the empirical level. However, advocates for an alternative technique called exploratory structural equation modeling (ESEM) has criticized

CFA for its unrealistic assumption that cross-loadings are zero unless otherwise is specifically specified (e.g., Joshanloo, 2016; Marsh et al., 2014); this feature leads to potentially inflated correlations at the latent level. As such, future validation research should examine whether alternative statistical techniques—for instance CFA and ESEM—suggest the same conclusion regarding the validity of the new *ikigai* measures.

A similar type of validation efforts will be needed for my new leisure validation scale. To begin with, it is important to ensure that this concept is empirically distinguishable from similar constructs, such as leisure satisfaction (Beard & Ragheb, 1980), leisure attitude (Ragheb & Beard, 1982), leisure meaning-making (Porter, 2009), benefits of leisure (e.g., Tinsley, Colbs, Teaff, & Kaufman, 1987; Tinsley, Driver, Ray, & Manfreda, 1986; Tinsley, Kass, & Driver, 1981), leisure needs satisfaction (e.g., Walker & Kono, 2018), and serious leisure (e.g., Gould et al., 2011; Gould et al., 2008). The techniques mentioned above (e.g., CFA, ESEM) can be helpful in this line of research, too. Beyond validity and reliability issues, future researchers should also test a wider nomological model in which a variety of leisure variables including leisure valuation predict *ikigai* perception. A worthy question here is: does leisure valuation add explanatory power to the model *above and beyond* other leisure variables? My quantitative findings seem promising as leisure valuation remained a significant, powerful predictor of *ikigai* perception while controlling for leisure activity participation and leisure satisfaction, that is, the behavioural and cognitive dimensions of leisure. It should be noted that the leisure valuation scale is open to inclusion of different values, depending on demographic and cultural contexts of studies.

Finally, future research should also investigate why leisure may be an important life domain for the pursuit of *ikigai*, as well as other well-being concepts. One hypothesis proposed

in this dissertation is that leisure may be a unique life domain where people can pursue different experience values, and make a better balance among different values by supplementing lacking values. In contrast, other life domains such as work and family may be more geared toward a certain value(s), such as effort. Thus, leisure may be freely value-able. To test this thesis, future studies should investigate multiple life domains at the same time. For example, researchers can measure valuation of leisure and work experiences and examine if scores in the leisure domain generally are higher than or equal to ones in the work domain. They can also focus on a group of people whose lives are predominated by one value (e.g., effort among workaholic employees), and see if their leisure lives seem to compensate the value(s) that is missing (e.g., enjoyment). This line of work will not only empirically justify the importance of leisure in the pursuit of well-being, but also facilitate interdisciplinary work between leisure and other researchers.

In summary, there are many potential avenues of future research. This fact is consistent with my dissertation's position as a "theory development" study. In other words, this dissertation does not establish the *ikigai* theory; rather, it is just the beginning. I strongly recommend that future research both inside and outside of leisure fields adopt, modify, and expand this theoretical framework.

#### **6.4 Concluding Remarks**

I could have written the following paragraphs by pretending that it was a neat pathway to take, like many other research papers: The need to study the topic was clear, and strong theoretical and practical justifications for research initiation existed; the literature was abundant yet gaps within it were apparent; research questions easily arose from the review; the questions guided methodological choices; data collection and analyses went smoothly; and writing of my dissertation reflected this linear progress. However this was not the case.

After reading at least hundreds of articles, I was not able to formulate my dissertation proposal. This project on *ikigai* and leisure was born when my doctoral supervisor Dr. Gordon Walker asked me to name *one word* for my dissertation. Among possibly thousands of ideas I came across during reading, what came to my mind was *ikigai*. Since then, more focused reading revealed that leisure was repeatedly mentioned as a major source of *ikigai* (e.g., COGJ, 1994; CRS, 2012). However, this relationship was left untheorized. I also came to learn that *ikigai* is an issue of practical importance, as having *ikigai* reduces the chance of premature death (e.g., Tomioka et al., 2016). Well-being researchers in the West also happened to note the significance of research on *ikigai* (e.g., Martela & Steger, 2016; Peterson, 2008). Within the leisure studies scholarship, the need for theorizing the process through which leisure impacts well-being especially in cultural contexts was identified (e.g., Iwasaki, 2007). However, all of these supporting facts came to me *after* I chose the topic of *ikigai* with a great deal of help from Dr. Walker.

Retrospectively, I am confident that the relationship between *ikigai* and leisure is a both theoretically and practically important research topic, based on the above facts. My dissertation offers a theoretical starting point to accelerate research on how leisure impacts *ikigai*. Here, in brief, are my answers to the research questions.

Answer 1: Among Japanese university students, *ikigai* perception consists of life affirmation, life vibrancy, self-authenticity, genuine care, life momentum, and life legacy. As such, it appears to have a multifaceted nature.

