The Facets of Meaningful Experiences: An Examination of Purpose and Coherence in Meaningful and Meaningless Events

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Abstract

Research on meaning has begun to assess the specific facets of meaning in life. Few studies have examined the extent to which these facets distinguish meaning at the level of individual events. In the present study, participants from Singapore and the U.S. wrote about meaningful and meaningless events and rated the extent to which they experienced purpose, coherence, positive and negative implications for self and others, positive affect, and negative affect. In both samples, meaningful and meaningless events differed most in their levels of positive affect, purpose, and positive implications for the self. When entered as predictors of overall event meaningfulness, purpose and positive affect independently predicted meaning. Measures of coherence did not predict the meaningfulness of event with one exception. The extent to which an event offered a new understanding predicted meaning above and beyond purpose and PA. Implications for meaning assessment and theories of meaning are discussed.

Keywords: meaning, purpose, coherence, significance, positive affect, events

The Facets of Meaningful Experience: An Examination of Purpose and Coherence in Meaningful and Meaningless Events

The experience of meaning in life is associated with a range of positive outcomes such as well-being, health and mortality (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006; Krause, 2009). Much of this research has focused on overall sense of meaning in life. A possible criticism of assessments of meaning is that simply asking respondents to evaluate how meaningful their life is may overlook the complexities of the construct (Leontiev, 2013). With the aim of clarifying *meaning* and enabling more sophisticated theory development and research, several scholars have articulated distinct components or facets of meaning. An emerging consensus appears to be that the experience of meaning consists of a cognitive component reflected in a sense of *coherence* or perception that one's life and experiences are comprehensible; and a motivational component reflected in a sense of *purpose* (i.e., the presence of valued goals; George & Park, 2016; Martela & Steger, 2016; Wong, 2012). Other components of meaning have also been proposed. Reker and Wong (2012) suggested an emotional component of meaning consisting of feelings of happiness and satisfaction that derive from the ability to make sense of experiences and pursue goals. In contrast, a number of scholars have referred to the sense of *significance* or *mattering* and its role in the experience of meaning (George & Park, 2016; Janoff-Bulman & McPherson Frantz, 1997; King, Hicks, Krull, & Del Gaiso, 2006; Martela & Steger, 2016).

Recently, George and Park (2017) developed the Multidimensional Existential Meaning Scale (MEMS) to assess specific components of meaning (i.e., comprehension, purpose, and mattering). They provided evidence for the utility of measuring individual components of meaning by showing that each facet was (i) uniquely associated with measures of overall meaning in life; and (ii) correlated with distinct but theoretically relevant constructs (e.g.,

comprehension was more strongly associated with self-concept clarity than were the other two facets). The MEMS and other multidimensional scales (e.g., the Multidimensional Meaning in Life Scale [MMIL]; Costin & Vignoles, *in press*) are important contributions to the assessment of meaning, opening the door to research on the antecedents, consequences, and stability of specific aspects of meaning and their contribution to overall meaning. Despite this advantage, these multidimensional scales are similar to the scales that preceded them (e.g., Battista & Almond, 1973; Steger al al., 2006; Wong, 1998) in their focus on respondents' life as a whole. For example, both the MEMS and MMIL ask respondents whether they are able to make sense of the things that happen *in their lives* (comprehension) and whether they have compelling *life goals* (purpose).

To date, there have been few facet-level analyses of meaning at the level of individual experiences—especially with regard to how these facets relate to the meaningfulness of an event. Although the literature has highlighted the importance of meaning in life, such judgments are often assumed to be derived at least partly from the meaning experienced in specific events and activities. As Reker and Wong (2012) noted, "It is not meaningful to talk about life as a whole as having meaning; life contains only meanings that are actualized through specific activities, quests, and goals" (p. 746). Their point was that a full understanding of meaning requires an investigation of *both* top-down and bottom-up processes. In studying such processes, it is helpful to distinguish between global meaning and situational meaning (Park, 2010; Reker & Wong, 2012). Global meaning refers to the broad set of beliefs, goals, and frameworks that enable people to experience life as generally comprehensible and purposeful. Situational meaning refers to the appraised meaning and significance of a particular event. The relation between situational meaning and global meaning has important theoretical and applied implications. For example,

the experience of trauma can be understood as an upheaval in the alignment between global meaning systems and the situational meaning of the traumatic event ("shattered assumptions"; Janoff-Bulman & McPherson Frantz, 1997, p.95). Interventions and therapies aimed at helping trauma victims may focus on the specific actions and activities they can do to restore meaning in their lives (Janoff-Bulman & McPherson Frantz, 1997; Reker & Wong, 2012). The intention is not to convince victims overnight that life remains meaningful—but to help them recover meaning in life through specific daily activities as well as through the reinspection of their appraisals of the traumatic event when appropriate.

