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Ikigai and saudade, cultural meanings lived through the body

Igor de Almeida¹, Jamila Rodrigues^{2,3}

¹ Institute for the Future of Human Society, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan

² Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology, Okinawa, Japan

³ NICHIBUNKEN - International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto, Japan

*Corresponding authors:

Igor de Almeida, Institute for the Future of Human Society, 46 Shimoadachi-cho, Yoshida, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-8501 Japan.

Email: dealmeida.igor.b04@kyoto-u.jp

Jamila Rodrigues, Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology, 1919-1 Tancha, Onna-son, Kunigami-gun, Okinawa 904-0495, Japan.

Email: jamila.rodrigues@oist.jp

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Abstract

This study examines culture-specific emotions as embodied experience. Culturally based emotions are often linguistically and conceptually unique to particular groups, which may pose translation challenges. Despite most studies focusing on linguistic and cognitive aspects of emotions, this article posits that embodiment also plays a role in understanding culture-specific emotions. We examine two cultural concepts, *saudade* from Portuguese-speaking cultures and *ikigai* from the Japanese culture, and how they can be part of an embodied experience within each culture. This study sheds light on the idea that although these concepts mean different things for people in their cultural context, the manner in which *saudade* and *ikigai* is articulated is indeed an embodied experience, a body and mind relationship and, source of body knowledge.

Key-words – body, embodiment, emotion, saudade, ikigai

Introduction

Recent studies focus on emotions that are arguably specific to one or a group of cultures, they can be called culture-specific emotions (Mesquita, 2022) or culturally-unique emotions (Niiya et al., 2006), and they are considered an essential part of the cultural manifestations of a given society or culture. While the words related to these emotions are of common use in their native cultures and languages, the same words are sometimes deemed impossible to translate into similar concepts in other languages. Each of these words can be used among native speakers to easily describe and communicate a very specific emotion, that emerges in specific situations in their daily life, but would require a rather verbose explanation of all the intricacies related to the culture, situation, context and feelings involved if one is to describe or communicate the emotion to a person who doesn't speak the language that contains such word (Valsiner, 2007, p. 38). Despite these words being unique and often not translatable, and sometimes the emotion being presented as a key characteristic of a culture; many authors claim that the emotion itself is somewhat universal, as in the cases of Japanese *amae* (Doi, 1973) or German *schadenfreude* (van Dijk and Ouwerkerk, 2014).

Studies on those emotions tend to focus on linguistic or cognitive aspects related to the emotions and the cultures that originated them (i.e, van Dijk and Ouwerkerk, 2014: Doi, 1973; Niiya et al., 2006). In this article we argue that there is another essential dimension that needs to be considered when studying culture-specific emotions – the body, and its embodied experience. To the best of our knowledge, no study has yet focused on analysing and comparing the embodiment of culture-specific emotions. To exemplify our argument, we discuss and analyze two of those emotions from two different cultures – *saudade*, from Portuguese-speaking cultures; and *ikigai*, from the Japanese culture¹. Specifically, we pay attention to the role the embodied experience of these phenomena as narrated by people within their cultural groups.

Saudade is commonly translated into English as “longing”, “homesickness” or “nostalgia”, “yearning” or “missing”; often accompanied by adjectives such as “poignant” or “great”. However, dictionary definitions go beyond those possible translations and describe

¹ Other emotions could be analysed to exemplify embodiment in culturally specific emotions, *saudade* and *ikigai* were chosen by the authors because of their familiarity and expertise on these two emotions. The first author does research regarding *saudade*, and the second author does research regarding *ikigai*. Both authors come from a Portuguese-speaking background and have been living in Japan for many years.

something more specific: “a memory of something that was pleasant but is distant in terms of time or space”; “a feeling of sadness because of someone’s death or because of losing something that one had a strong affection for” (ACL - Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, 2001; Silva, 2012). The Japanese concept of *ikigai*, can be referred to as life experience resulting from evaluating subjective constructions of life purpose, such as a sense of fulfilment, self-actualisation, or joy (Kamiya 1966). Japanese psychologist Mieko Kamiya (1966) definition of *ikigai* is a reason for living or a feeling that arises when people are aware of the value of their existence, but it can also mean general well-being, inner satisfaction, or self-realisation. In sum, this article argues that although these phenomena are culturally conceptualised differently by different cultural groups of people, upon reflection, they rise certain feelings or emotions emerging from its embodied relationship to the self, the other and objects in the world.