Answer 2: Leisure valuation, activity participation, and satisfaction, at least, do impact students' *ikigai* perception.

Answer 3: Leisure—especially leisure valuation—strongly influences *ikigai* perception even

after controlling for satisfaction with other life domains. This may be because leisure plays a unique role in the *ikigai* pursuit. Namely, leisure is freely value-able.

Answer 4: Students pursue life affirmation and vibrancy by (a) engaging in enjoyable, effortful, stimulating, or comforting experiences, (b) diversifying experience values, (c) making a balance among competing values, and (d) disengaging from overwhelming experiences. They pursue self-authenticity and genuine care by (e) engaging in valuable experiences with their close others, and (f) sharing information about their own valuable experiences with these others. They further pursue life momentum and legacy by (g) cognitively linking the past, present, and future, and (h) strategically choosing experiences that relate to their past or future. Leisure impacts each one of these processes.

Answer 5: Value engagement is conditioned by students' ability to act on opportunities for potentially valuable experiences, and their understanding of what value(s) is important in a given situation. Experiencing together and sharing experiences arise from shared values between students and their close others, and trust between them. Cognitive and behavioural associations occur when students have defining past experiences and set clear future goals.

Answer 6: The statistical model of leisure and *ikigai* explained the majority of variance in the respective *ikigai* perception.

Answer 7: It appears that participating in leisure activities, feeling satisfied with a leisure life, and most importantly valuing one's leisure experiences positively influence all *ikigai* processes and perceptions directly and/or indirectly.

In summary, therefore, leisure does matter to the pursuit of *ikigai*.

However, once again, my dissertation is a starting point for research on leisure and *ikigai*, and therefore is best seen as an accelerant of theorization of the relationship between leisure and well-being more broadly. The relationship between leisure and many other well-being concepts should be rigorously studied and theorized. To do so, the cross-fertilizing between leisure studies and positive psychology (Mock et al., 2016) should move beyond mere cross-citations to active interdisciplinary collaborations. If we are to seriously study leisure and well-being on a global scale, international collaborations are necessary (e.g., Stodolska, Walker, Xiang, Erwei, & Li, 2014). Both interdisciplinarity and internationality have been discussed as desirable characteristics within the leisure literature, but not yet been truly actualized (e.g., Samdahl, 2010; Samdahl & Kelly, 1999). As such, I believe that the topic of leisure and *ikigai* is a line of inquiry that advances the leisure scholarship in a highly desirable direction.



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## Appendix A

### The Guide for the Semi-Structured Photo-Elicitation Interviews in English

Study Title: “Theorizing Linkages between *Ikigai* and Leisure among Japanese University Students: A Mixed Method Approach using Grounded Theory and Structural Equation Modeling”

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The following is the list of interview questions. Please note that this is a semi-structured interview, so not all of the listed questions may be asked in our actual interview. Also, questions and probes may be added to encourage you to elaborate on topics further. In addition, please note that you can refuse to answer any questions. Finally, you can withdraw from the research project any time without any consequence.

#### 1) Introductory Section

- 1-1) Welcome comment
- 1-2) Quick overview of ethical issues and permission for audio-recordings
- 1-3) How do you think about your *ikigai* now?
  - 1-3-1) Did your view of *ikigai* change through the photo-sharing/-taking/-reflecting process?
  - 1-3-2) If so, how do you think it changed?
- 1-4) How did you enjoy the photo-sharing/-taking/-reflecting process?
  - 1-4-1) Did you have any difficulty (e.g., choosing photos, making captions, answering questions)?
  - 1-4-2) If so, what was the difficulty?
  - 1-4-3) Did it help you to think about your *ikigai*?
  - 1-4-4) If so, how did it help you doing so?

#### 2) Photo-Grouping Activity Section: Copies of photos and short answers are presented

- 2-1) Could you please group your photos in any way that makes the most sense for you?  
Please take your time.  
[After photographs are grouped, the grouping will be photographed with the participant's permission]
- 2-2) Could you tell me about the way you grouped your photographs?
  - 2-2-1) Why did you group your photographs in this way?

- 2-2-2) What do you think had an influence on your grouping photographs in this way?
- 2-2-3) What were you thinking when you were grouping?
- 2-3) Could you tell me what each group means for you?
  - 2-3-1) What do you think made these photographs group together?
  - 2-3-2) How is this group different from others?
  - 2-3-3) How is this group relate to, if at all, to any other group?
  - 2-3-4) Is this group similar to any other groups? If so, which one(s) and how?
- 2-4) If you have to rank the groups in order of their importance to you, how would it look like?
  - 2-4-1) Could you tell me why you ranked them that way? (or, what made you rank this way?)

