

# The Humanistic Aspects of Effective Psychotherapy

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Former Director  
Research Institute  
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Vikersund Norway

Co-founder  
Chief Scientist



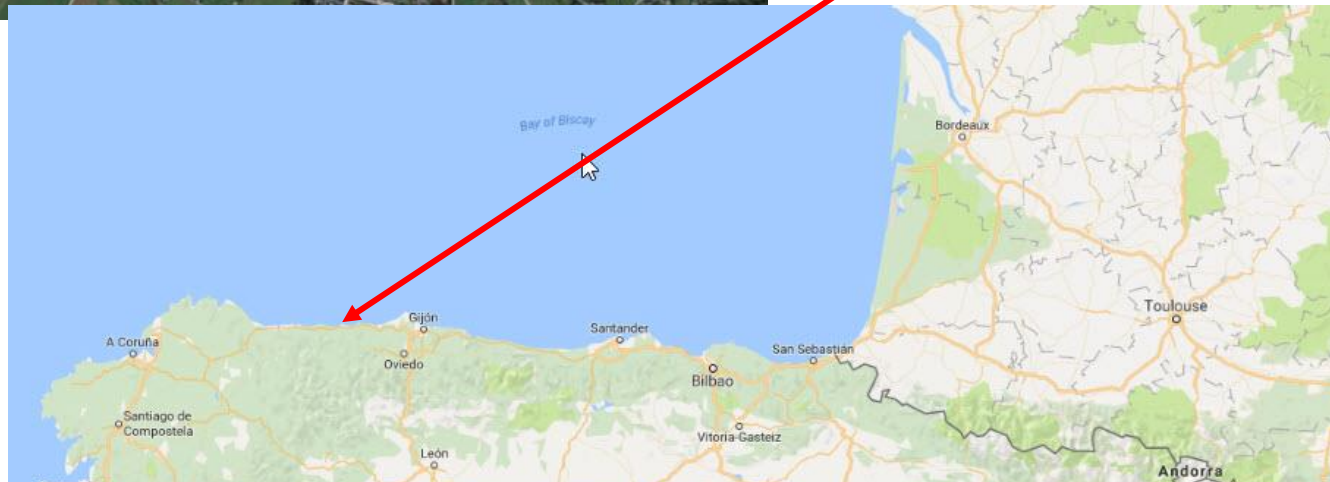
# Psychotherapy: How can this possibly work?



# Luarca Spain



Luarca





# Fishermen in Luarca Spain

Deciding whether to  
fish on foul weather  
days



# Fishermen in Luarca Spain

**Deciding whether to  
fish on foul weather  
days**

Group level evolution:  
Survival of the fittest  
Group

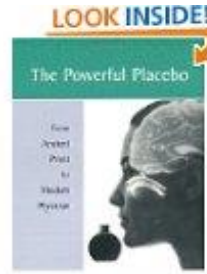
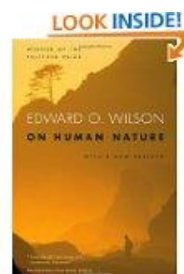
Multilevel:  
Group and Individual

E. O. Wilson



Eusocial animals

# Healing in a social context



- Ants do it! (and bees)
- Bats do(n't) do it (social quarantine)
- Facial Expression of Pain
- Human social healing practices



# The Social Brain

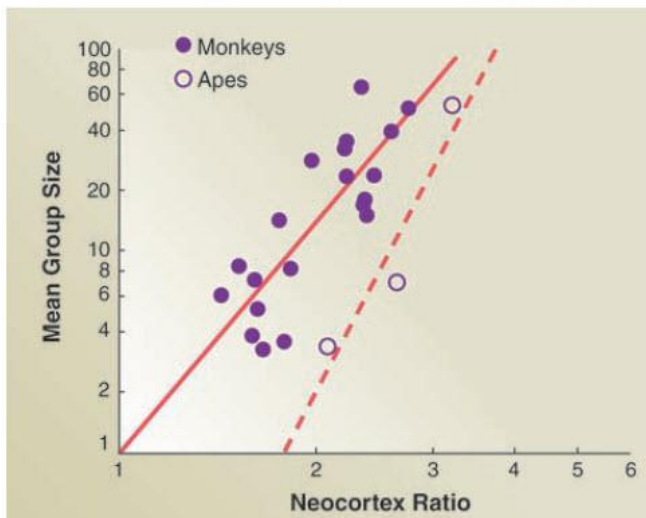
## Social Cognition

### REVIEW

## Evolution in the Social Brain

R. I. M. Dunbar\* and Susanne Shultz

The evolution of unusually large brains in some groups of animals, notably primates, has long been a puzzle. Although early explanations tended to emphasize the brain's role in sensory or technical competence (foraging skills, innovations, and way-finding), the balance of evidence now clearly favors the suggestion that it was the computational demands of living in large, complex societies that selected for large brains. However, recent analyses suggest that it may have been the particular demands of the more intense forms of pairbonding that was the critical factor that triggered this evolutionary development. This may explain why primate sociality seems to be so different from that found in most other birds and mammals: Primate sociality is based on bonded relationships of a kind that are found only in pairbonds in other taxa.



brain evolution against the steep selection gradient created by the high costs of brain tissue. In this respect, most of the ecological hypotheses proposed to date also fail. None can explain why primates (which have especially large brains for body mass, even by mammal standards) need brains that are so much larger than, say, squirrels, to cope with what are essentially the same foraging decisions.

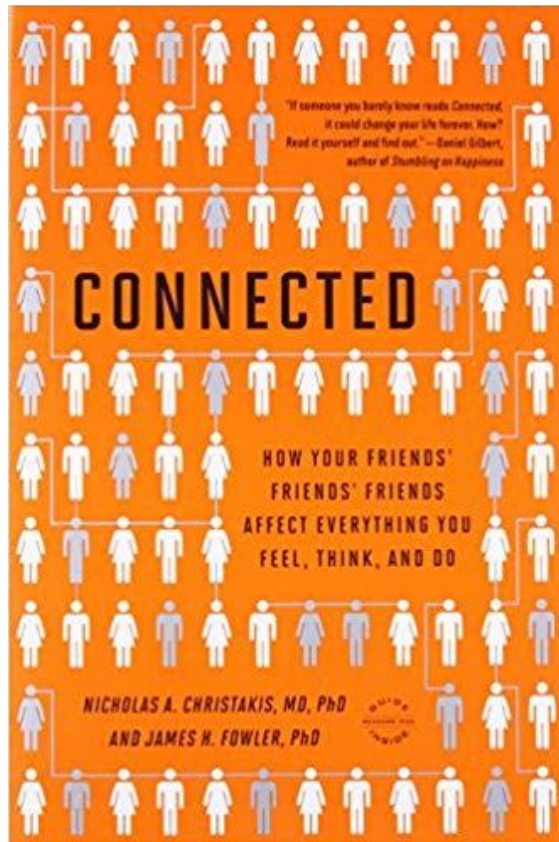
As an alternative, Byrne and Whiten proposed the Machiavellian Intelligence hypothesis (9) in the late 1980s: They argued that what differentiates primates from all other species (and, hence, what might account for their especially large brains) was the complexity of their social lives. Unfortunately, the term “Machiavellian” was widely interpreted as implying deceit, manipulation, and connivance—traits that most