Furthermore, just as *saudade* and *ikigai* are deeply rooted in Portuguese and Japanese cultural knowledge, so are other concepts of similar foundational importance in different cultural settings. For example, another well-being concepts that can relate to *ikigai*, is the term ‘Ubuntu’ (loosely translated as “I am, because you are”) in the South African Zulu cultural context (Hayward & Roy, 2019). Ideas of healing, well-being and the self are also discussed in the Brazilian Yoruba religious concept of *axé*, referred to by Brazilians as a life force that flows through the everyday and spiritual worlds, (like the *kami* spirits for Japanese people) binding them together (Seligman, 2014). The objective of this research is to present the importance of embodiment in culturally specific emotions through a literature review of research on *saudade* and *ikigai*.

Bodies, Culture, Embodiment and Emotion

Conceptualisations of the body have been largely dominated across Western literature and discussed as symbolic bodies (Douglas 1970; Csordas 1994), social bodies (Nettleton and Watson 1998) or phenomenological approaches to the body in experiencing illness (Havi 2017) as example. In anthropology, Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) discussed how different cultural groups conceptualized the body and proposed that emotions affect the way in which the body, pain or illness “are experienced and projected in images of the well or poorly functioning social body and body politic” (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987: 28). Scholars noted that although emotions encompass feelings and cognitive orientations, morality, and cultural ideology, they can also, “provide an important ‘missing link’ capable of bridging mind and body,

individual, society, and body politics” (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987: 29). In other words, the authors suggest that emotions connect the various dimensions of what it is to be human; emotions are not confined to either mental or physical aspects but are intricately intertwined. As a result, emotions are catalysts for transforming knowledge into human understanding, as well as intensifying and committing human action. Drawing from anthropology, Clifford Geertz (1973) suggested that human emotion, either individual or collective, public or private, whether repressed or explosively expressed is shaped by cultural meaning. Similarly, in social psychology studies, Batja Mesquita (2022) further suggests that emotions can be regarded as a cultural phenomena because people learn about them (and have them) within their cultural context. People learn how to express emotions in different situations, what emotion to feel in certain contexts, and how to call each emotion as they grow up in their culture, during the socialization process. Thus, each cultural context has its own norms, names and types of manifestations for each emotion. In other words, it is through interaction with others and the world around us that people learn to categorize and experience emotions in certain ways (Mesquita, 2022).

Emotions and or feelings are not fixed concepts; since we are social beings, our social relations are dynamic, unpredictable, and created in cooperation or conflict with others (Lyhne and Wagoner, 2022). For example, Ian Burkitt's (2012; 2014) work on emotions further explains that perceptions happen from a self-observing and the self as a "temporal social construction" (Burkitt, 2014: 108). Thus, the self, and the development of subjective feelings are in constant interrelation with the other (s), meaning that subjective experience happens through other (s) toward the self as in words, actions or body gestures (Burkitt, 2014).

Adding to Burkitt's idea is that culture is also essential to study people behaviour and how humans sense the world. In this sense, behaviour is based on how perceptions of “right” and “wrong” within social groups and societies are constructed, thus, it is a normative phenomenon (Brinkmann, 2010). If we think of culture as, “the norms, values, and standards by which people act, and it includes the ways distinctive in each society of ordering the world and rendering it intelligible (Murphy, 1986:14)” to study culture is to attend to the complexity of communal life and its behavioural patterns, which are interlinked to people's daily life. Thus, we can see how bodies affect the way people perceive and relate to their social world (Valsiner, 2012).