### 3) Individual Photo-Elaboration Section

- 3-1) Now, I would like you to tell me about individual photographs in each group. Let's start with [photographs in the most important group].
  - 3-1-1) What in this photo is related to your *ikigai*?
  - 3-1-2) Could you tell me what this caption means for you?
- [Repeat this process until all ten photographs are elaborated on]
- 3-2) Now that we talked about all the photos, would you make any changes if you could group them again?
  - 3-2-1) If so, could you group them in the new way?
  - 3-2-2) What made you change your grouping?

### 4) General *Ikigai* Questions and Leisure Questions Section

- 4-1) What do you think made the things in your photos good sources of *ikigai* for you?
  - 4-1-1) Could you tell me how they became good sources of *ikigai* for you?
  - 4-1-2) Can you think of anything that was *ikigai* for you before, but not now?
  - 4-1-3) If so, what happened to such previous sources of *ikigai*?
- 4-2) For you, what does it feel like having *ikigai* in your life?
  - 4-2-1) How do you think *ikigai* influences your life?
  - 4-2-2) How would your life look like if you didn't have these *ikigai*?
- 4-3) Does *ikigai* mean the same thing as happiness (or *shiwase*) for you?
  - 4-3-1) If not, how do you differentiate between their meanings?
  - 4-3-2) If so, what are similarities between *ikigai* and *shiwase* in your view?
- 4-4) What are the things that make you feel *ikigai*?
  - 4-4-1) Do you want to add anything that is not in your photographs?
  - 4-4-2) What common characteristics do you see among these things?
- 4-5) When do you usually feel *ikigai* in your everyday life?
- 4-6) Where do you usually feel *ikigai* in your everyday life?
- 4-7) With whom do you usually feel *ikigai* in your everyday life?
- 4-8) How do you think, if at all, your leisure (or *jiyuujikan-katsudou*, *yoka*, *rejaa*) is related to your *ikigai*?
  - 4-8-1) Could you tell me what such leisure looks like?
  - 4-8-2) What in such leisure do you think lets you feel *ikigai*?
  - 4-8-3) Do any of your photographs represent such leisure?
  - 4-8-4) If you were to locate your leisure in this grouping of photographs, where

would it fit?

4-8-5) How do you think your leisure is similar to or different from other domains of your life (e.g., education, family) in terms of their relationships to *ikigai*?

4-9) How important is leisure to you in terms of *ikigai*?

## 5) Concluding Section

5-1) Can I ask once again how you think of your *ikigai*?

5-1-1) Do you think it changed through this interview process?

5-1-2) If so, how did it change? What made that change?

5-2) Now, if you do the photo-sharing/-taking-reflecting process once again, do you think you would change anything (e.g., contents of photos, processes)?

5-2-1) If so, how would you change?

5-3) In hindsight, would you say anything is missing in your 10 *ikigai* photographs? If so, what would it be?

5-4) What will you do in the future to make your life more full of *ikigai*?

5-5) Is there anything that you want to add or change?

Please indicate whether you give me a permission to use any of your photographs for future paper publication, conference presentation, or teaching material, by signing the separate consent form for photo copy rights.

Thank you for your participation!

Shintaro Kono

Email: [skono@ualberta.ca](mailto:skono@ualberta.ca)

## Appendix B

### The Member-Check Form in English

The research project you participated in, entitled “an interview study of *ikigai* among Tokai University students”, had a total of 27 participants. Based on the data analysis I continued since the last year, I have identified three factors that influence *ikigai*: *keiken*, *ibasho*, and *houkou-sei*. In this round of follow-up questions, I would like you to first read the definitions of these three factors. Then, you will be asked to answer six questions based on those definitions. It is expected to take 30 minutes.

### The Definitions of the Three *Ikigai* Factors

Please read the following definitions of the three *ikigai* factors: *keiken*, *ibasho*, and *houkou-sei*.

*Keiken* ... The state in which you perceive values, such as enjoyment, effort, stimuli, and comfort, within activities that you currently engage in. To further enhance *ikigai*, it is important to actualize not only one value (e.g., only enjoyment), but actualize various values, and make a balance among different values (e.g., a balance between enjoyment and effort).

*Ibasho* ... The state in which close others (including various people such as friends, family members, and teachers) and you feel that both of you can be who you really are and that you care for each other from the bottom of your hearts.

*Houkou-sei* ... The state in which the past, present, and future are clearly linked to one another in your mind. The state in which you understand what influences your past experiences have on your current experiences, life, and self. And the state in which your future goals and ideal views of life and self are connected to your current experiences.

### Follow-Up Questions based on the Above Definitions

Please read each of the following questions, and answer the six questions. In the free descriptions, please include as many things as possible that you think are related to the topics.