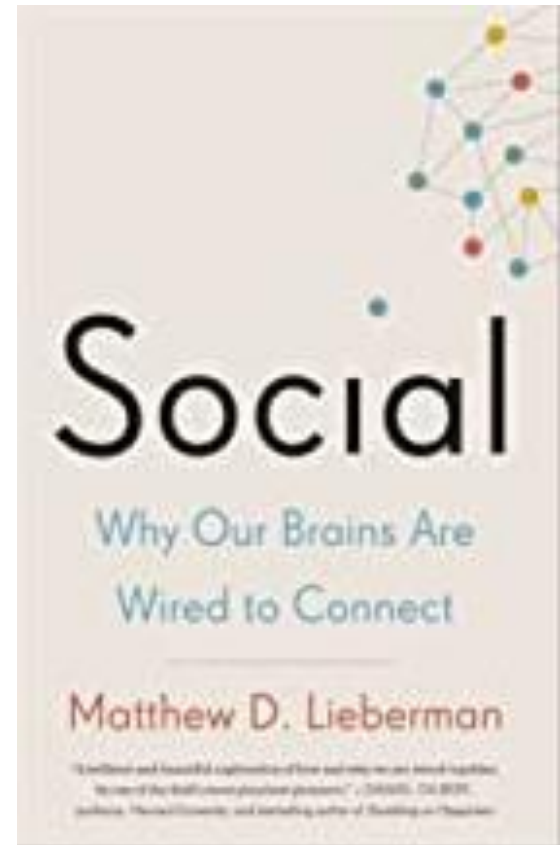
**Fig. 1.** Many primates, like these baboons in the Amboseli basin of Kenya, live in large and complex social groups. Baboons have been studied at multiple sites across Africa for decades.

# Two books on social brains...

- Social contagion



- Neuroscience





# What we know about psychotherapy

- Psychotherapy is effective
- Demonstrated in RCTs and in practice
- As effective as medications
- Longer lasting, fewer side effects, less resistant to additional courses
- NNT = 3 (compared to natural hx)
  - There is room for improvement!
  - Therapists are not aware of failures
- What makes psychotherapy work?

MIND

## *Science Plays the Long Game. But People Have Mental Health Issues Now.*

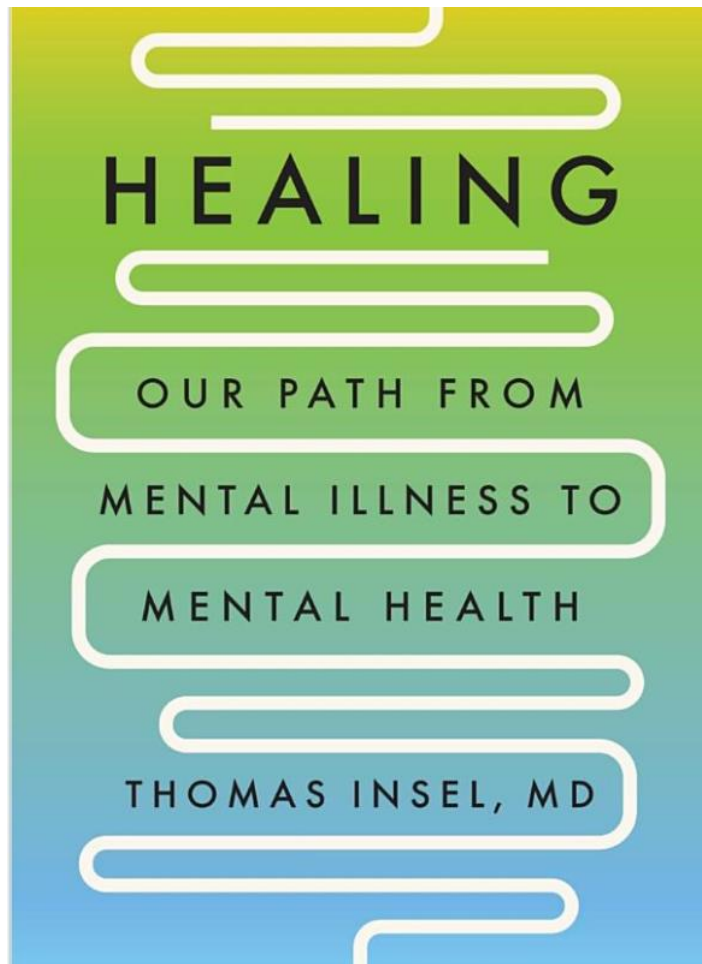
I've reported on behavior and mental health for 20 years. As I exit, I can't help but wonder why researchers have placed so little emphasis on helping people in distress today.



Benedict Carey

Like most science reporters, I had wanted to report on something big, to have a present-at-the-creation run that would shake up our understanding of mental health problems. At minimum, I expected research that would help people in distress improve their lives.

Almost every measure of our collective mental health — rates of suicide, anxiety, depression, addiction deaths, psychiatric prescription use — went the wrong direction, even as access to services expanded greatly.



Thomas Insel, MD  
Former Director NIMH

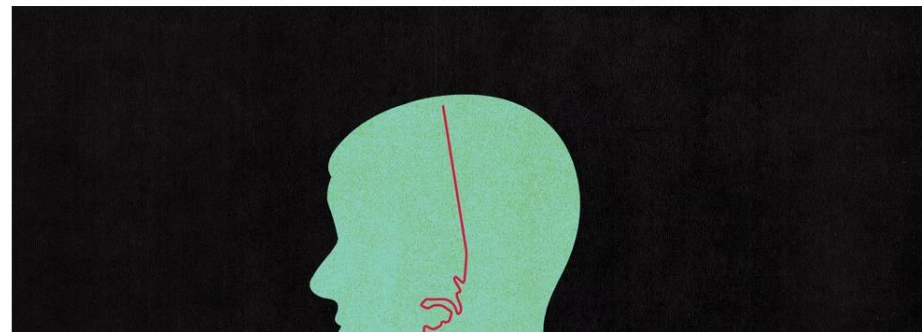
- Biomarkers
- Neuroscience
- Genetics
- Medication

IDEAS

## What American Mental Health Care Is Missing

Scientific research alone cannot address the challenges that Americans with mental illness face.

By Thomas Insel







## Overview

Understand the nature of the common factors and how they utilize human evolved social healing as a basis

Be knowledgeable of the research evidence for the common factors and specific ingredients

Understand how the common factors interact with specific ingredients to produce change

Three Pathways to Healing...



