



Australian
National
University

Understanding empathy in diverse cultural settings: *challenges & opportunities*



Image: Sneha Karpe

Presented by Nathan Wiltshire

Centre for Social Research & Methods

Australian National University

Empathy in Healthcare: 3rd Biennial Colloquium, 12th November 2021



Is empathy the same for people from different walks of life?





Introducing



Experiential empathy projects

1.



Image: Laura Martin

2.



Image: Tiffany Tran

3.



Image: Laura Martin

4.



Image: Stephen Schweinsberg



Notes from the field(s)



Welcome to Sonoshi



Image: Nathan Wiltshire



Student nurses supporting the community





A pilot study to measure empathy

*When someone cares for me,
supports me and my community,
how could it be a bad thing?*

Study outcomes..

- ❖ Ceiling effect
- ❖ Respect for carers
- ❖ Self construals
- ❖ Collective values



Image: Nathan Wiltshire



About empathy



Empathy, a multi-dimensional relational construct

Multi-dimensional...

“Empathy is to understand, feel, and share what someone else feels, with self-other differentiation - *Eklund & Meranius, 2020*”

Experiential, relational...

Empathy as “co-creative practice”, “other-orientated”, “dynamic, interactive process”, and reflects the “quality of relationships” – *van Dijke et al, 2020*

Components of a whole...

Empathy is a "suite of separable components" that may be tempting to view in isolation, however, the inter-relations between components are fundamental to the overall picture
- *Weisz & Cikara, 2021*



About culture



Culture shapes human experience

Culture influences a person's self-perspectives, i.e. their selfhood, motivations, and cognition
– *Marcus & Kitayama, 1991*

“Future researchers should seek to identify which forms of independence and which forms of interdependence prevail in different cultural contexts” – *Vignoles et al 2016, p.991*



Image: Nathan Wiltshire



Culture & empathy – a clash of constructs?

"While many people around the world identify and label forms of social knowing and assessment that closely resemble 'empathy', very few have concepts that are identical to it".

- Hollan 2012, p.72



Image: Catherine Walsh



Measuring with CARE



Consultation and Relational Empathy (CARE) measure

A simple, scalable instrument

CARE Patient Feedback Measure for
*** Type name of Practitioner here ***

Please write today's date here:

D	D	/	M	M	/	Y	Y		

Please rate the following statements about today's consultation.

Please mark the box like this with a ball point pen. If you change your mind just cross out your old response and make your new choice. Please answer every statement.

How good was the practitioner at...	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Does not apply
1) Making you feel at ease <small>(introducing him/herself, explaining his/her position, being friendly and warm towards you, treating you with respect; not cold or abrupt)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) Letting you tell your "story" <small>(giving you time to fully describe your condition in your own words; not interrupting, rushing or diverting you)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) Really listening <small>(paying close attention to what you were saying; not looking at the notes or computer as you were talking)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) Being interested in you as a whole person <small>(asking/knowing relevant details about your life, your situation; not treating you as "just a number")</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) Fully understanding your concerns <small>(communicating that he/she had accurately understood your concerns and anxieties; not overlooking or dismissing anything)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6) Showing care and compassion <small>(seeming genuinely concerned, connecting with you on a human level; not being indifferent or "detached")</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7) Being positive <small>(having a positive approach and a positive attitude; being honest but not negative about your problems)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8) Explaining things clearly <small>(fully answering your questions; explaining clearly, giving you adequate information; not being vague)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9) Helping you to take control <small>(exploring with you what you can do to improve your health yourself; encouraging rather than "lecturing" you)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10) Making a plan of action with you <small>(discussing the options, involving you in decisions as much as you want to be involved; not ignoring your views)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: If you would like to add further comments on this consultation, please do so here.						