Just as research and theory on overall meaning in life has benefited from the measurement of specific facets of meaning, we believe research on situational meaning will also benefit from a better understanding of the facets that underlie meaningful experiences. Single experiences can vary in the degree to which they are comprehended or infused with purpose; either of these facets in turn may influence the meaningfulness of the event. Though it is possible that the facets contributing to a meaningful *life* also contribute to a meaningful *experience*, such an assumption runs the risk of an ecological fallacy: the assumption that relationships observed at one level of analysis (e.g., group means) also apply at a lower level of analysis (e.g., individual behavior). For example, some negative events may induce negative affect but still be appraised as meaningful (Tov & Lee, 2016); however, high average levels of negative affect are generally associated with lower levels of meaning in life (Steger et al., 2006). Thus, the facets that are associated with meaningful experiences should be tested empirically, and not inferred from research on meaning in life as a whole.

In the present study, we instructed participants to write about meaningful and meaningless experiences. We then compared the extent to which purpose, coherence, and other

possible facets of meaning differed between these experiences and evaluated their unique contribution to the overall meaningfulness of an experience.

Possible Facets of Meaningful Events

Given the prominence of purpose and coherence in many conceptualizations of meaning (Costin & Vignoles, in press; George & Park, 2016; King et al., 2006; Martela & Steger, 2016; Reker & Wong, 2012; Wong, 2012), we examined the extent to which these facets were experienced in meaningful versus meaningless events. A sense of purpose is often thought to arise in the pursuit of important goals. However, people sometimes report new purposes or goals as a result of particular experiences (Baumeister, 1991). This distinction does not arise when meaning is assessed in life as a whole, but it does arise when examining meaning at the level of events. Therefore, we asked participants to evaluate the sense of purpose they experienced both during and after an event.

Typically, the coherence or comprehensibility of an event is defined as the extent to which people are able to make sense of their experiences. In addition, several theories emphasize the consistency of experiences with global beliefs, values, and expectations (Heine, Proulx, & Vohs, 2006; Janoff-Bulman & McPherson Frantz, 1997; Park, 2010; Reker & Wong, 2012). Threats to meaning may arise when actions and experience conflict with the frameworks that people use to evaluate and interpret events. Thus, coherence was operationalized not only in terms of how much people were able to make sense of an event but also in terms of the degree to which the experience reinforced their knowledge, beliefs, and values.

Another proposed facet of meaning has been called *significance*. But various scholars using this term have defined it in somewhat different ways. King et al. (2006) referred to meaning as involving a feeling that life has a “significance beyond the trivial or momentary” (p.

180). Martela and Steger (2016) more specifically referred to significance as the sense that one's life has value and is worth living. George and Park (2016) referred to this facet as *mattering* and described it as the extent to which one's existence is felt to be significant, important, and of value. Whereas the aforementioned theorists defined significance with respect to life as a whole, Janoff-Bulman and McPherson Frantz (1997) discussed significance more generally as "whether something is of value or worth" (p. 91). They gave examples of how trauma survivors gradually come to see a value or significance in their negative experience. This can include revising their assumptions about themselves and the world, and inspiring a greater appreciation for life more generally. This view of significance is similar to benefit finding—a form of meaning construal that occurs at the level of events (Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larson, 1998). Coming from the perspective of single experiences, we similarly viewed significance as the extent to which an event had positive implications for a person's life. We also examined whether events had positive implications for people other than the self, given previous work suggesting the importance of self-transcendence and serving others as critical sources of meaning (Reker & Wong, 2012).

