

Cultural Empathy in International Contexts: Successes and Pitfalls

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EMPATHY

-the power of understanding and imaginatively entering into another person's feelings

-identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings, and motives.



SUPPORT



Pity:

I acknowledge your suffering.

Example:

I forward your newstory about the accident to others.

Sympathy:

I care about your suffering.

Example:

I send you a sympathy card.

Empathy (2 types):

I try to understand and feel your suffering.

Cognitive Empathy Example:

I understand why you are devastated.

Affective Empathy Example:

I send you thoughtful messages. You reply and share your feelings with me.

Compassion:

I relieve your suffering.

Example:

I reach out to you and offer concrete help. I continue to be there for you.

Three types of empathy

Cognitive

Being able to put yourself in someone else's place, and see their perspective.

'Empathy by thought', rather than by feeling.
Most common in organisations.

Emotional

Literally feeling and experiencing another person's emotions, as if you had 'caught' them.

Can be good to feel what another is feeling, but it can also be overwhelming.

Generative

Appreciating someone else's thoughts and feelings, but with an additional move towards action.

Usually most impactful and giving, generative empathy will grow it in others.



Is empathy cultural?

Empathy Global Ranking (Interpersonal Reactivity Index)

Country

Ecuador
Saudi Arabia
Peru
Denmark
United Arab Emirates
Korea
US
Taiwan
Costa Rica
Kuwait

Top 10

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

Geographic Region

South/Central America
Middle East
South/Central America
Northern Europe
Middle East
East Asia
North America
East Asia
South/Central America
Middle East

Lowest empathy Finland (58) & Venezuela (62)

Hofstede's cultural dimensions

	Collectivism	Individualism
Vertical	<p>Self different from others</p> <p>Communal sharing</p> <p>Authority ranking</p> <p>Low freedom</p> <p>Low equality</p> <p><i>Ex: India, China</i></p>	<p>Self different from others</p> <p>Market pricing</p> <p>Authority ranking</p> <p>High freedom</p> <p>Low equality</p> <p><i>Ex: USA, France</i></p>
Horizontal	<p>Self same as others</p> <p>Communal sharing</p> <p>Equality matching</p> <p>Low freedom</p> <p>High equality</p> <p><i>Ex: kibbutz, rare</i></p>	<p>Self same as others</p> <p>Market pricing</p> <p>Equality matching</p> <p>High freedom High equality</p> <p><i>Ex: Australia, Norway</i></p>

Source :
Triandis, H. C., & Gelfand, M. J. (1998). *Converging Measurement of Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (Vol. 74). Psychological Association, Inc

Benjamin Pastorelli 

Collectivist		Individualistic		Highly Individualistic	
<i>Country</i>	<i>Hofstede Score</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Hofstede Score</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Hofstede Score</i>
Albania	20	Austria	55	Belgium	75
Bulgaria	30	Czech Republic	58	Denmark	74
Croatia	33	Estonia	60	France	71
Greece	35	Finland	63	Hungary	80
Portugal	27	Germany	67	Ireland	70
Romania	30	Iceland	60	Italy	76
Slovenia	27	Lithuania	60	Latvia	70
		Luxembourg	60	Netherlands	80
		Malta	59	Sweden	71
		Norway	69	United Kingdom	89
		Poland	60		
		Slovakia	52		
		Spain	51		
		Switzerland	68		