# The CARE Pathway

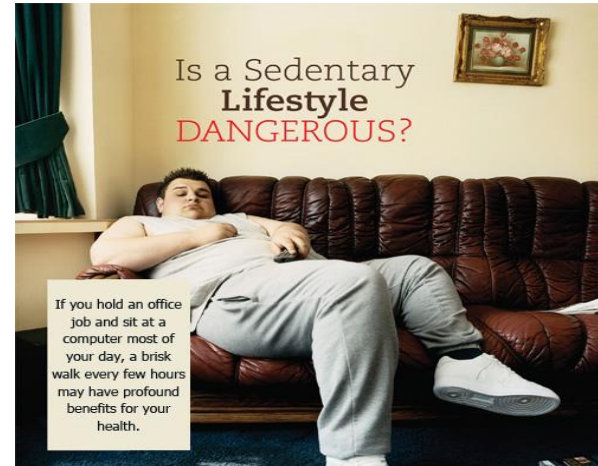
## Caring, Attentive, Real & Empathic

- Many constructs:
  - Support
  - Empathy
  - Caring
  - Understanding
  - Reassurance
  - Trust
  - Warmth
  - Genuineness
- How is CARE therapeutic?

Obesity

# Risks for mortality

Lack of Exercise



Pollution

Smoking



# Loneliness



# Psychotherapy provides a human connection

- Reduces loneliness
- Uniquely enduring
- Emotional regulation



## Emotional Coregulation in Close Relationships

Emily A. Butler

Ashley K. Randall

*Department of Family Studies and Human Development, University of Arizona, USA*

Bidirectional linkage of oscillating emotional channels (subjective experience, expressive behavior, and autonomic physiology) between partners, which contributes to emotional and physiological stability for both partners in a close relationship.

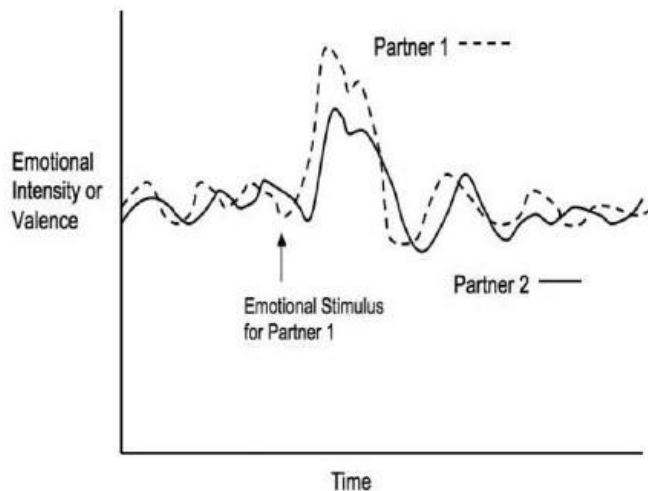


# Coregulation

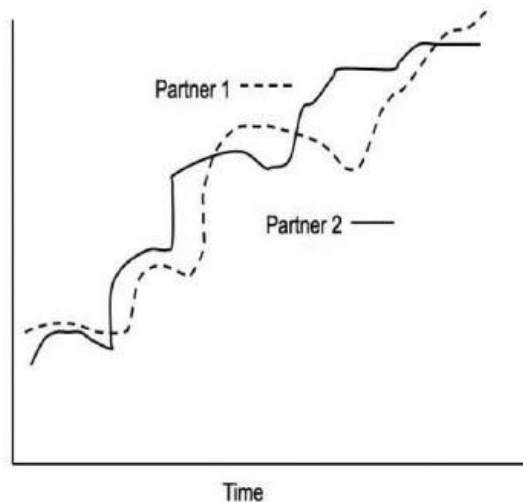
Negative reciprocity  
Social contagion  
Transmission

No correlation  
May buffer

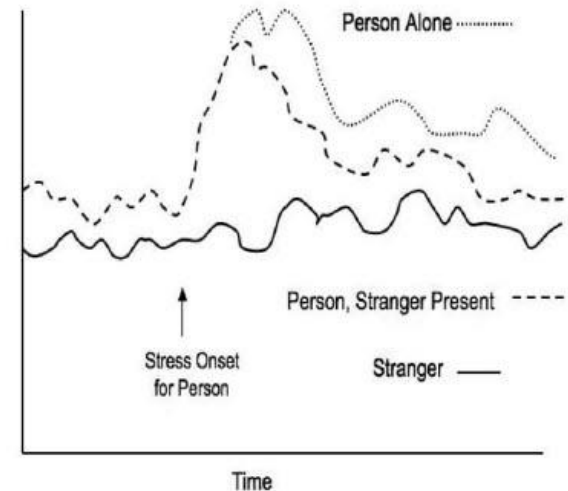
A. Coregulation



B. Morphogenic Process



C. Stress Buffering



Coregulation occurs when there is mutual trust

Emotional and physical well being:  
Dynamic patterns of organized variability (allostasis)

Research Article<sup>I</sup>

# Lending a Hand

## Social Regulation of the Neural Response to Threat

James A. Coan,<sup>1</sup> Hillary S. Schaefer,<sup>2</sup> and Richard J. Davidson<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Virginia and <sup>2</sup>W.M. Keck Laboratory for Functional Brain Imaging and Behavior and Department of Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Maritally satisfied women

Three conditions:

1. No hand holding
2. Stranger holding hand
3. Husband holding hand



# Hand holding results....

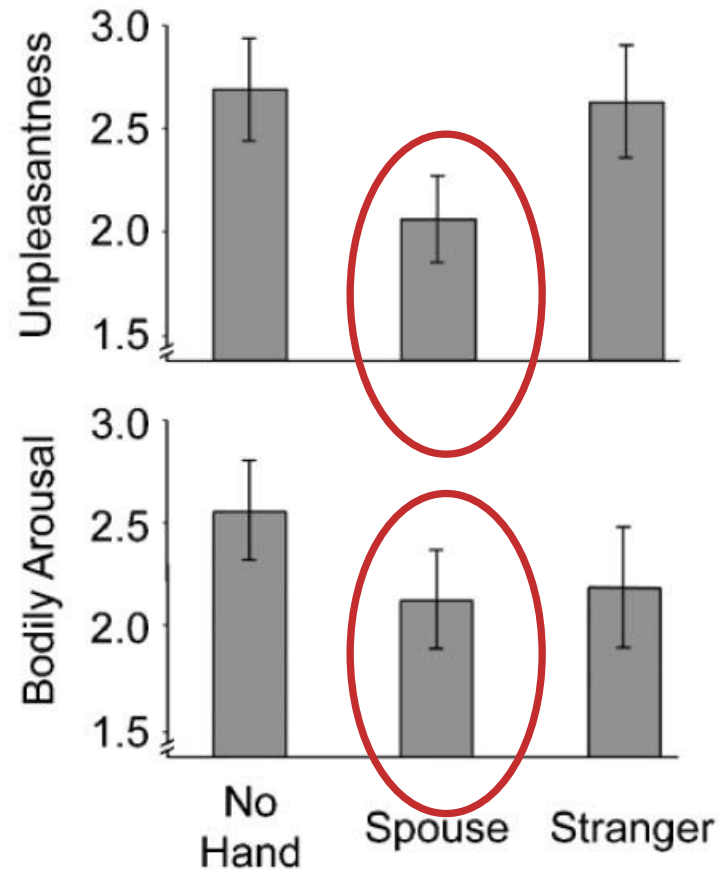
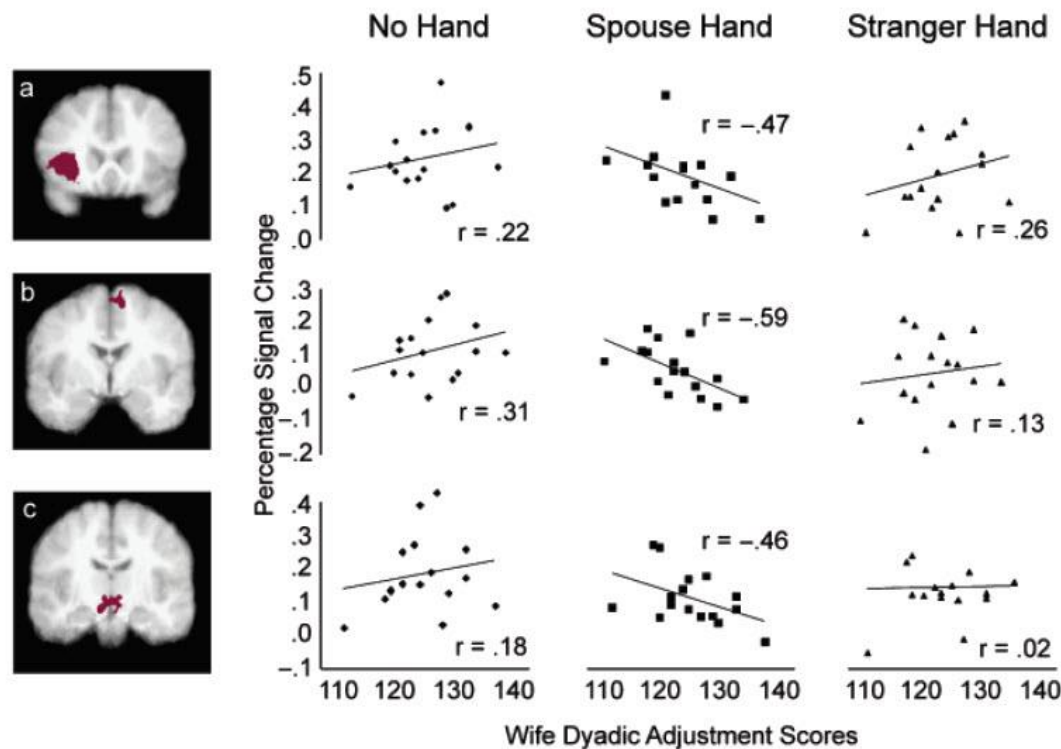


Fig. 2. Main effects of hand-holding condition on unpleasantness and arousal ratings.

# Hand holding (continued)



Conclusion: Hand holding attenuated threat-related neural activation in areas implicated in the regulation of emotion and emotion-related homeostatic functions

Martial satisfaction moderated effect  
(More satisfied = greater emotional regulation)



# Coregulation in psychotherapy

*Psychotherapy Research*, 2019  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2019.1661541>



## EMPIRICAL PAPER

### Coregulation of therapist and client emotion during psychotherapy

CHRISTINA S. SOMA<sup>1</sup>, BRIAN R. W. BAUCOM<sup>2</sup>, BO XIAO<sup>3</sup>, JONATHAN E. BUTNER<sup>2</sup>,  
PETER HILPERT<sup>4</sup>, SHRIKANTH NARAYANAN<sup>3</sup>, DAVID C. ATKINS<sup>5</sup>, & ZAC E. IMEL<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Educational Psychology, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA;* <sup>2</sup>*Department of Psychology, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA;* <sup>3</sup>*Viterbi School of Engineering, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA;* <sup>4</sup>*School of Psychology, University of Surrey, Guilford, UK &* <sup>5</sup>*Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA*

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Journal of Counseling Psychology

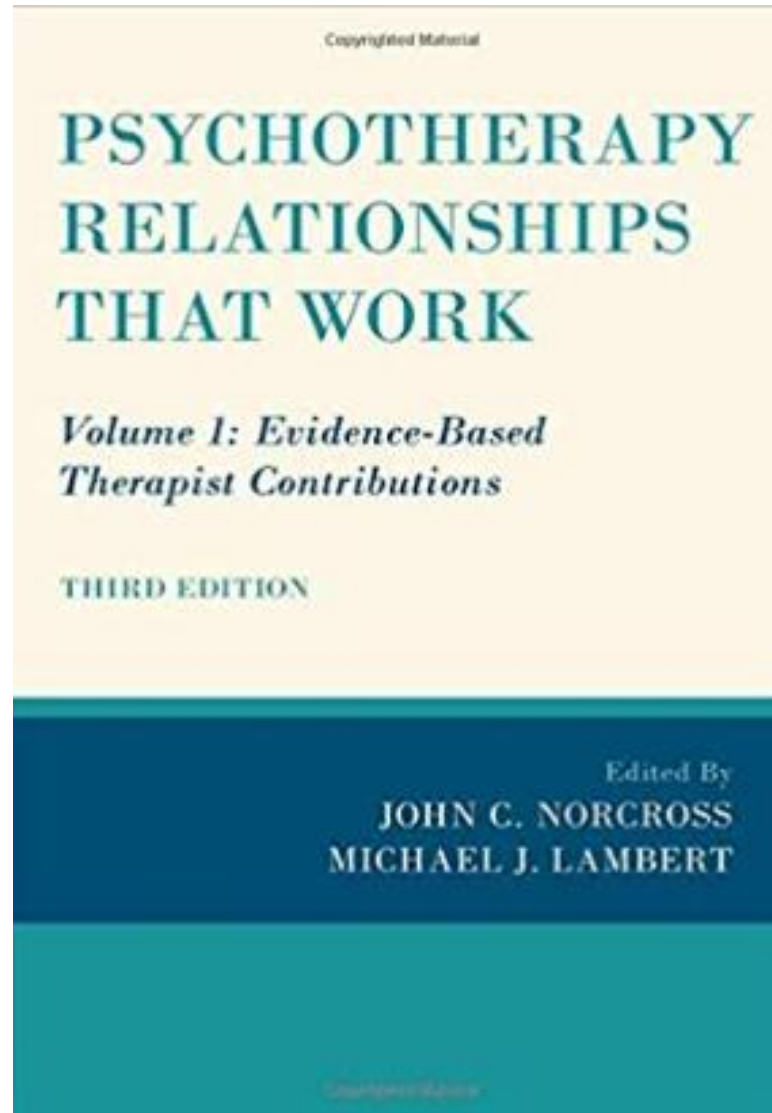
2020, Vol. 67, No. 3, 337–348  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000405>

## Investigating Coregulation of Emotional Arousal During Exposure-Based CBT Using Vocal Encoding and Actor–Partner Interdependence Models