1-A) **In your college life so far**, have you had a situation full of “***keiken***” as in the above definition? Could you please describe that situation in detail? What activities did you do, and what value(s) did you find? How do you think such a life with valuable experiences is different from a college life without them?

1-B) How strongly did you feel *ikigai* **when you had a lot of “keiken”** as answered in 1-A? Suppose that a full of *ikigai* is 10 and absence of *ikigai* is 0. Please highlight the number that most corresponds to your *ikigai* level then.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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2-A) **In your college life so far**, have you had a situation full of “*ibasho*” as in the above definition? Could you please describe that situation in detail? With whom did you feel *ibasho*? How did you spend time with those people?

2-B) How strongly did you feel *ikigai* **when you had a lot of “ibasho”** as answered in 1-A? Suppose that a full of *ikigai* is 10 and absence of *ikigai* is 0. Please highlight the number that most corresponds to your *ikigai* level then.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

3-A) **In your college life so far**, have you had a situation full of “*houkou-sei*” as in the above definition? Could you please describe that situation in detail? What past, present, and future was involved in it?

3-B) How strongly did you feel *ikigai* **when you had a lot of “houkou-sei”** as answered in 1-A? Suppose that a full of *ikigai* is 10 and absence of *ikigai* is 0. Please highlight the number that most corresponds to your *ikigai* level then.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

4) Suppose that you have **a friend who is struggling with having “keiken”** as defined above. If that person consults you, what would you recommend to let him or her have “*keiken*”? If you have related experiences, please add them to your answer.

5) Suppose that you have **a friend who is struggling with having “*ibasho*”** as defined above. If that person consults you, what would you recommend to let him or her have “*ibasho*”? If you have related experiences, please add them to your answer.

6) Suppose that you have **a friend who is struggling with having “*houkou-sei*”** as defined above. If that person consults you, what would you recommend to let him or her have “*houkou-sei*”? If you have related experiences, please add them to your answer.

This is the end of the follow-up questions. Thank you very much for your answers. Please send this file to Shintaro Kono at [skono@ualberta.ca](mailto:skono@ualberta.ca)

## Appendix C

### The *Ikigai* Perceptions Scale (English Version)

*Note:* the following items went through the back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1970), based on the original Japanese version. All measurement models were designed to follow the common factor or reflective model.

**Life affirmation:** the perception that one's daily life is worth living.

1. I feel that the life I have now is important to me.
2. I feel that my daily life is meaningful.
3. I feel that my current life is worth living.

**Life vibrancy:** the perception that one's daily life is vibrant and full of energy.

4. I feel that my daily life is full of energy.
5. In my daily life, I feel motivated in general.
6. I feel that every day is different from one another in a good way.

**Self-authenticity:** the perception that in one's close relationships, s/he and close others can be who they really are to each other.

7. In my close relationships, I feel that close others and I can say what we really want to say to each other.
8. In my close relationships, I feel that close others and I can show bad sides of ourselves.
9. In my close relationships, I feel that close others and I can be who we really are.

**Genuine care:** the perception that in one's close relationships, s/he and close others truly care for each other without thinking of personal gains.

10. In my close relationships, I feel that close others and I give heart-warming words to each other.
11. In my close relationships, I feel that close others and I care about each other from the bottom of our hearts.
12. In my close relationships, I feel that close others and I do what we can do for each other without thinking about personal gains.

**Life momentum:** the perception that one's daily life is moving toward the future s/he desires.



13. I feel that my life is heading in a good direction through the daily life I have.

14. I feel that my daily life is leading me to achieve my future goals.

15. I feel that my daily life is related to the future I want.

**Life legacy:** the perception that one's past has contributed to his or her current life.

16. I feel that what I accomplished in the past shaped who I am today.

17. In my daily life, I feel positive influences of my past experiences.

18. I feel that my current life is built on valuable experiences I accumulated in the past.

## Appendix D

### The *Ikigai* Perceptions Scale (Japanese Version)

注：全ての測定モデルは共通因子または反映法を元に作成している。

**生活価値感：**日々の生活は価値のあるものであるという主観的認識。

1. 自分の今の生活が大切だと感じる。
2. 自分の日々の生活に意味を感じる。
3. 自分の今の生活に生きる価値を感じる。

**生活活気感：**日々の生活が活気に満ち、エネルギーに満ちているという主観的認識。

4. 日々の生活が活気に満ちていると感じる。
5. 日々の生活の中で、全体的にやる気を感じる。
6. 毎日が良い変化に富んでいると感じる。

**自己忠実感：**親しい人間関係において、お互い（個人と親しい他者と）が自分らしくいられているという主観的認識。

7. 親しい人間関係において、お互いに本当に言いたいことを言えていると感じる。
8. 親しい人間関係において、お互いの悪いところも見せられていると感じる。
9. 親しい人間関係において、お互いに本当の自分でいられていると感じる。