Thomas Csordas's (1990; 1993; 1994) embodiment paradigm explains that the self is always and already embedded in the culture as a process of orientation. Therefore, self and culture are grounded in embodiment. For Csordas, self as process "happens" at the merge of bodily experience, cultural setting and practice, and becomes objectified through language as person in culture (Csordas 1994). He draws from Merleau-Ponty (1962) idea that perception of and interaction with the world is necessarily embodied, thus, the focus on both the materiality and subjectivity of the body. For Csordas this means there is an embodied process of perception, an attention to that which we perceive that is phenomenological by nature, "if our perception ends in objects, the goal of phenomenological anthropology of perception is to capture that moment of transcendence in which perception begins. That moment is constituted by culture" (Csordas, 1990:7). He further uses Bourdieu's (1977) ideas of habitus and the importance of social bodies as the basis for collective existence. In Bourdieu's theory, to internalise a habitus is to internalise dominant social and cultural ideas and the modes of being enshrined therein. Thus, subjects become particular subjects (i.e., racial, gendered) that reinforce, perpetuate, and reproduce the habitus by adhering to and propagating its dominant ideas and socio-cultural modes of expression. For Csordas, perception and practice are central methods of the self. Whereas perception begins with the body at the "preobjective" level and ends when the self is objectified as a person within the culture (a self within the culture), practice represents social life and modes of operation of social life and emphasizes the importance of the embodied subject(s) in its intersubjective domain.

His definition of the self as process is extended in his study of North American charismatic healing rituals, where he focuses on imagination, perception, memory, language and emotion and their semiotic and phenomenological meanings (Csordas 1994). While semiotics focuses mainly on symbolic meaning, Csordas also includes sensory experiences and bodily sensations as intertwined with cultural meanings. He introduces and compares the semiotic or textual approach, which sees the body as a representation, and the embodied approach, which sees the body as a necessity of being in the world (Csordas 1994).

In the textuality paradigm, the meaning of experience is the goal of study, so cultural contexts are mainly structures in which meaning takes shape (e.g. symbols). In the embodiment paradigm, the emphasis is on the phenomenological richness of the experience, which means that cultural contexts are also practices that form an engagement with the unexpected and or transdendent realities (Csordas, 1994). Csordas sees embodiment and

semiotics working together because they both provide information about the culture being studied. Semiotics provides the setting, the framework, through the analysis of language, text, signs or symbols. Embodiment provides the content (the body) through the pre-objective and the habitus, which is the locus of being in the world, and integrates these paradigms through his concept of "somatic modes of attention" (Csordas 1993; 1994).

For Csordas, somatic modes of attention allow us to gather, describe and analyze cultural data from any phenomenological cultural field. Csordas constructs sensory engagement in the context of somatic modes of attention influenced by culture, which include, but are not limited to, proprioception, kinesthethia, imagination, emotion, intuition, and cognition. (Csordas 1993). While Csordas' concept is in line with a broader cultural phenomenological framework, we note that somatic processes are, in general, bodily functions that are essential to the functioning of the organism (voluntary and involuntary). These processes are controlled by the somatic nervous system, which regulates skeletal muscles and mediates sensory and motor functions (Damasio 1999). In sum, Csordas embodied paradigm helps us to investigate how people within their cultural groups experience *ikigai* and *saudade* as cultural phenomenon and part of subjective embodied experience as symbolic and communicative cultural system represented through the body .

Nevertheless, while Csordas explains the self embedded in culture as a process of orientation, others point to a dialogue between culture and self. In psychology and philosophy, Shogo Tanaka (2015; 2018) argues that culture is a mediator of action and that the self 'acts in the world' as a process rooted in the intersection between self and environment, or what he calls the 'ecological self' (Tanaka 2015:34). For Tanaka, an embodied self is necessarily ecological in the sense that, "finds its identity through interaction with the environment" (Tanaka, 2015:35) and later argues that, "culture is not an independent variable but a mediator that guides our embodied interactions with others as a part of the social context" (Tanaka, 2018: 281).

While we recognise that an embodied self results from action in the world and relation with outer elements (i.e., culture, society, people) here we place emphasis on the body as the vessel of communication, the productive starting place for analyzing cultural concepts such as *ikigai* and *saudade*. Essentially, the body is multifaceted in that it is cognitive and affective, while also being the locus of movement and expression. As we receive information through our senses and express it through our actions, both of these pathways are dependent upon

and influenced by culture. In this way, bodies can represent different socio and cultural values, that entail emotion, imagination, verbalization, symbols, and or intuition, all at once. Thus, thinking, perceiving, imagining, and feeling *ikigai* and *saudade* experience are all parts of bodily knowledge.