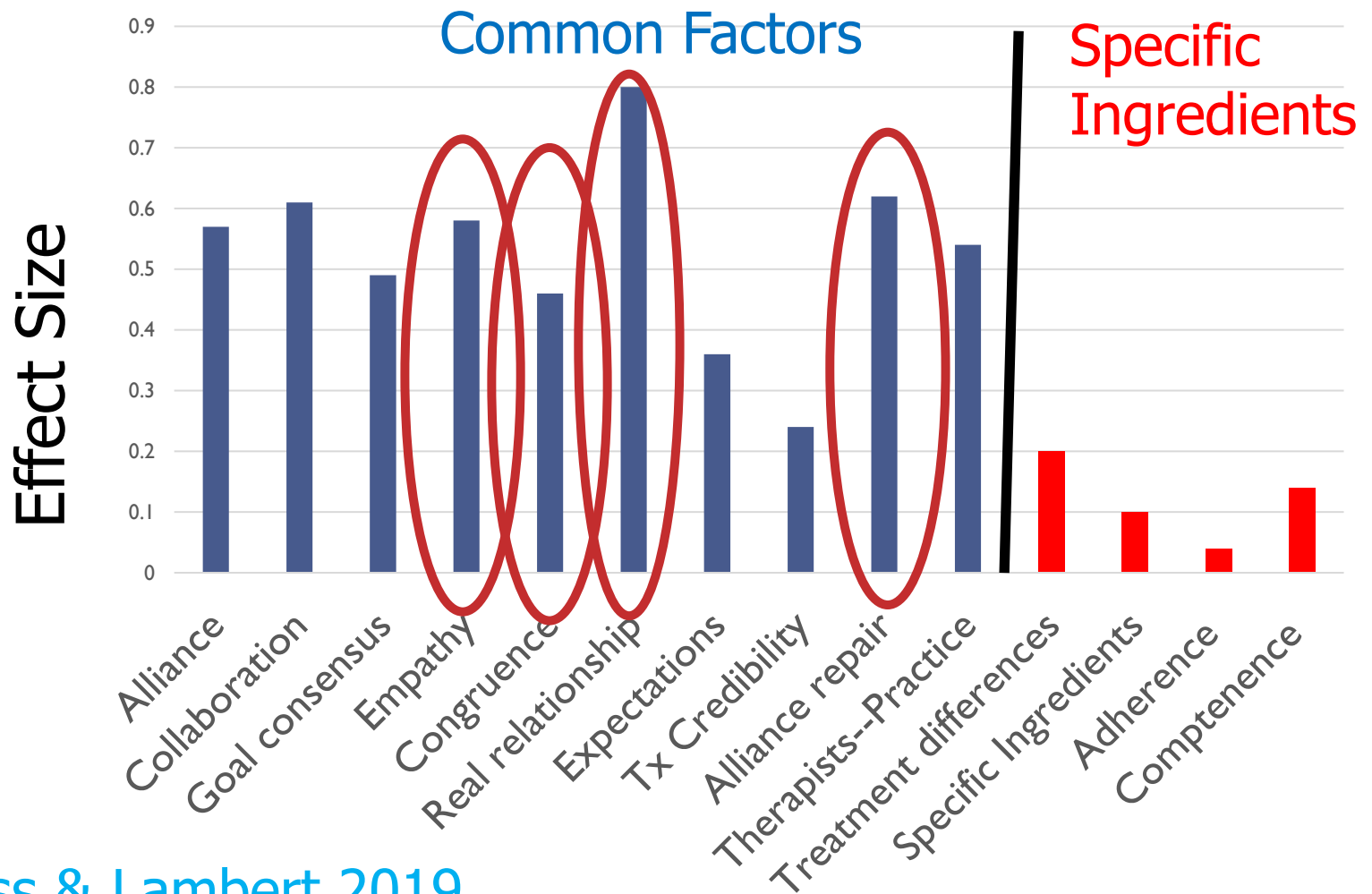
Gesine Wieder  
Dresden University of Technology

Travis J. Wiltshire  
University of Southern Denmark and Tilburg University

# Evidence for Relationship



# Science: Empathy, real relationship, congruence



Norcross & Lambert 2019

# EXPECTANCY Pathway

- We learned this was dangerous→



- Classical conditioning?
- Vicarious learning?
- Evolved to avoid electrical sockets?
- Verbal persuasion with **trusted** others!



# Expectation

- Expectation influence on well being
- Created through verbal persuasion
- Placebo effects

# Placebos—The amazing influence of the mind

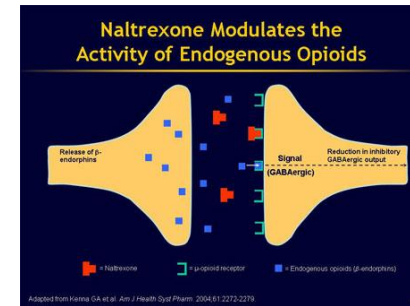


## Nothing works better!

For pain, Parkinson's disease, irritable bowel syndrome, depression, anxiety, fitness, taste, athletic performance....

# Pain

- Subjective reports
- Endogenous opioids



- Awareness of delivery
- Inoculations, size, price, color....

# Satiation (Crum et al. 2011)

- Presented as “indulgent” or “sensible”
- Actually 380 Calorie
- Indulgent more filling
- Greater decline in ghrelin (hunger hormone) in indulgent condition



versus



620 Calorie  
“Indulgent”

140 Calorie  
“Sensible”



# Fitness (Crum et al. 2007)

- Randomly assigned
- Given information... or not
- No differences in activity in 4 weeks
- Informed group decreased
  - Weight
  - Blood pressure
  - Body mass index
  - Waist to hip ratio



Versus



# Anxiety

Journal of Psychiatric Research 84 (2017) 90–97



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Psychiatric Research

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/psychires](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/psychires)



Specific expectancies are associated with symptomatic outcomes and side effect burden in a trial of chamomile extract for generalized anxiety disorder

John R. Keefe<sup>a</sup>, Jay Amsterdam<sup>b</sup>, Qing S. Li<sup>b</sup>, Irene Soeller<sup>b</sup>, Robert DeRubeis<sup>a</sup>, Jun J. Mao<sup>c,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Psychology, School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania, PA, USA

<sup>b</sup> Department of Psychiatry, Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, PA, USA

<sup>c</sup> Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, NY, USA



Anxiety: Borkovec & Costello, 1993; Brown et al., 2014; Chambless et al., 1997; Kirsch et al., 1983; Newman & Fisher, 2010; Rutherford et al., 2015; Westra et al., 2007