Recent studies have shown that meaning is enhanced by thoughts of the future (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013; Tov & Lee, 2016; Waytz, Hershfield, & Tamir, 2015). This is consistent with Baumeister's (1991) contention that meaning ultimately involves a connection between concepts and ideas. Life is meaningful to the extent that the present is connected to the past (e.g., one's past actions have contributed to present outcomes), as well as to the future (e.g., present actions contribute to future goals). An important insight from Waytz et al.'s (2015) research is that the mere act of mentally simulating either the past or future can enhance meaning. If so, it may be that even negative implications of an event (for self or others)

contribute to the perceived meaningfulness of an event. This assumes that recognizing such implications involves mental simulation of either the past or future. We tested this possibility in our study.

Finally, positive affect (PA) appears to be a strong correlate of meaning in life (Steger et al., 2006) as well as daily experiences of meaning (King et al., 2006; Tov & Lee, 2016). King et al. (2006) provided evidence that PA may have a causal effect on the experience of meaning (King et al., 2006). In Reker and Wong's (2012) model, PA is included as a third (affective) component of meaning arising from the cognitive and motivational components. Consequently, we examine the extent to which meaningful and meaningful experiences differed in PA and negative affect (NA).

Method

We conducted a repeated-measures experiment in which participants wrote about two personal events—one meaningful and one meaningless. For each event, they also rated the degree to which they experienced various facets of meaning and affect. In addition to increasing the statistical power of our design, we were interested in comparing how much each facet differed between meaningful and meaningless experiences. Such a comparison might indicate the facets that are most salient in the experience of event-level meaning.

Participants

Two samples were recruited for the experiment. Sample 1 consisted of 146 undergraduate students (100 females) from Singapore Management University (SMU). The SMU sample ranged from 18 to 28 years old (M = 21.10, SD = 1.84) and was predominantly Chinese (79.5%) with another 16.4% from other Asian ethnic groups (e.g., Indian, Malay, etc.). Sample 2 initially consisted of 99 U.S. workers from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Data from nine workers

were excluded after research assistants discovered that the "experiences" they wrote about were copied and pasted from various blogs and websites on the Internet. (No such cases were identified in the SMU sample). The final sample consisted of 90 workers (35 females), ranging from 21 to 63 years old (M = 32.48, SD = 8.52). The MTurk sample was predominantly European American (63.3%), but also included African American (12.2%), Asian American (12.2%), and people of other ethnicities (9%).

Measures and Materials

Unless noted otherwise, items were rated on seven-point scales (0 = *not at all*, 6 = *extremely*).

Writing tasks. Participants were instructed to write both a meaningful and meaningless experience. We stressed to participants that we were interested in their own understanding of what a meaningful (meaningless) experience was, "no matter how temporary or enduring" it may have been. Participants were asked to describe both the content of the event (what happened) as well as their reasoning (why they considered it to be meaningful [meaningless]). There was no time limit for these tasks but a minimum of 75 characters had to be written before participants could proceed.

Meaningfulness. Participants rated "how meaningful each event or experience" was.

Purpose. Two items measured the sense of purpose experienced during and after the experience.

Coherence. Sense of coherence was measured using two items. The first asked "How well were you able make sense of your experience (i.e., you could understand what happened and why)?" The second item asked "How much did the experience help you understand something that you didn't understand before?"

Consistency with knowledge, values, and beliefs. As an alternative measure of coherence, participants were asked how much the experience affected their knowledge, values, or beliefs (KVB). Ratings were made separately for *knowledge* ("e.g., your understanding of certain concepts and ideas"), *values* ("e.g., what you feel to be important in life"), and *beliefs* ("e.g., what you consider to be true about yourself, people, or the world in general"). The scale ranged from -3 (*It completely challenged my KVB*) to 0 (*It had NO effect*) to +3 (*It completely reinforced/strengthened my KVB*).

Implications of the event. Participants rated how much the event had positive and negative implications for their life going forward. They also rated how much the event had positive and negative implications for other people. In the instructions, we provided examples of "implications" (e.g., changing the way one does something, changing how one feels about someone or something, preventing something good or bad from happening).

Affective experience. Participants rated the extent to which they felt three positive emotions (*good, pleasant, positive*) and three negative emotions (*bad, unpleasant, negative*) during the event. Item responses were averaged into separate scores for PA (α_{SMU} = .97; α_{MTurk}= .98) and NA (α_{SMU} = .96; α_{MTurk}= .98).