***Saudade* and its embodiment**

Although being commonly related to the Portuguese language, the word *saudade* is also present in close related languages such as Galician, and in Cape Verdean creole as ‘sodade’, having the exact same meaning in these other languages. As a word commonly used in daily life, and a recurrent theme in poetry, *saudade* was mostly studied by researchers in literature (e.g. Rodrigues, 1967) and philosophy (e.g. Botelho & Teixeira, 1986). For instance, it is a major theme in the poetry of Luis Vaz de Camões from Portugal, and Rosalia de Casto from Galicia; and in the music of Cesaria Evora from Cape Verde, and Vinicius de Moraes from Brazil. It was only in the last decades that *saudade* got attention in Social Science, including psychology.

Previous research on *saudade* focus on various aspects of this emotion, but to our knowledge, none has focused on the embodiment of *saudade*. However, it becomes clear that embodiment constitutes an important facet of *saudade* when we analyze the excerpts used in previous research to exemplify episodes and expressions of *saudade* in literature, music or data from participants in previous studies.

In the poetry of Rosalia de Castro, *saudade* is often depicted as an embodiment of pain derived from the absence of someone. Some examples of it are “a worm that gnaws at my heart’s core”, “I only know it is bliss that pains me”, “always tears come into my eyes ... but deeper pity fills my heart” (Krause, 2012). In a computational analysis of song lyrics from romantic *saudade* themed popular Brazilian songs, Nascimento and Martins (Nascimento & Martins, 2009) classified 458 song lyrics into 5 categories, each with a different kind of *saudade* being represented, where it is originated and when it is felt. The embodiment of *saudade* is perceivable in the lyrics excerpts used to exemplify some of those categories, as in “já é demais, vai, saudade, vai pra nunca mais. vai, saudade, a dor que trago no peito já é demais” [“it is already too much, go away, *saudade*, go away and never come back. Go away, *saudade*, the pain I carry in my chest is already too much”] (authors’ translation) from José Roy e Sérgio Falcão’s “Vai, Saudade”; in “e a saudade a me martirizar, no meu peito já veio morar só pra me ver chorar”[and the longing that martyrs me has come to live in my chest

just to see me cry] (authors' translation) from Dorival Caymmi's "Adeus"; in "*hás de sentir dentro do coração uma triste e suave emoção*"[you will feel a sad and gentle emotion inside your heart] (authors' translation) from Cristóvão de Alencar e Paulo Barbosa's "*Quando a saudade chegar*"; in "*cai a tarde, tristonha e serena, em macio e suave largor, despertando no meu coração a saudade do primeiro amor.*"[he afternoon falls, sad and serene, soft and gentle, awakening in my heart the saudade for my first love] (authors' translation) from Erothildes de Campos e Jona Neves' "*Ave Maria*"; and in "*na sombra triste da noite, a sonhar com os seus lindos olhos a me olhar, vem o soluço da saudade e aflição*"[in the sad shadow of the night, dreaming of your beautiful eyes looking at me, comes the sob of saudade and affliction] from Serrinha's "*Desolação*".

The embodiment of *saudade* is also present in one of the most iconic manifestations of the Portuguese musique culture – fado. In Silva's (2012) linguistic analysis of *saudade* one of the excerpts used to exemplify saudade says "My beloved one said I had a taste of saudade on my lips and in my hair the wind and the freedom were born". While research on artistic representations of saudade is common, there is also a growing body of research on lay people's narratives about saudade, as well as analyses of their conceptualizations of saudade.

Neto and Mullet (2014) did a series of studies to understand how laypersons in Portugal conceptualize *saudade*. In the first study, participants were tasked with listing all features of saudade that came to their mind during a few minutes. In the following study, a separate group of participants evaluated the features described in the previous study in terms of how central or important those features are for the concept of saudade. "Memories" ('*recordações*'), "sadness" ('*tristeza*'), and "missing someone" ('*sentir falta de alguém*') were the terms most frequently mentioned in the first study, indicating the cognitive side of the concept. Despite not as frequently mentioned as the previous ones, concepts denoting embodied characteristics of saudade were considered as highly central for the understanding of the concept, such as "Pain" ("*dor*") , "sense of constriction in the heart" ('*aperto no coração*'), "feeling empty" ('*sensação de vazio*'), "feeling incomplete" ('*sensação de incompleto*'), and "butterflies in stomach" ('*aperto no estômago*').