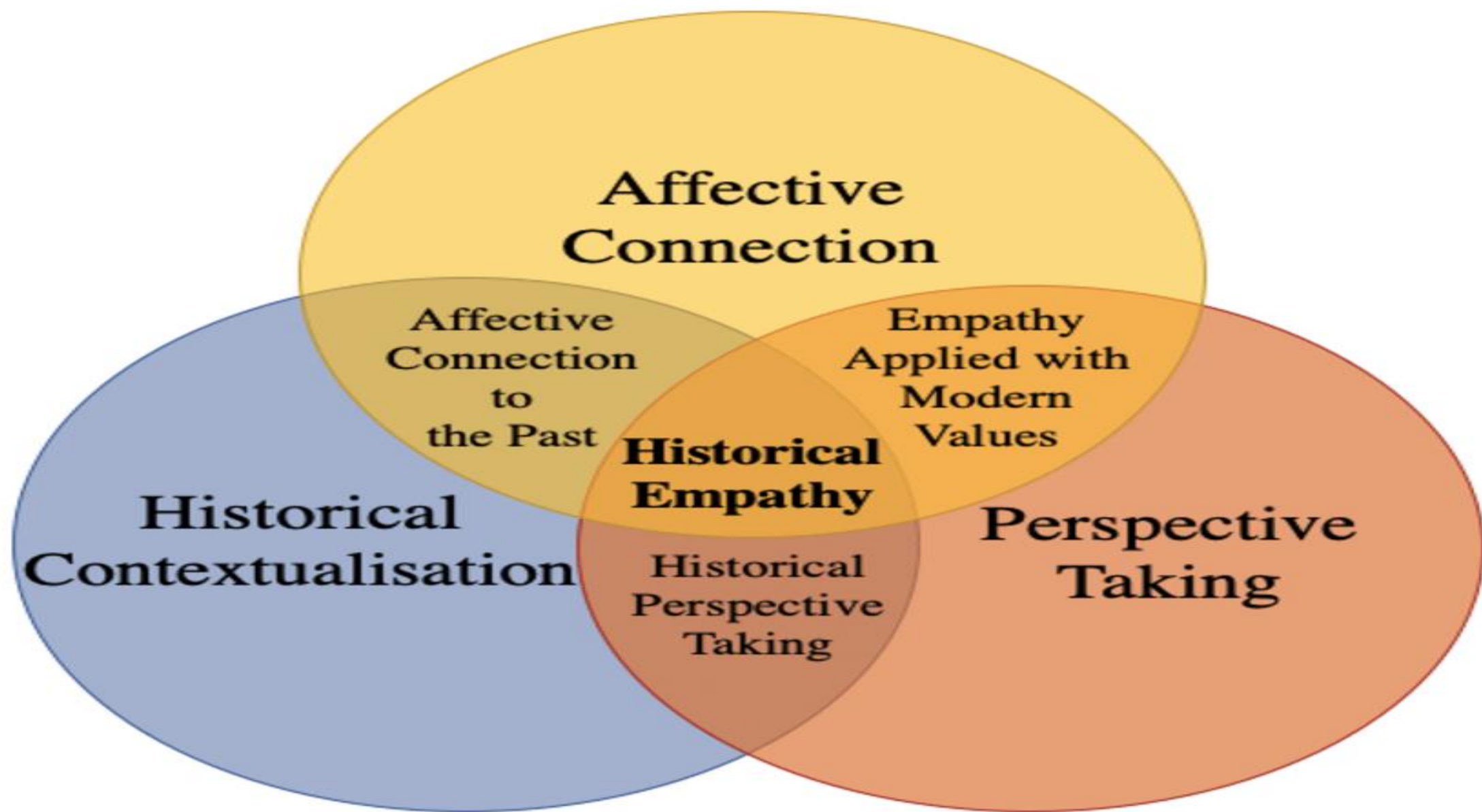
Individualism vs. Collectivism

- Individualism
 - Ties between individuals are loose
 - Stress on personal achievements and individual rights
- Collectivism
 - People are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups
 - Focus on community, society, nation or country



Collectivism			Individualism			
1-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-100	101-120	
		Malaysia	26		Japan	46
		China	20		United States	91
		India	48		Germany	67
		Brazil	38		Ireland	70
		France	71		Austria	55

Map and Index Source: www.clearcultural.com



Compassion Fatigue

- Emotional, physical & spiritual exhaustion from witnessing and absorbing the problems and suffering of others. (Perry, 2010; Sabo, 2011).
- The stress that results from helping or wanting to help a suffering person
- Those with enormous capacity for empathy are most at risk
- It is often identified by others before being identified / admitted by the individual
- Skills, experience and longevity do not result in “immunity” to compassion fatigue

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

Examples of Compassion Fatigue – Figley (Ed.) 1995;97

Cognitive

- Perfectionism
- Preoccupation with trauma
- Spacing out
- Loss of meaning
- Self-doubt
- Minimization

Emotional

- Powerlessness
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Anger/rage
- Survivor guilt
- Hypersensitivity
- Emotional roller coaster
- Overwhelmed
- Depleted energy

Behavioral

- Impatient
- Withdrawn
- Irritable
- Sleep disturbances
- Hypervigilance
- Accident prone
- Losing things

Spiritual

- Questioning the meaning of life
- Loss of purpose
- Lack of self-satisfaction
- Question religious beliefs

Personal Relationships

- Withdrawal
- Mistrust
- Overprotective as a spouse or parent
- Loneliness

Physical

- Shock
- Rapid heartbeat
- Joint and muscle pains
- Dizziness and disorientation
- Impaired immune system

Emotions Monitoring



Final Thoughts

- Empathy could be trained
- Culture has got an influence in our empathic skills
- Research on Cultural Empathy needs culturally sensitive measures designed by people from other geographic regions to better capture what empathy means to them.
- Empathic/Compassion fatigue could affect certain professionals
- Empathy enhances inclusion in diversity
- Empathy enables build trust and creates a safe environment that is conducive to collaborative problem solving



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