**まごころ感：**親しい人間関係において、お互い（個人と親しい他者と）が自らの利益を考えずに、相手のことを気遣っているという主観的認識。

10. 親しい人間関係において、お互いに温かい言葉をかけられていると感じる。

11. 親しい人間関係において、お互いのことを心から気にかけていると感じる。
12. 親しい人間関係において、個人の利益は考えずお互いのために出来ることをしていると感じる。

**人生推進感：**日々の生活が自分の望む将来に向かって進んでいるという主観的認識。

13. 日々の生活を通して自分の人生が良い方向に向かっていると感じる。
14. 日々の生活が将来の目標達成に繋がっていると感じる。
15. 日々の生活が自分の望む将来に繋がっていると感じる。

**人生功績感：**個人の過去の経験が今の日々の生活に貢献しているという主観的認識。

16. 過去に成し遂げてきたことが、今の自分を作り上げてきたと感じる。
17. 日々の生活の中で、自分の過去の経験の良い影響を感じる。
18. 過去に積み重ねてきた価値ある経験の上に今の生活があると感じる。

## Appendix E

### The *Ikigai* Processes Inventory (English Version)

*Note:* the following items went through the back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1970), based on the original Japanese version. All measurement models, except for value disengagement, were designed to follow the composite or formative model.

**Value actualization:** the experiential process through which one finds a type of values, such as enjoyment, effort, stimuli, or comfort, in what s/he has been engaged recently.

1. I have enjoyed my recent experiences. (enjoyment)
2. I have felt joy in my recent experiences. (enjoyment)
3. Recently, I have been engaged in experiences that required me to make efforts. (effort)
4. I have strove in my recent experiences. (effort)
5. Recently, I have participated in stimulating experiences. (stimuli)
6. Recently, I have been engaged in novel experiences. (stimuli)
7. Recently, I have had comforting experiences. (comfort)
8. Recently, I have had relieving experiences. (comfort)
9. I have found value in my recent experiences. (global item for the redundancy test; Hair et al., 2017)

**Value diversification:** the experiential process through which one discovers multiple values in his or her recent life either across different undertakings or within a single experience.

10. I have found various types of value (e.g., effort, enjoyment, stimuli, comfort) in my recent experiences.
11. I have recently experienced something that has a variety of value (e.g., effort, enjoyment, stimuli, comfort) to me.

**Value valance:** the experiential process through which one increases and maintains a balance across multiple values in his or her recent life.

12. Through my recent experiences, I have found a good balance between efforts and enjoyment.
13. Through my recent experiences, I have found a good balance between stimulation and comfort.

**Value disengagement:** the experiential process through which one distances him- or herself from overwhelming undertakings, so that s/he can feel rejuvenated and re-engage with the experiences.

14. When I was overwhelmed by some experience, I have done things that served as good diversions.

15. When things were too much, I have taken good breaks.

16. When I felt stuck in my daily life, I have done things to feel refreshed.

**Experiencing together:** the interpersonal process through which one finds value—mostly enjoyment or effort—within experiences in which his or her close others are also engaged.

17. I have enjoyed my experiences more when they were shared with my close others.  
(enjoyment)

18. With my close others, I have enjoyed pretty much anything. (enjoyment)

19. With my close others, I have gone through very difficult experiences. (effort)

20. I have made more efforts than usual when I faced a challenge with my close others.  
(effort)

21. Recently, I have experienced valuable things with my close others. (global item for the redundancy test; Hair et al., 2017)

**Sharing experience:** the interpersonal process through which one shares the information on his or her recent experiences with close others who did not engage in a given experience.

22. I have talked to my close others about my recent experiences.

23. I have shared my recent experiences with my close others.

24. I have turned to my close others for material or emotional support when I faced a problem in my recent experiences.

25. I have asked my close others for advice about my recent experiences.

26. I have been connected to my close others through interactions related to my recent experiences. (global item for the redundancy test; Hair et al., 2017)

**Cognitive association:** the cognitive process through which one associates his or her recent experiences with the past or future.

27. In my mind, I relate what I have recently done to my past valuable experiences. (past)

- 28. I reflect on what positive influences my past experiences have on who I am today. (past)
- 29. In my mind, I associate my recent experiences with my future goals. (future)
- 30. I think of how my recent experiences can lead to a future life I want. (future)
- 31. I think about what recent experiences mean in my long life. (global item for the redundancy test; Hair et al., 2017)

**Behavioural association:** the behavioural process through which one selectively engages in experiences that are relatable with his or her past or future.