More recently, Magalhães (2020) interviewed wayfarers from Brazil, people moving along state borders, asking about their lives and inquiring their ways of feeling *saudade*. Despite not all participants talked about *saudade*, a few participants mentioned feeling *saudade* towards someone or something. One participant talked about embodied *saudade*

when he met his daughter after a long period without seeing her - “Oh my God! When I was getting close, my heart started to beat faster. Tum! Tum! Tum! [He gestures in what seems to me as a heart beating strongly in his chest]. Oh, my god [smiling]! It was nine months now: nine months with- out seeing her”. In sum, art representations of *saudade* from different countries, as well as expontaneous descriptions and episodes of *saudade* from lay people show that this emotion is often accompanied by embodied sensations.

Ikigai and its embodiment

The word *ikigai* derives from *ikiru* (生きる) which means “living,” and *gai* (甲斐) meaning “worth doing something” (Kono, 2017). The concept of *ikigai* has been widely studied in psychology studies (Kamiya, 1966; Imai et .al, 2012; Kotera et. al., 2021). Japanese phsycologist Mieko Kamiya refers to *ikigai* as ‘purpose in life’ (Kamiya 1966), and Gordon Matthew’s defined *ikigai* as ‘life worth living’ (Mathews 1996; 2006). However a precise translation of *ikigai* does not exist, since it is rooted in Japanese culture and language (Kamiya, 1966). It is debatable whether and how much *ikigai* is deeply ingrained in Japanese life (Kampitsch (2019), but in Western conceptualizations of psychological well-being, *ikigai* might be connected to concepts of self-actualization (Maslow, 1968), zest in life (Frankl, 1959), and a sense of commitment (Hersey, 1955). Other studies associated *ikigai* with both hedonic and eudaemonic ideas of well-being (Kono, 2017).

The concept has been studied across several disciplines, primarily in large-scale studies that attempt to develop rating scales to measure an individual's level of *ikigai*. Kumano (2010) examined situations in which female college students thought of, felt or desired *ikigai* and analysed data from a large-scale survey in which different valences appeared in relation to different situations: positive, negative, and neutral. Women thought of and desired *ikigai* in stressful, depressing, traumatic, crisis and anxious situations, like when experiencing negative self-appraisal or poor life-work balance. In positive situations, the number of females who felt *ikigai* was higher than that of females who pondered about or wished to have *ikigai*.

Fido et al., (2019) conducted the first cross-cultural and psychology survey study on *ikigai* in the United Kingdom. Along with Western psychometric tools, they used the Ikigai-9², a Japanese psychometric tool developed by Imai et.al, (2012), which was validated and

² Ikigai-9 consists of nine items measuring one's reason for existing through emotions towards one's life, one's future, and the recognition of one's existence.

translated into English. A large-scale survey amongst 349 UK citizens sought to define baseline positive associations between *ikigai* and aspects of mental health such as well-being, happiness, depression, anxiety, and or stress. Findings suggest that although *ikigai* was not correlated with anxiety or stress measures, UK participants also seem to experience it to some degree, “scores on *ikigai* correlated positively with well-being and negatively with depression. Scores for depression, anxiety, and stress were all positively correlated with one another and negatively correlated with well-being” (Fido et.al, 2019 p. 1353).

Research on *ikigai* is mainly studied from a geographical, age, gender, social or mental health perspective, and even cross culturally. Yet, apart from one of the authors study (*Rodrigues, forthcoming*) no studies focused on its embodiment. Though, just like the concept of *saudade*, when we analyse previous literature from participants in other studies, we note that the role of the body and embodiment constitutes an important aspect of *ikigai*.