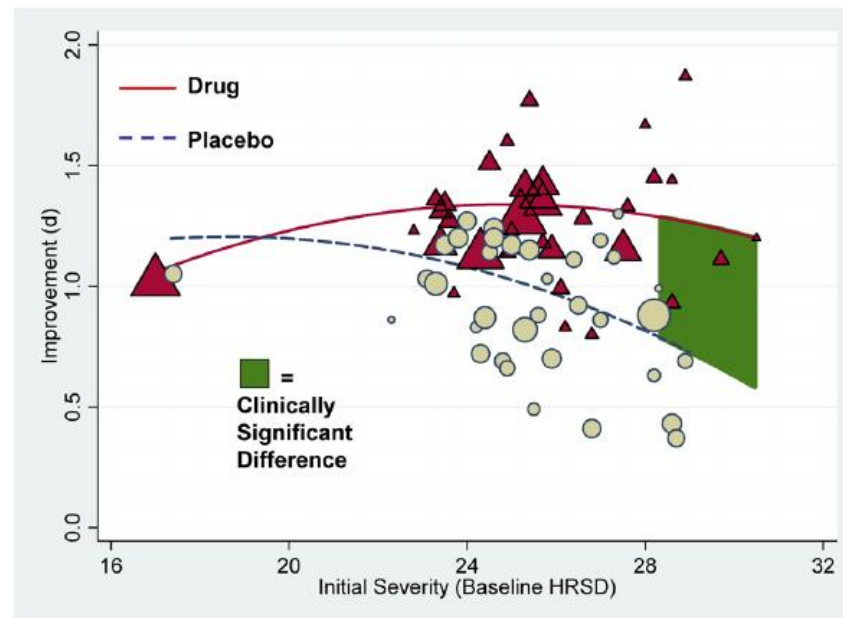
# Depression

OPEN ACCESS Freely available online

PLOS MEDICINE

## Initial Severity and Antidepressant Benefits: A Meta-Analysis of Data Submitted to the Food and Drug Administration

Irving Kirsch<sup>1\*</sup>, Brett J. Deacon<sup>2</sup>, Tania B. Huedo-Medina<sup>3</sup>, Alan Scoboria<sup>4</sup>, Thomas J. Moore<sup>5</sup>, Blair T. Johnson<sup>3</sup>



# Expectation

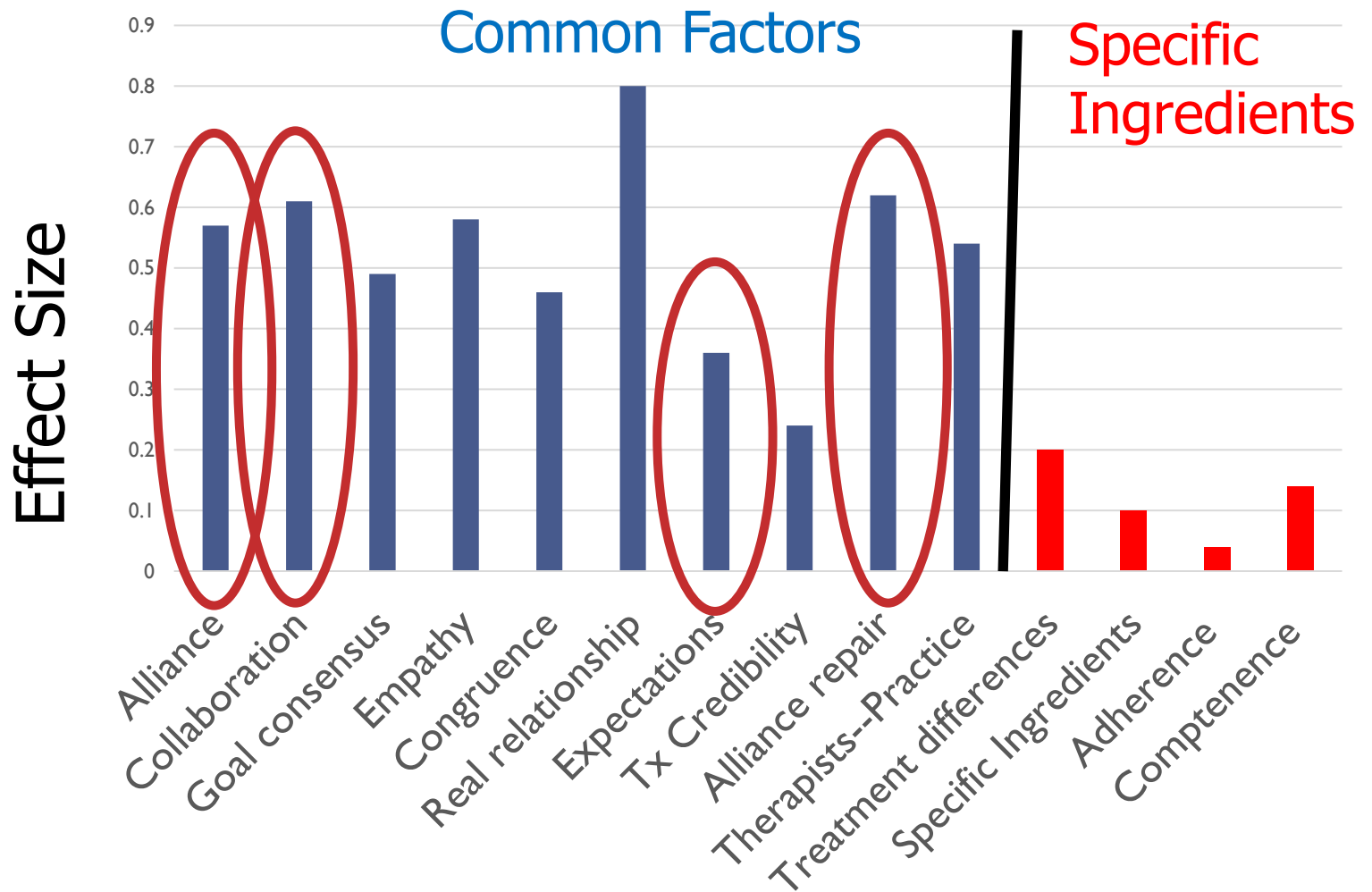
- Expectation influence on well being
- Placebo effects
- Agreement about tasks and goals of Tx—  
Alliance
- Treatment actions
- Created in interpersonal interaction
- Explanation of disorder and treatment



# Acceptability of Explanation

- Consistent with healing practice
- Consonant with patient's folk psychology
  - Culturally adapted Tx are more effective (Benish et al. 2011)
- Perceived qualities of therapist & therapist actions
  - Trust, being understood, working in patient's best interest
  - Persuasiveness
- Emotional context and salience of experience

# Science: Alliance, Collaboration, Expectations



# Effects of relationship in placebo

## CARE + EXPECTANCY (Kaptchuk et al., 2008)

- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Acupuncture Placebo
- Three conditions
  - Wait list (no placebo)
  - Limited interaction-- <5 minutes
  - Augmented interaction—warm, empathic, caring, but no intervention
- Results...