Procedure

Although all participants wrote about a meaningful and meaningless event, which one they wrote first was randomly assigned across participants. After writing about a meaningful (meaningless) event, participants rated that event on its overall meaningfulness, facets of meaning, and affective experience. Next, they wrote about a meaningless (meaningful) event and completed the same ratings used previously. Finally, they completed a set of demographic questions.

Results

Meaningful versus Meaningless Experiences

Mean comparisons between meaningful and meaningless events on all measures are presented in Tables 1 and 2 for Samples 1 and 2, respectively. All comparisons between meaningless and meaningful events were statistically significant ($p < .01$). Not surprisingly, meaningful events were rated higher on meaning than meaningless events (Cohen's *d*'s > 2.40). Meaningful events were also characterized by higher levels of PA, lower levels of NA, greater levels of purpose during and after the event, higher levels of coherence, more positive and less negative implications for self and others. In both samples, the four largest differences (by effect size) occurred for PA, purpose during, purpose after, and positive implications for the self. These aspects may be the most salient features distinguishing meaningful and meaningless events.

The smallest differences occurred for negative aspects of the event such as the level of NA and negative implications for self and others. Interestingly, meaningful and meaningless events differed much more in their levels of PA (*d*'s > 2.00) than in their levels of NA (*d*'s < -0.88). Whereas high levels of PA are highly indicative of meaningful events, high levels of NA less consistently indicate that an event is meaning*less*.

Although measures of coherence were higher for meaningful than meaningless events, effect sizes were generally lower than they were for purpose. For example, in Sample 1, *d*'s were greater than 2.00 for both purpose items and smaller than 2.00 for all coherence items. In Sample 2, *d*'s were greater than 1.70 for both purpose items and smaller than 1.70 for all coherence items. This may suggest that at the level of events, purpose is a more salient facet than coherence in distinguishing meaningful and meaningless events.

Prediction of Event Meaningfulness from Meaning Facets

Correlations among all variables are presented in Table 3. The correlations tell a similar story as the mean level comparisons. For example, overall event meaningfulness correlated most strongly with PA, purpose, and positive implications for the self, and least strongly with NA and negative implications for self and other.

Next, we examined the extent to which different facets uniquely predicted event meaningfulness. Because each participant rated two events (one meaningful, one meaningless), we accounted for possible clustering in responses from the same participant by testing a set of general estimating equations (GEE) models. These analyses are akin to regression models, but GEE models adjust the standard errors to account for lack of independence in responses from the same participant (McNeish, Stapleton, & Silverman, 2017). To reduce the number of variables in the model, we computed a single measure of purpose by averaging responses to the purpose felt during and after the event. Responses to the two items were highly correlated (r's > .80 in both samples; see Table 3). We also averaged the consistency ratings for knowledge, values, and beliefs (α's = .88 in both samples). The other two coherence items (i.e., how much participants could make sense of the event and how much it helped them understand something new) correlated somewhat less with each other than they did with other facets (e.g., purpose). Therefore, we did not average these items together but examined them separately. All predictors were grand-mean centered prior to entering them in the analysis.

We first tested a model excluding PA and NA (Model 1), given that they are not generally accepted as facets of meaning by many theorists (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Martela & Steger, 2016). Results of this model are presented in Table 4. Across both samples, event meaningfulness was significantly predicted by purpose (b's $\geq$ .56, p's < .001) and positive

implications for the self (*b*'s $\geq$ .21, *p*'s $\leq$ .004). In Sample 2, the extent to which the event helped participants understand something new also predicted meaningfulness (*b* = .22, *p* = .015). Other measures of coherence did not predict meaningfulness above and beyond measures of purpose and significance.

In Model 2, we entered PA and NA as predictors in the model. PA predicted event meaningfulness in both samples (*b*'s $\geq$ .26, *p*'s $\leq$ .03). Purpose remained a significant predictor in both samples (*b*'s $\geq$.48, *p*'s < .001). After controlling for PA, positive implications for self still predicted event meaningfulness in Sample 1 (*b* = .14, *p* = .039) but not in Sample 2 (*b* = .15, *p* = .117). Measures of coherence did not generally predict meaningfulness with one exception: new understanding. How much an event helped participants understand something new predicted meaningfulness in both samples. Interestingly, the effect was significant in Sample 1 only after controlling for PA.