Kono et al., (2019) conducted a study with 27 Japanese university students and used a mix methods approach to study *ikigai*. Several participants were invited to provide personal accounts of *ikigai* through semi-structured interviews, personal writing and photographic documentation. The authors found that leisure activities were pathways for young people to pursue *ikigai*. Specifically, leisure activity participation, satisfaction with one’s leisure life, and positive evaluation of leisure experiences had greater levels of *ikigai* perception (Kono et al., 2019). For their participants, *ikigai* was regarded as a stimulating experience, and there are cases when participants discuss body movement, such as playing tennis or the piano, engage in team sports or walking the dog (Kono et al., 2019). For example, one of their participants describes attending a rock festival and, “jumping three hours straight” wish for “this moment would have lasted forever”. Another participant maintained, “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” . Others describe bread-making as coping mechanism to deal with stress: “I really like making breads. I got into it. ... I mix [dough] without thinking of anything else and that helps relieving stress” (Kono et al., 2019: 242).

Whereas the authors note that the immersion into the present moment helped their participants to take their minds off daily stress, we also note that these activities (as *ikigai*) are an embodied experience. For these participants, the body becomes the platform of *ikigai* knowledge were bodily experiences such as jumping, cooking bread, walking the dog or simply moving the body without thinking are valued experiences of enjoyment and wellbeing in life.

Tong's (2018) ethnographic work amidst a group of Japanese elderly, investigates karaoke classrooms as what he refers to as 'musicking activities'. He claims these activities are individual and social experiences through which people can attain a sense of *ikigai* and wellbeing. Tong conceptualises 'musicking' as any activity that involves music, whether by performing, listening, rehearsing or practicing, composing, or even dancing. The author mentions that karaoke provided opportunities for his participants to maintain and even create new individual and social identities for themselves, and it was a large part of their participants' idea of *ikigai*. For some of their participants, singing karaoke was an important activity through which they could re-kindle romantic feelings and explore the sensual and emotional intimacies of passionate love which had by now disappeared from their long-term marriages (Tong, 2018). In this sense, romantic aspects of karaoke participation allowed people to construct musical meaning, achieve musical experiences of flow, as embodied actions toward enhancing *ikigai*.

Interestingly, *ikigai* can also be evoked during crisis situations, for example, when people are experiencing traumatic events and lose their *ikigai*. In other words, *ikigai* can be both temporal and situational. For example, in an ethnographic work from one of the authors, amidst a group of Japanese people, participants were asked about feelings evoked by *ikigai* and, finding *ikigai* in times of crisis (Rodrigues, forthcoming) Participants described body vibration, followed by strong emotions or feelings of accelerating and or calmness immersed from the body as experiencing *ikigai*. Sometimes participants use specific Japanese expressions to express their ideas, other times they would begin with "I cannot find the words", or "I don't know if this is right" (Rodrigues, forthcoming).

Overall, the above studies suggest *ikigai* experience as self-knowledge and the ways in which people perceive and act in socio-cultural settings. It shows us, for example, how people come to think about and desire *ikigai* in different life situations (e.g. stress, trauma), or how individual and social identities are constructed in relation to the idea of *ikigai*. However, while the *ikigai* phenomenon seems to be studied mainly from a quantitative approach and or within geographical, age, gender, social or mental health dimensions (with a few cases of cross-cultural research), focusing only on these dimensions overlooks the *ikigai* experience as a bodily response and what the nature of this bodily experience might be. Apart from one of the authors study (Rodrigues, forthcoming) no studies focused on its embodiment.

However, as with the concept of *saudade*, when we analyse previous literature from participants in other studies, we find that the role of the body and embodiment is an important aspect of *ikigai*. By taking an embodied approach to this phenomenon, we move away from merely socio-cultural dimensions or quantitative measures of *ikigai*, to appreciate embodied knowledge as a means of understanding the different dimensions of what living well means to people, and how the body plays a crucial role in this process.

Relating *saudade* and *ikigai*

Although distinct and coming from distant cultures, *saudade* and *ikigai* share some basic features for being emotions and concepts frequently related to the core of each's respective culture. There are several possible sources or triggers for each of these concepts, and specific characteristics in their manifestation. Common to *ikigai* and *saudade* is that they seem to occur when people reflect on the emotion and connect it with certain aspects of their lives, activities, people, situations, or the environment. A fundamental characteristic of *ikigai*, is that is interpreted differently by individuals experience and the context in which it occurs (Kamiya 1966; Matthews 1996); while a fundamental characteristic of *saudade* is that it is usually directed to a specific object, person or situation (e.g., Neto and Mullet, 2014; Magalhães, 2020). We note that there are specific sensations in certain parts of the body for *ikigai* and for *saudade*. Based on previous research, two tables were created to summarize and compare these general features (Table 1), and embodiment (Table 2), of *saudade* and *ikigai*.