- 32. I have participated in things that were related to my past valuable experiences. (past)
- 33. I have been engaged in things where I could use what I learned in my past experiences. (past)
- 34. I have been engaged in things that would lead me to achieve my future goals. (future)
- 35. I have participated in things that would help me get closer to my ideal future life. (future)
- 36. Recently, I have selectively participated in things that appeared meaningful in my long life. (global item for the redundancy test; Hair et al., 2017)

## Appendix F

### The *Ikigai* Processes Inventory (Japanese Version)

注：「息抜き」を除き、全ての測定モデルは形成法（formative）を想定している。

**価値実現化：**楽しみ、頑張り、刺激、そして癒しといった経験の潜在的価値を個人が最近やっていることを通して実現する経験的プロセス。

1. 最近の経験を楽しんでいる。（楽しみ）
2. 最近の経験で喜びを感じている。（楽しみ）
3. 最近、努力が求められる経験をしている。（頑張り）
4. 最近の経験で頑張っている。（頑張り）
5. 最近、刺激的な経験をしている。（刺激）
6. 最近、新鮮な経験をしている。（刺激）
7. 最近、癒される経験をしている。（癒し）
8. 最近、ホッとできる経験をしている。（癒し）
9. 最近の経験に価値を見出している。（Redundancy testのための単一反映法項目; Hair et al., 2017）

**価値多様化：**異なる経験をまたいで又は一つの経験の中で、個人の最近の生活の中で複数の価値を実現する経験的プロセス。

10. 最近経験したことがらの中に様々な価値（例：頑張り、楽しみ、刺激、癒し）を見出している。
11. 多様な価値のある（例：頑張り、楽しみ、刺激、癒し）ことを最近経験している。

**価値均衡化：**個人の最近の生活において実現された多様な価値の中のバランスを良くし、それを保つ経験的过程。

12. 最近の経験では、良いバランスで頑張りと楽しみを両立している。

13. 最近の経験では、良いバランスで刺激と癒しを感じている。

**息抜き：**大変な経験から距離を取ることでリフレッシュされ、再度その経験に取り組めるようにする経験的过程。

14. 何かの経験で思いつめた時は、良い気晴らしになることをしている。

15. 色々と大変になった時には、上手く息抜きしている。

16. 日々の生活の中で行き詰った時に、リフレッシュになることをしている。

**共通の経験：**親しい他者と共有する経験において、個人が親しい他者と一緒に経験の価値、特に頑張りと楽しみを実現する対人过程。

17. 親しい他者と一緒に経験をすることで、その経験をより楽しんでいる。（楽しみ）

18. 親しい他者とは、たいていどんなことでも楽しんでいる。（楽しみ）

19. 親しい他者と一緒なら、とても困難な経験でもやり抜いている。（頑張り）

20. 親しい他者と一緒に挑戦することで、いつもより頑張れている。（頑張り）

21. 最近、親しい他者と一緒に価値あることを経験している。（Redundancy testのための単一

反映法項目; Hair et al., 2017）

**経験の共有：**個人の最近の経験についての情報をその経験に直接関わっていない親しい他者と共有する対人过程。



- 22. 親しい他者に自分の最近の経験について話をしている。
- 23. 親しい他者と自分の最近の経験を共有している。
- 24. 最近の自分の経験で問題に直面した時は、親しい他者に物的または精神的サポートを求めている。
- 25. 最近の自分の経験に関して親しい他者にアドバイスを求めている。
- 26. 最近の自分の経験に関する交流を通じて、親しい他者とつながっている。(Redundancy testのための単一反映法項目; Hair et al., 2017)

**認知的関連付け：**個人の最近の経験を自らの過去や将来と結びつける認知的プロセス。

- 27. 最近していることを過去の価値ある経験と意識的に関連付けている。(過去)
- 28. 過去の経験が今の自分にどのような良い影響を与えているか考えている。(過去)
- 29. 最近の経験を将来の目標と意識的に関連付けている。(将来)
- 30. 最近の経験が、将来自分が送りたい生活にどうつながるか考えている。(将来)
- 31. 長い人生の中で最近の経験にどのような意味があるのか考えている。(Redundancy testのための単一反映法項目; Hair et al., 2017)

**行動的関連付け：**個人の過去や将来に関連付けやすい特定のことを選択的に経験する行動的プロセス。

- 32. 過去の価値ある経験に関連したことを最近している。(過去)
- 33. 過去の経験で学んだことを活かせることを最近している。(過去)
- 34. 将来の目標達成につながる経験を最近している。(将来)
- 35. 理想の将来の生活に近づくのに役立つことを最近している。(将来)

36. 長い人生の中で有意義だと思うことを最近選んで行っている。（Redundancy testのための  
単一反映法項目; Hair et al., 2017）

## Appendix G

### The *Ikigai* Conditions Scale (English Version)

*Note:* the following items were translated by the author based on the original Japanese version; that is, the back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1970) was *not* applied to them. All measurement models were designed to follow the common factor or reflective model. Unlike the above *ikigai* perceptions scale and *ikigai* processes inventory, the following items did not go through the expert review process.