© CARE SW Mercer, Scottish Executive 2004. The CARE Measure was originally developed by Dr Stewart Mercer and colleagues as part of a Health Service Research Fellowship funded by the Chief Scientist Office of the Scottish Executive (2000-2003). 4571132878

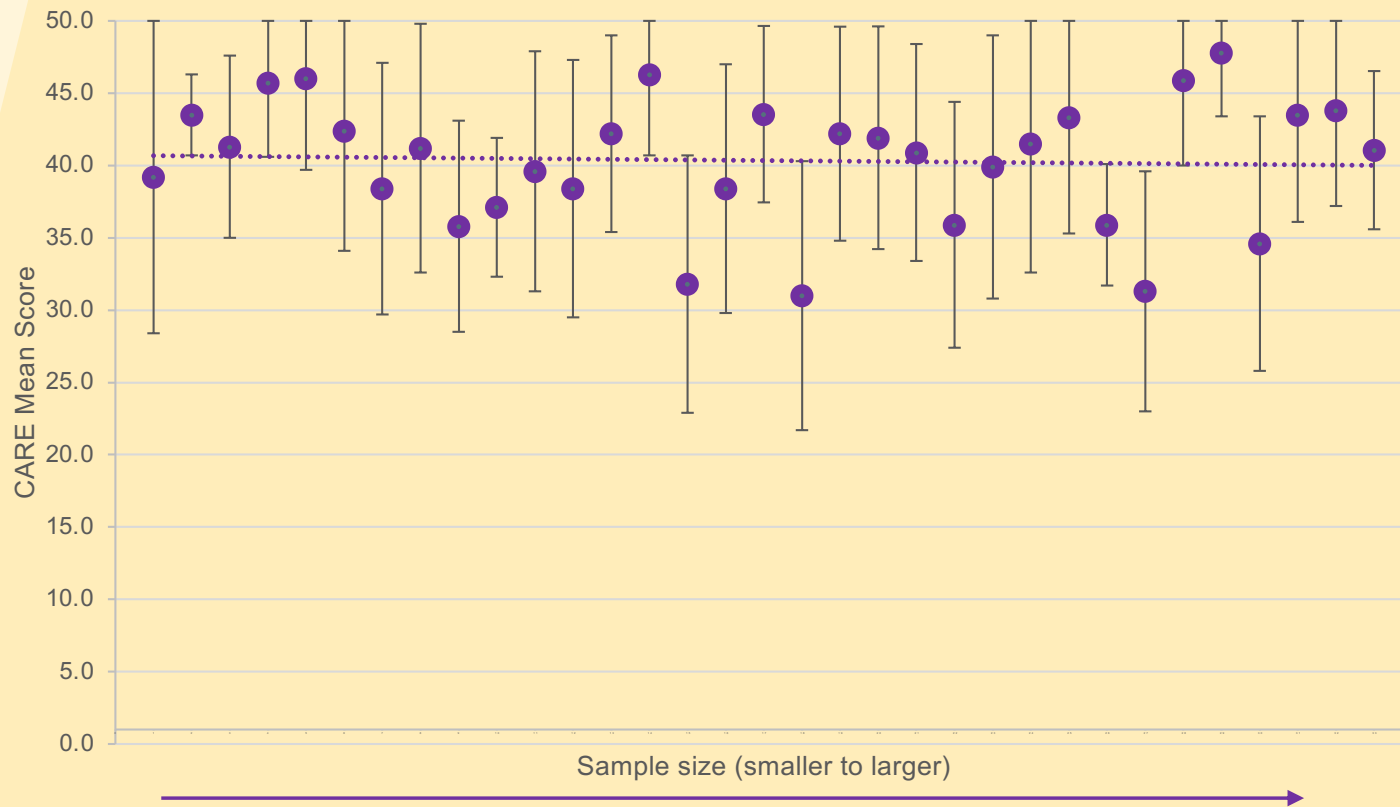


Construct validity



CARE empirical data

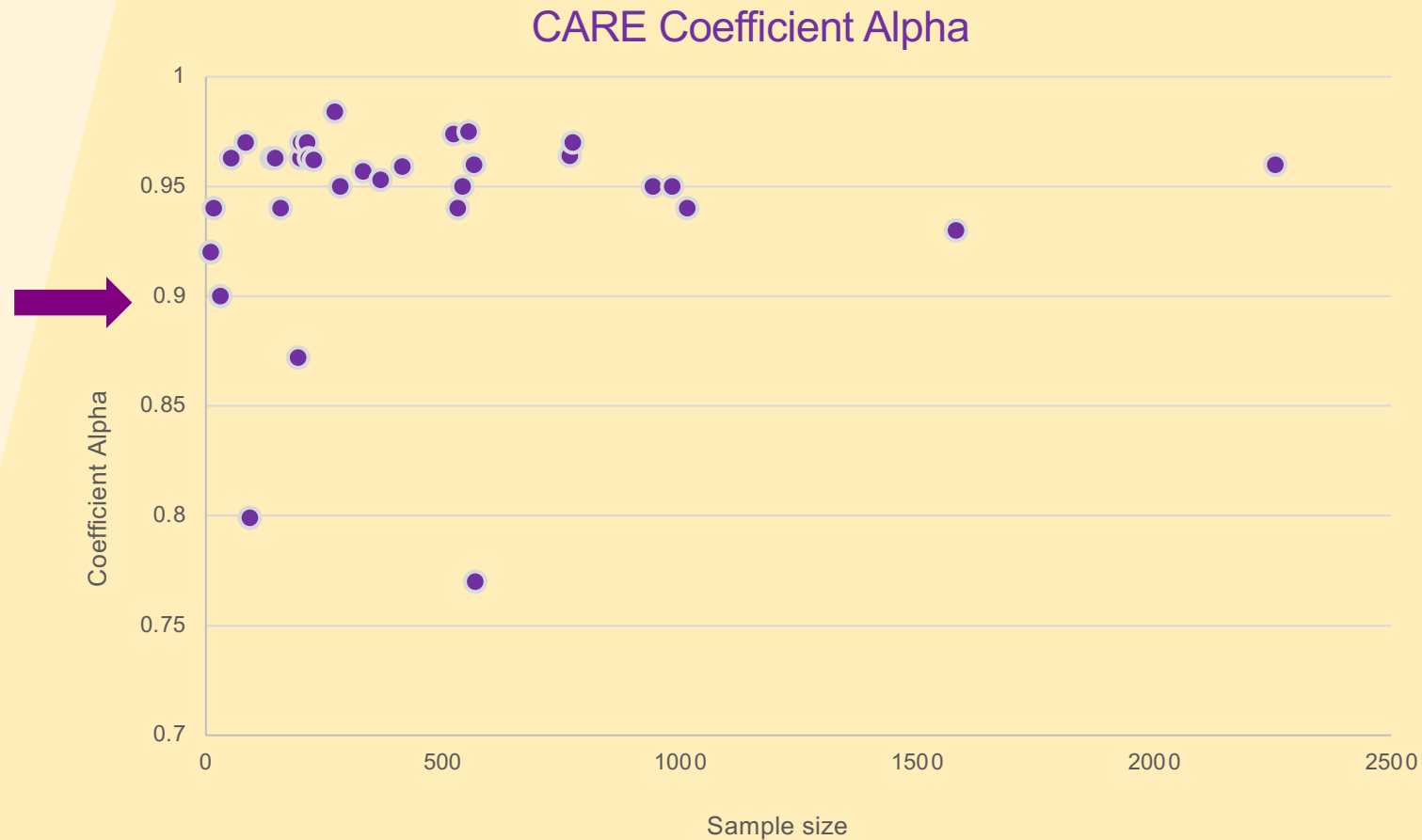
CARE mean, standard deviation, & sample size



“Distinct ceiling effect, likewise found in earlier work, and the obvious halo effects around even scores limit the informative value of the measure” – *Crosta Ahlborn et al 2017, p.290*



CARE empirical data



“Values of alpha can be too high, and point to redundancy among times, I recommend a maximum value of 0.9” - *Streiner 2005, p. 103*



Empathy and CARE entangled?

“Self-report empathy scales hardly ever mention empathy; instead, they refer to specific feelings, attitudes, skills, and behaviour. Nowhere does CARE [or other similar instruments] include the terms empathy, empathetic, or empathic. Instead, the term 'empathy' is a superordinate concept” - *Hall and Schwartz 2019, p.237*

“Studies should include the physician’s and the patient’s concrete experiences and interpretations, the context in which empathy is developed and practiced, and avoid peripheral or implicit approaches” - *Pedersen 2009, p.318*

“unsubstantiated equivalency between a generally good provider consultation and empathy” - *Sanders et al, 2021 p.4261*



Summary & research directions



Summary

1. Empathy, a multi-dimensional relational construct
2. Varies between cultures
3. Empirical data suggests limitations in capturing & measuring empathy

Research directions



*Building empathy from
the grassroots*

Image: Creative commons WDRFree



Image: Laura Martin

Thanks for listening!

Contact

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