Table 1
Features of *ikigai* and *saudade*.

Ikigai		Saudade	
Sources/ triggers	Characteristics	Sources/ triggers	Characteristics
Family	Temporal	Family	Long-term
Friends	Not fixed	Friends	Good and bad at the
Job	Dimensions of the self	Food	same time
Community	and others	Places (i.e., hometown)	In relation to
Social Events	Different meanings		others/events/actions
Environment (i.e.,	Individualised		Ambiguous
nature walks, sea,)	Good feeling/ Positive		

Note: Sources and triggers of *saudade* are usually only in the mind of the person who feels *saudade* i.e., not physically present. Features based on previous research on *ikigai* (Kono, 2017; Tong, 2018; Fido et al., 2019;)

and *saudade* (Krause,2012; Magalhães, 2020; Nascimento & Martins, 2009; Neto and Mullet, 2014; and Silva, 2012).

Table 2

Body related aspects of *ikigai* and *saudade*.

Ikigai		Saudade	
<u>Body parts</u>	<u>Embodied experience</u>	<u>Body parts</u>	<u>Embodied experience</u>
Chest	Vibration	Heart	Pain
Heart (or <i>kokoro</i> in Japanese terms)	Vibration	Chest	Agony
			Emptiness
Belly	Butterflies	Chest	Tightness
Centre of the body	Undulation	Lips	Taste
All body (sometimes refer as body and mind)	Calm	Belly	Butterflies
	Peace		
	Stimulating		
	Fulfilling		

Note: Body related aspects based on previous research on *ikigai* (Kono, 2017; Tong, 2018; Fido et al., 2019;) and *saudade* (Krause,2012; Magalhães, 2020; Nascimento & Martins, 2009; Neto and Mullet, 2014; and Silva, 2012).

Further, *ikigai* can be regarded as continuous process of negotiating roles and relationships. For example, studies amidst Japanese women suggest that *ikigai* is recognised as a process to finding harmony and or balance in their pursuit for social and individual fulfilment (Saint Arnault and Shimabukuro, 2016). Kavedžija (2019) used *ikigai* to investigate how retired Japanese people “come to see their lives as meaningful despite the many challenges they must confront”. Results suggest that central to the elderly’s ideas of *ikigai* is, for example, seeking independence while also seeking care from, and its sources was strongle connected with the community.

As for *saudade*, personal memories of someone they love or a pleasant event or situations that reminds one of the objects of *saudade* (e.g., a song, a photo, or a certain food) would elicit it. Similary, *ikigai* sometimes can be related to a source, an activity that provides enjoyment and self-satisfaction or to an object that can trigger feeling *ikigai* (Kamiya 1966). Our argument is that cultural ideas of *ikigai* and *saudade* are related to bodily experiences.

Discussion and conclusion

The argument presented in this article is based on the premise that the way individuals sense cultural phenomena such as *ikigai* and *saudade*, is also a bodily experience. We argue that upon inner awareness, people can identify, and attribute bodily experience and body-based expressions associated to feelings of *saudade* or joy from having *ikigai*.

Even though culturally different, these phenomena are embodied experiences involving a somatic response (i.e., fast heart rate), a cognitive dimension (i.e., sadness derived from missing someone) and symbolically represented through the body (i.e., the image of *ikigai/saudade* raising from the chest, belly, heart). Thus, the body is at the centre of these experiences. Departing from these ideas, cultural perceptions of *saudade* and *ikigai* can give rise to certain embodied emotions and feelings that reflect people's ways of thinking about the world, in other words, cultural behaviour can be source of body knowledge, similarly to Csordas'(1993) ideas.