Discussion

Across two samples (one from Singapore, another from the U.S.), the two most consistent predictors of event meaningfulness were sense of purpose and PA. These effects were independent of each other suggesting that a sense of purpose may be associated with meaning regardless of whether it is accompanied by positive emotion. Positive implications for self were also associated with event meaningfulness, although the strength of its association was reduced after controlling for PA and the effect was no longer significant in Sample 2. With the exception of "new understanding", measures of coherence did not predict meaning above and beyond other facets. This is somewhat surprising given the prominent role that coherence and comprehensibility play in theories of meaning.

These findings have a number of important implications for meaning theory and assessment—particularly at the level of events. First, the results support the importance of purpose in the experience of meaning. Not only is purpose an important facet of meaning in life, it appears to be one of the more salient aspects of meaningful events. That is, when people contrast meaningful and meaningless events, it seems clear that the former are more closely tied to their goals and strivings whereas the latter are not. Second, the positive emotions experienced during an event seem to be important aspects of meaning beyond purpose. In contrast, negative emotions were not associated with meaning after controlling for other facets. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that PA contributes to meaning above and beyond goal pursuit (King et al., 2006), and other studies indicating that PA has a stronger effect than NA on daily meaning (Tov & Lee, 2016).

Another possible facet of event meaningfulness that emerges from our study is the extent to which the event has positive implications for oneself. This facet has much in common with benefit finding (Davis et al., 1998) and significance in the sense of the value or worth of an experience (Janoff-Bulman & McPherson Frantz, 1997). However, positive implications for oneself did not predict event meaningfulness after controlling for PA in Sample 2, though it remained significant in Sample 1. An event that is high in positive implications for oneself is likely to trigger high levels of positive emotion so that its unique effects are reduced when PA is controlled for. This seemed to be true in both samples—though the effect remained significant in Sample 1 where the sample size was larger (145 versus 90 in Sample 2). Thus, Sample 2 may have lacked the power to detect the effect of positive implications independent of PA—a possibility that can be addressed with larger sample sizes in the future research.

We did not find any effects of positive implications for others. Although other scholars have suggested that self-transcendence and serving others should enhance meaning (Reker & Wong, 2012), our methodology may not have been optimized to test this hypothesis. For example, although helping others may typically be experienced as meaningful, it is not the only type of experience that yields meaning. Daily life may provide numerous routes to meaning (Heintzelman & King, 2014) and helping others is just one such route. Successful personal achievements are also often regarded as meaningful whether they help others or not. Had we asked participants to write about events in which they helped others and contrasted these with events in which they were selfish, we may have observed a more reliable effect on meaning. Instead, participants were free to write about any experience they deemed meaningful (and meaningless)—and not all of these may have involved other people.

The negative implications of an event did not have any effect on event meaningfulness after controlling for other facets. It may be that levels of mental simulation were equivalent in both the meaningful and meaningless conditions. This is likely given the retrospective nature of the writing tasks—whether respondents have thought about the positive implications of meaningful events or the negative implications of meaningless events. Alternatively, this may indicate a boundary condition on the effects of mental simulation on meaning (Waytz et al., 2015). Perhaps mentally simulating negative outcomes does not yield meaning to the same extent as simulating positive outcomes.

The more puzzling finding may be that measures of coherence were not as strong predictors of event meaningfulness as other predictors. We operationalized coherence both in terms of participants' ability to make sense of the event as well as the consistency of the event with their knowledge, values, and beliefs. These measures were correlated with event

meaningfulness (Table 3) but did not predict meaning above and beyond other facets. Recently, Costin and Vignoles (*in press*) observed a similar pattern with regard to meaning *in life*. Specifically, they did not observe longitudinal effects of coherence on meaning in life. They suggested that coherence may either be a product of meaning in life or is a parallel outcome (i.e., arising from common antecedents). Previous theories emphasized how conflicts with beliefs and expectations posed threats to meaning (e.g., Heine et al., 2006). Thus, whereas violations of expectations may reduce meaning, consistency with these expectations may only maintain meaning at a minimum level rather than enhancing it further. Following this, it might be argued that coherence plays a larger role discriminating meaning*less* events from those that are more meaningful, but may not discriminate among events that are moderately to extremely meaningful. In other words, coherence primarily influences variation between the upper and lower halves of the meaning continuum. However, this explanation would not explain our results given that we have specifically elicited both meaningful and meaningless experiences.