**Value understanding:** the state in which one understands what type of experience is valuable for current self or present life situation.

1. I understand what type of experience is important to me now.
2. I know what type of experience can make my life more valuable.

**Action:** one's ability to act on an opportunity for a potentially valuable experience without overthinking things.

3. I do not overthink things and take an opportunity for a good experience.
4. I find important things to be by getting involved in various things.

**Echoed value:** the state in which one believes that s/he shares similar value systems with close others with whom s/he engages in experiences.

5. My close others and I share find value in similar experiences.
6. My close others and I have similar value systems around what is important in our daily lives.

**Trust:** the state in which one trusts close others enough to share private issues around his or her experiences, such as failures and negative emotions.

7. I trust my close others so that I can talk about private issues.
8. I believe that my close others will help me when I am in trouble.

**Defining past:** the state in which one is aware of past experiences that had substantial impacts on his or her value system and attitude toward a life.

9. I have had a wonderful experience in the past that strongly influenced my value system.
10. In the past, I had a good experience that turned out to be a turning point of my life.

**Clear goals:** the state in which one has a clear idea of what s/he wants to do in the future.

11. I set clear goals for my future.

12. I clearly envision the future life I want.

## Appendix H

### The Ikigai Conditions Scale (Japanese Version)

注：全ての測定モデルは共通因子または反映法を想定している。をまた、以下の項目は上記の生きがい感尺度・生きがいプロセス尺度とは異なり、専門家レビューを経ていない。

**価値理解：**今の自分・生活に対してどんな経験が（潜在的に）価値あるかを理解している状態。

1. 今の自分にとってどんな経験が大切か理解している。
2. どんな経験が自分の生活をより価値あるものにしてくれるか分かっている。

**行動力：**価値ある経験の機会がある時に色々と考えずにまずは行動してみる能力。

3. 良い経験の機会がある時はあまり考えずに取りあえずやってみる。
4. 色々と行動する中から、自分にとって大切なことを見つけている。

**価値の共鳴：**同じ経験に関わっている親しい他者と自分が似た価値を共有しているという認識がある状態。

5. 私と親しい他者は同じような経験に価値を感じている。
6. 私と親しい他者は、日々の生活で何が大切かについて似た価値観を持っている。

**信頼形成：**失敗や負の感情などの経験に関するプライベートな情報を話せるほどの信頼を親しい他者と形成した状況。

7. プライベートな問題を話せるくらい親しい他者を信頼している。
8. 困った時には親しい他者が力になってくれると信じている。

**決定的な過去：**自分の価値観や態度に多大な影響を及ぼした過去の経験を認識している状態。

9. 自分の価値観に強く影響した素晴らしい経験が過去にあった。

10. 過去に、人生の転機となる良い経験があった。

**明確な目標：**自分が将来何をしたいのか明確な考えがある状態。

11. 将来自分が何をしたいのか明確な考えがある。

12. 自分が望む将来の生活像が明確に見えている。

## Appendix I

### The Leisure Valuation Scale (English Version)

*Note:* the following items were created based on the original Japanese version, and were scrutinized through the back-translation process (Brislin, 1970). This scale was designed to follow the reflective-formative higher-order measurement model (Hair et al., 2017; Javis et al., 2003) in which each sub-scale (e.g., enjoyable leisure) is identified as a reflective model and the four sub-scales formatively compose the overall leisure valuation model.

**Enjoyable leisure:** the subjective valuation that one's leisure (or free-time) experience makes one's overall daily life enjoyable.

1. My free-time experiences can make my daily life enjoyable.
2. My free-time experiences can infuse joy into my daily life.
3. During free time, I can experience what I really like.

**Effortful leisure:** the subjective valuation that one's leisure (or free-time) experience allows oneself to make an effort that leads to personal growth and/or goal achievements.

4. I can achieve my goals in my free-time experiences.
5. I can make an effort in my free-time experiences.
6. My free-time experiences give me an opportunity to feel personal growth.

**Stimulating leisure:** the subjective valuation that one's leisure (or free-time) experience makes one's overall daily life stimulating and exciting.

7. My free-time experiences can add novelty to my daily life.
8. My free-time experiences can make my daily life stimulating.
9. During free time, I can experience things I have never done.

**Comforting leisure:** the subjective valuation that one's leisure (or free-time) experience infuses comforting and securing moments in one's overall daily life.

10. My free-time experiences give me a chance to feel secured.
11. My free-time experiences allow me to feel relieved.
12. My free-time experiences are the place in my daily life where I can feel comforted.