The above analysed narratives indicate that subjectivity and the material body are intrinsically linked to the self, as bodies are never simply objects, but are part of a process in which the self is understood as always and already immersed in culture, thus, both self and culture are grounded in embodiment (Csordas, 1994). In this way, the ideas people share about *saudade* and *ikigai* show us how cultural concepts are imagined, constructed and represented through their bodies. If we are to study phenomena like *ikigai* and *saudade* experience, we need to place the body at its centre, because the experience comes from people's perceptions, orientation, and engagement with the world.

By focusing on *saudade* and *ikigai* as narrated by people within their cultural groups we can better understand how humans frame their bodies and how these experiences shape part of people's cultural world. Having this said, we are also aware that this study has limitations. Although *saudade* and *ikigai* are words with no concrete equivalent in a given other language, we are aware that untranslatability as such is a contested phenomenon by linguists who claim that it is hard to find exact translations for most words (Hatim & Munday 2004). On this note, we also do not reduce *saudade* and *ikigai* as phenomenon's that only certain groups of people can feel. Missing someone or something and having in joy in life are all part of human nature. However, in global and complex systems, people must draw from various sources of cultural wisdom to empower themselves to "be agents of their own change" (Bilash, 2019: 259). Although these words and ideas mean different things for people in their

given cultural context, the manner in which people tend to articulate about *saudade* and *ikigai* are both an embodied experience, a body and mind relationship, and source of body knowledge.

This study has several implications to cultural psychology and related fields. Emotions are an essential part of human culture, they help us communicate with others and teach us how to navigate the human relationships in our cultures (Mesquita, 2022). Migrants have to learn how to navigate other cultures' emotion norms (De Leersnyder et al., 2011). Thus taking embodiment of culturally specific emotions into consideration is important for the understanding of how people learn, develop and express their emotions in their cultures, as well as how people learn new emotion cultural norms and adapt to other cultures.

Related to this point, we can also consider the implications of the present study for the field of clinical psychology. Ryder and colleagues (2011) have argued about the importance of considering one's culture when conducting therapy. Since values, norms and expectations differ across cultures, it is expected that the way that psychological disorders and treatments will also differ accordingly. It is essential that therapists take it into consideration when dealing with patients from foreign cultures.

In his book about *amae*, Doi (1973) describes this culturally specific emotion from Japan relating it to the way that Japanese people establish and maintain their relationships. Although *amae* being an emotion deeply rooted in Japanese culture, Doi's (1973) book on it is also an important work on the human psyche, stemming from an emic approach from a non-western culture (see Berry, 2013 for a discussion). Doi (1973) gives several examples of how *amae* can be manifested (p. 20) in non-Japanese cultures such as in the form of "passive love" (p. 20). Also, there is an example of a patient who had to resort to the Japanese culturally specific emotion *amae* when explaining her child's symptoms for the lack of such word and concept in English (Doi, 1973, p. 18). Hence, studying culturally specific emotions is important to understand not only the culture that originated it, but also to understand humans living in other cultures.

Following the argument of the above mentioned researchers (and our own work) we argue that it is important to study not only the cognitive aspects of those emotions, but also the embodiment involved in the experience.

Lastly, similarly to the above mentioned applications in research and clinical psychology, the results presented here can be used by practitioners in related fields that deal

directly with humans and culture such as policy making, education, health services, organisational training, and so on. We would refer, in particular, to scholars interested in exploring body and mind experiences in conditions such as illness, sickness, pain, depression or grief, for example, which are all packed with different kinds of emotion. Practitioners can also utilise it to help others suffering from a lack of direction or purpose, disembodiment, distress and the effects of loss and trauma. Knowing and analysing alternative ways of having emotions through embodiment allows new perspectives on one's own emotions and cultural practices. Thus, analyses of life events and their embodied emotions offer a key to understanding the body, the self, society and culture.

The review presented here has limitations. Firstly, the results presented here are limited to the embodiment phenomenon of two culturally specific emotions – *saudade* and *ikigai*. Although the authors believe that this phenomenon should be present in other culturally specific emotions, future studies should be done to examine this possibility. Secondly, previous research presented here did not focus on embodiment, in most cases it wasn't even mentioned. In spite of that, the embodiment of emotions emerged from the narratives contained in the analysed research. Because of this review methodology, the authors were not able to completely uncover the ways of embodiment of each studied emotion. Thus, future research has plenty of room to explore.

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