We identified a potential aspect of coherence which may be uniquely associated with meaning—the extent to which an event offers a new understanding to the participant. However, this relationship held in Sample 1 only after controlling for PA. Our understanding of this effect is that when two events are equally high (or low) on PA, an event that offers new understanding will tend to be perceived as more meaningful than one that does not. This relation is weaker without controlling for PA because the effect of PA on meaning may be so strong that many events that engender positive emotion are perceived as meaningful even when they do not offer new insights or lessons. Once PA is controlled for, a relation between new understanding and meaning is more evident. Future research should attempt to replicate this effect. It will also be helpful to identify the processes that determine the ability of participants to develop new

understandings or learn from their experiences. One process that may be relevant has been called accommodation (Park, 2010). This refers to the modification of one's global beliefs to better account for one's experiences.

An important limitation of our study is that we did not examine significance in the sense of feeling that life was worth living (Martela & Steger, 2016) or that one's existence matters (George & Park, 2016). Longitudinal studies have recently identified mattering as an important precursor to meaning (Costin & Vignoles, *in press*). It is possible that the relation between meaning and positive implications for self is partly capturing the effect of mattering on meaning. It would be extremely informative to assess both in future studies. We also caution that our research design does not permit causal interpretation of any of the facets we have examined. This is an important caveat especially with respect to the strong effects we observe of meaningfulness on purpose. That is, our studies show that when people contrast meaningful and meaningless experiences, the sense of purpose experienced in the former is notably higher than in the latter. This does not establish purpose as a cause of event meaningfulness; and other studies have found mixed support for such an effect (e.g., Costin & Vignoles, *in press*). More experimental and longitudinal research will enable such interpretations. However, before such studies can offer insights into the causal structure of meaning, it will be necessary to refine how the various facets of meaning are defined and operationalized. It may be that assessing the facets of meaning at the level of events and experiences provides a more sensitive test of such causal hypotheses. Future work can help clarify how such facets might best be defined.

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Table 1

Comparison of Meaningful and Meaningless Event on Meaning Components and Affect in Sample 1

	Meaningful		Meaningless			
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*d*	*t* [a]
Meaningfulness	5.39	0.65	1.48	1.24	3.82	32.52
Positive Affect	4.93	1.18	1.51	1.26	2.66	22.74
Negative Affect	1.12	1.46	3.54	1.75	-1.51	-12.86
Purpose During	4.97	1.21	1.31	1.45	2.63	22.47
Purpose After	5.17	1.03	1.40	1.54	2.89	24.67
Make Sense	4.86	0.97	2.90	1.74	1.43	12.26
New Understandg	4.38	1.47	2.16	1.72	1.48	12.61
Knowledge	1.28	1.56	0.05	1.41	0.85	7.24
Values	1.75	1.41	0.08	1.46	1.26	10.79
Beliefs	1.44	1.55	0.06	1.43	1.05	8.94
Pos-I Self	4.99	1.00	1.96	1.73	2.25	19.20
Neg-I Self	1.01	1.32	2.32	1.86	-0.83	-7.05
Pos-I Others	4.08	1.72	1.93	1.78	1.24	10.58
Neg-I Others	1.01	1.26	1.83	1.68	-0.59	-5.05

Note. $N = 145$. Pos-I = positive implications; Neg-I = negative implications.

[a] All t-tests yielded statistically significant mean differences ($p < .001$).

Table 2

Comparison of Meaningful and Meaningless Experiences on Meaning Components and Affect in Sample 2

	Meaningful		Meaningless			
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*d*	*t* [a]
Meaningfulness	5.62	0.59	1.79	2.14	2.46	16.27
Positive Affect	5.01	1.42	1.77	1.76	2.04	12.10
Negative Affect	1.19	1.84	2.91	2.11	-0.87	-6.20
Purpose During	4.68	1.52	1.62	1.96	1.74	11.14
Purpose After	5.11	1.18	1.83	1.97	2.01	13.50
Make Sense	4.98	1.24	3.67	1.95	0.79	5.96
New Understandg	4.30	1.69	2.26	2.11	1.07	7.85
Knowledge	1.29	1.59	-0.11	1.47	0.91	7.34
Values	1.63	1.58	0.12	1.51	0.98	7.20
Beliefs	1.46	1.52	0.13	1.58	0.85	5.99
Pos-I Self	5.21	1.27	1.97	1.98	1.94	13.80
Neg-I Self	1.08	1.78	2.23	1.88	-0.63	-4.95
Pos-I Others	4.29	1.89	1.71	1.84	1.38	9.87
Neg-I Others	1.16	1.94	1.79	1.93	-0.33	-2.63

Note. $N = 90$. Pos-I = positive implications; Neg-I = negative implications.