# Results

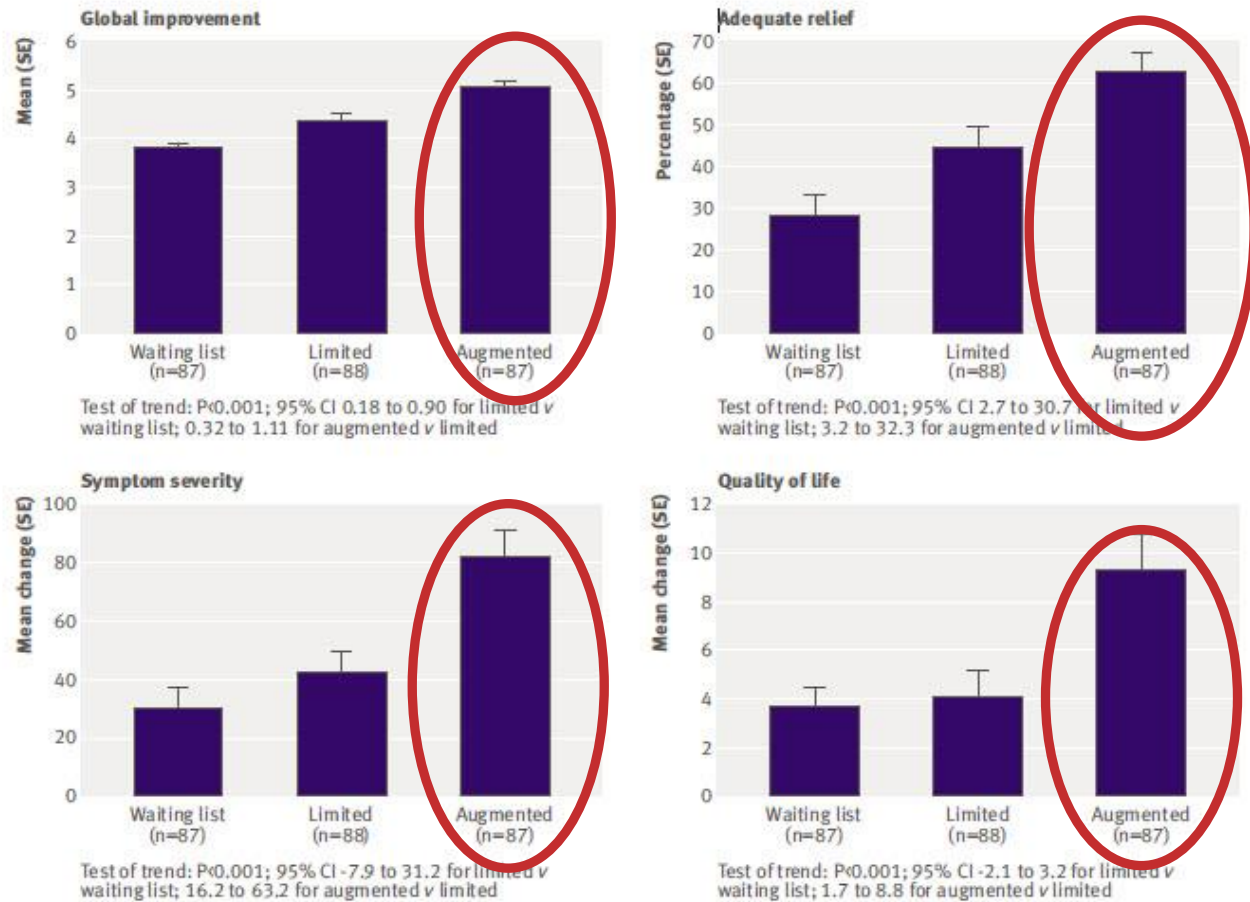
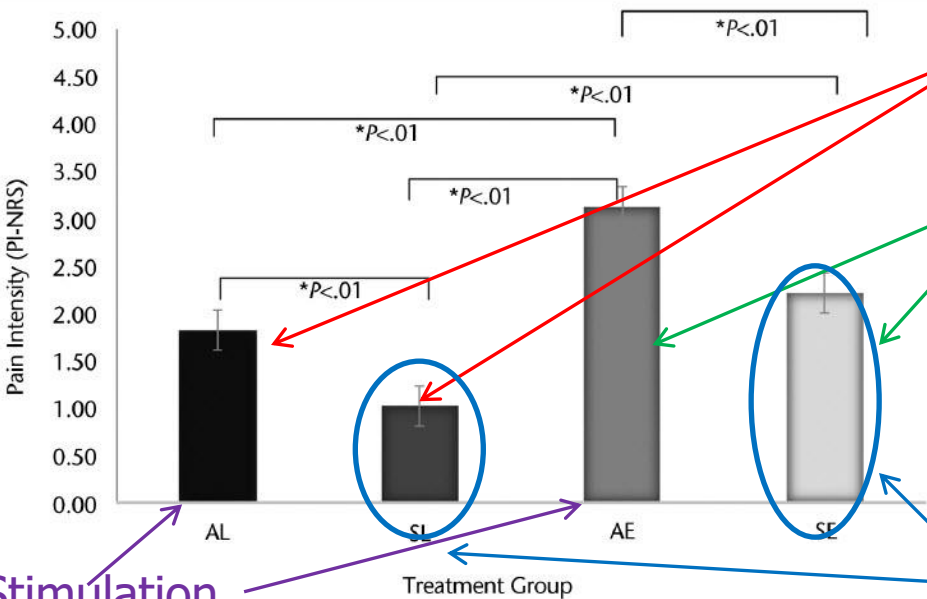


Fig 2 | Outcomes at three week end point

## Enhanced Therapeutic Alliance Modulates Pain Intensity and Muscle Pain Sensitivity in Patients With Chronic Low Back Pain: An Experimental Controlled Study

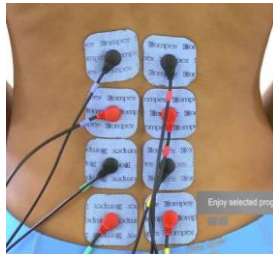
Jorge Fuentes, Susan Armijo-Olivo, Martha Funabashi, Maxi Miciak, Bruce Dick, Sharon Warren, Saifee Rashid, David J. Magee, Douglas P. Gross

J. Fuentes, PT, MScRS, PhD, Department of Physical Therapy, Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta, 3-48 Corbett Hall, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G4, and Department of Physical Therapy, Catholic University of Maule, Talca, Chile. Address all correspondence to Mr Fuentes at: [jorqef@ualberta.ca](mailto:jorqef@ualberta.ca).



Limited Alliance

Enhanced Alliance



Verum Stimulation

Placebo Stimulation





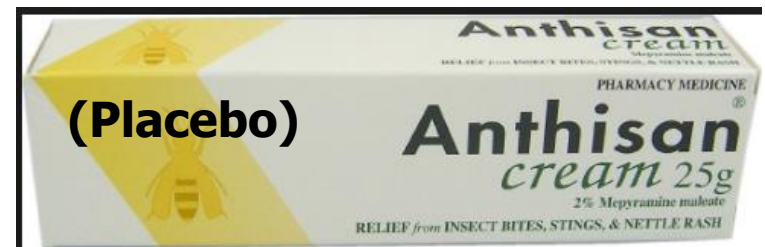
# Harnessing the Placebo Effect: Exploring the Influence of Physician Characteristics on Placebo Response

Lauren C. Howe, J. Parker Goyer, and Alia J. Crum  
Stanford University

Placebo administered under:

High or Low Competence

High or Low Warmth



# Warmth & Competence



- **High Warmth**

- Ask patient's name
- Eye contact
- Smiling
- Sitting close
- Warm posters on wall

- **Low Warmth**

- Do not patient name
- Minimal eye contact
- Stern
- Distal position
- No poster