## Appendix J

### The Leisure Valuation Scale (Japanese Version)

注：本尺度は反映法—形成法の高次元測定モデルを想定して作られている（Hair et al., 2017; Jarvis et al., 2003）。それぞれの下位尺度（例：楽しみ）がまず反映法で形成され、4つの下位モデルが形成法に沿ってレジャー経験全体の価値感モデルを作成する。

**楽しみ：**個人のレジャー（又は自由時間）経験が日常の生活全体を楽しいものにしてくれるという主観的な価値付け。

1. 自由時間での経験は私の日常生活を楽しいものにしてくれる。
2. 自由時間での経験は私の日常生活に喜びを与えてくれる。
3. 自由時間中に自分が本当に好きなことを経験できる。

**頑張り：**個人のレジャー（又は自由時間）経験において努力することができ、それが個人的成長や目標達成に繋がるという主観的な価値付け。

4. 自由時間の経験で自分の目標を達成できる。
5. 自由時間の経験で努力できる。
6. 自由時間での経験は個人的な成長を感じられる機会である。

**刺激：**個人のレジャー（又は自由時間）経験が日常の生活全体を刺激的で新鮮なものにしてくれるという主観的な価値付け。

7. 自由時間での経験は私の日常生活に新鮮さを与えてくれる。
8. 自由時間での経験は日常生活を刺激的にしてくれる。
9. 自由時間中に自分が今までしたことのないことを経験できる。

**癒し：**個人のレジャー（又は自由時間）経験が日常の生活全体に癒しや安心の瞬間を与えてくれるという主観的な価値付け。

10. 自由時間での経験は自分が安心できる機会である。
11. 自由時間での経験は私をホッとさせてくれる。
12. 自由時間での経験は日常生活の中で癒しを感じられる場である。

## Appendix K

### The Methods to Compute Value Diversification and Value Balancing Global Indicators

#### **Value Diversification**

First, scores of the two items for each value (e.g., enjoyment) were averaged. Second, the average scores were dichotomized, recoding values between 1 and 3 as 0 and values above 3 as 1. Third, the resultant four binary variables were summed up to form the final global indicator of value diversification. In the final variable, for example, individuals who had two 5s and two 1s across the four types of experience values received a value diversification score of 2, whereas those who reported 4 on each of the experience values got a diversification score of 4.

#### **Value Balancing**

Like the value diversification score, first, scores of the two items for each value (e.g., enjoyment) were averaged. Second, the average scores were trichotomized, recoding values between 1 and 3 as 0, values between 3.5 and 4 as 1, and values between 4.5 and 5 as 2. Third, the trichotomy variables for enjoyment and effort were added up, whereas the ones for stimuli and comfort were also summed up, forming two variables that ranged from 0 to 4. Fourth, these variables were recoded as follows: 0 or 1 (i.e., the combinations of 0 and 0, 0 and 1, or 1 and 0) as 0; 2 or 3 (i.e., the combinations of 1 and 1, 1 and 2, or 2 and 1) as 1; and 4 (i.e., the combination of 2 and 2) as 2. The resultant two trichotomy variables were, fifth, added up to create a variable that ranged from 0 to 4. By doing so, if an individual was to get the full score of 4 in the final value balancing variable, she or he had to report the average 4.5 in all four types of experience values. For the final score of 3, she or he had to report the average 4.5 in either the enjoyment-effort pair *or* stimuli-comfort pair, *and* report the average 3.5 on the other pair.

## Appendix L

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting the *Ikigai* Perceptions without the Interpersonal Aspects by Demographic Characteristics, Life Domain Satisfaction, and Leisure-Related Variables

	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	<i>b</i> <sup>*</sup>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i> <sup>*</sup>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i> <sup>*</sup>	<i>SE</i>
1. Sex	.132 **	.059	.049	.045	.020	.042
2. Age	.113	.041	.108*	.031	.085	.028
3. Academic year	.018	.049	-.083	.037	-.049	.034
4. Employment status	.079*	.037	.059*	.028	.048	.026
5. Student group	.138**	.067	.042	.052	.031	.047
6. Varsity	.021	.080	-.017	.061	-.012	.055
7. Academic satisfaction			.338***	.018	.227***	.017
8. Health satisfaction			.108**	.016	.057	.015
9. Economic satisfaction			.020	.017	.031	.016
10. Relationship satisfaction			.209***	.016	.136***	.015
11. Family satisfaction			.209***	.019	.137***	.017
12. Leisure time					-.059*	.006
13. Leisure participation					.108***	.038
14. Leisure satisfaction					.043	.017
15. Leisure valuation					.316***	.034
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.049		.452		.552	
<i>F</i>	6.749***		51.248***		56.033***	

Note. *N* = 672. \* *p* < .05, \*\* *p* < .01, \*\*\* *p* < .001.