[a] All t-tests yielded statistically significant mean differences ($p < .001$).

Table 3

Correlation among Meaning Components and Affect

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Meaningfulness	--	.66	-.22	.74	.74	.40	.63	.37	.45	.40	.72	-.05	.60	.05
2. Positive Affect	.80	--	-.58	.74	.69	.46	.44	.52	.48	.49	.76	-.38	.69	-.26
3. Negative Affect	-.54	-.70	--	-.34	-.31	-.27	-.06	-.31	-.30	-.25	-.38	.73	-.34	.58
4. Purpose During	.81	.78	-.56	--	.81	.46	.52	.44	.47	.46	.73	-.18	.69	-.05
5. Purpose After	.84	.77	-.53	.85	--	.52	.63	.42	.45	.42	.82	-.22	.69	-.08
6. Make Sense	.60	.54	-.32	.63	.65	--	.42	.26	.36	.30	.41	-.20	.41	-.19
7. New Understandg	.63	.49	-.25	.60	.67	.60	--	.25	.30	.30	.61	.04	.54	.11
8. Knowledge	.40	.41	-.37	.41	.42	.36	.32	--	.67	.68	.40	-.19	.38	.00
9. Values	.50	.52	-.38	.46	.49	.43	.35	.67	--	.78	.41	-.18	.45	-.09
10. Beliefs	.41	.41	-.36	.41	.45	.37	.32	.74	.70	--	.40	-.18	.42	-.05
11. Pos-I Self	.75	.71	-.43	.71	.78	.61	.67	.40	.41	.38	--	-.23	.76	-.04
12. Neg-I Self	-.35	-.44	.58	-.32	-.34	-.20	-.14	-.25	-.32	-.21	-.22	--	-.17	.72
13. Pos-I Others	.53	.54	-.30	.51	.56	.37	.37	.29	.27	.26	.58	-.19	--	-.04
14. Neg-I Others	-.22	-.25	.46	-.19	-.20	-.10	-.03	-.20	-.20	-.19	-.08	.54	.01	--

Note. Sample 1 correlations appear below the diagonal and are computed from 290 observations (two experiences each from 145 participants) except for meaningfulness which was computed from 291 observations (from 146 participants). Sample 2 correlations appear above the diagonal and are computed from 180 observations from 90 participants. All correlations greater than |.10| are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Table 4

Models Predicting Meaningfulness of Experience from Meaning Components and Affect

	Model 1			Model 2		
Predictor	*b*	*SE*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*p*
			Sample 1			
Intercept	3.47	.06	<.001	3.47	.06	<.001
Purpose	.61	.07	<.001	.48	.08	<.001
KVB	.05	.06	.360	.03	.06	.632
Make Sense	.01	.05	.919	.01	.06	.931
New Understandg	.07	.05	.156	.09	.05	.042
Pos-I Self	.21	.07	.002	.14	.07	.039
Neg-I Self	-.05	.04	.260	-.01	.05	.820
Pos-I Others	.04	.05	.449	.02	.05	.709
Neg-I Others	-.08	.05	.129	-.08	.05	.078
Positive Affect				.29	.08	.000
Negative Affect				.06	.05	.212
			Sample 2			
Intercept	3.66	.12	<.001	3.65	.11	<.001
Purpose	.56	.11	<.001	.50	.12	<.001
KVB	.13	.09	.152	.07	.09	.464
Make Sense	-.03	.08	.755	-.04	.08	.609
New Understandg	.22	.09	.015	.24	.09	.005
Pos-I Self	.25	.09	.004	.15	.10	.117
Neg-I Self	.12	.11	.276	.14	.10	.191
Pos-I Others	-.06	.09	.482	-.10	.08	.211
Neg-I Others	.01	.12	.947	.06	.12	.633
Positive Affect				.26	.12	.029
Negative Affect				.01	.07	.915

Note. KVB = Consistency with knowledge, values, and beliefs; Pos-I = positive implications; Neg-I = negative implications.