- **High Competence**

- Clear confident tone
- No mistake in procedures
- Room well organized

- **Low Competence**

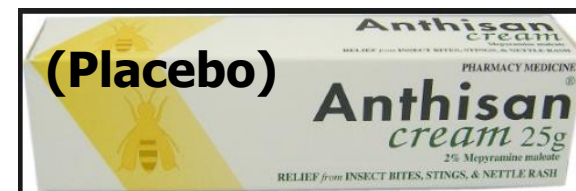
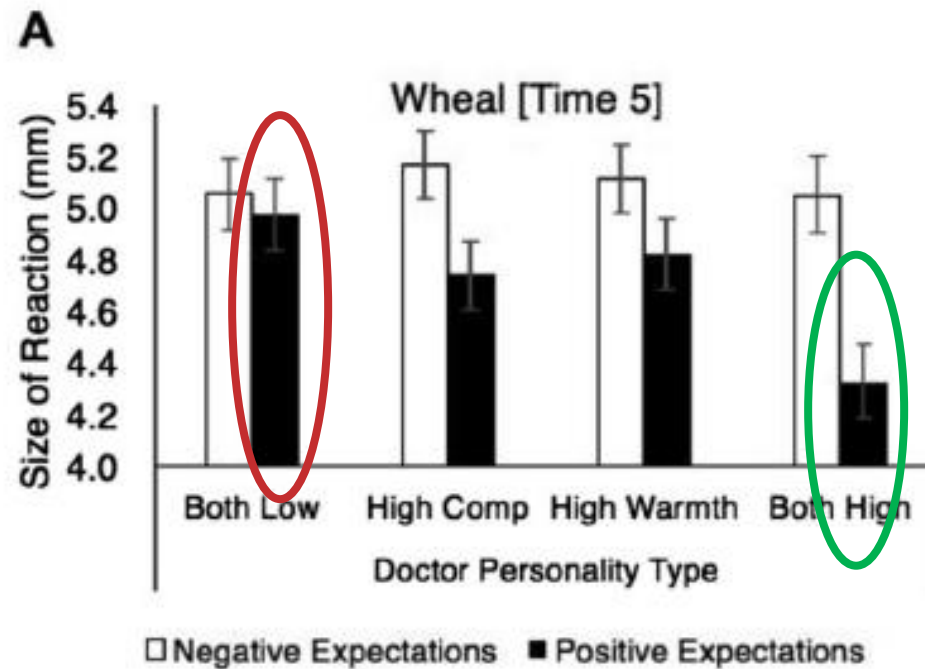
- Not verbally fluent
- Mistakes in procedures
- Messy desk, difficult to find equipment





# Harnessing the Placebo Effect: Exploring the Influence of Physician Characteristics on Placebo Response

Lauren C. Howe, J. Parker Goyer, and Alia J. Crum  
Stanford University



# Warmth and Competence



## When Your Doctor “Gets It” and “Gets You”: The Critical Role of Competence and Warmth in the Patient–Provider Interaction

*Lauren C. Howe<sup>1\*</sup>, Kari A. Leibowitz<sup>2</sup> and Alia J. Crum<sup>2\*</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Department of Business Administration, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland, <sup>2</sup> Department of Psychology, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, United States



# The Influence of the Patient-Clinician Relationship on Healthcare Outcomes: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials

John M. Kelley<sup>1,3\*</sup>, Gordon Kraft-Todd<sup>1</sup>, Lidia Schapira<sup>1,4</sup>, Joe Kossowsky<sup>2,5,6</sup>, Helen Riess<sup>1</sup>

**1** Empathy and Relational Science Program, Psychiatry Department, Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America, **2** Program in Placebo Studies and the Therapeutic Encounter, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center/Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America, **3** Psychology Department, Endicott College, Beverly, Massachusetts, United States of America, **4** Department of Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America, **5** Department of Anesthesiology, Perioperative and Pain Medicine, Boston Children's Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America, **6** Department of Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy, University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland

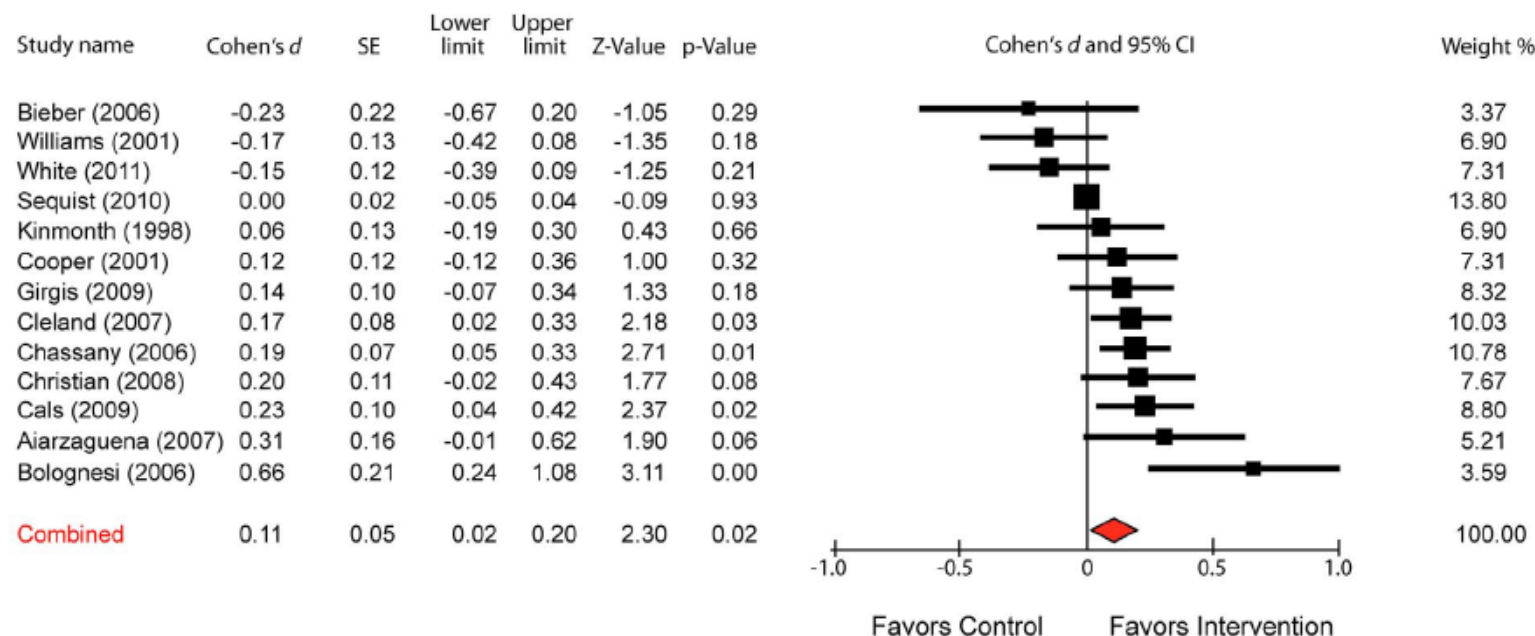


Figure 2. Forest Plot of Cohen's *d* for the Effect of the Patient-Clinician Relationship on Healthcare Outcomes.



# Warmth and Competence



Review

*TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences* Vol.11 No.2

Full text provided by [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)



## Universal dimensions of social cognition: warmth and competence

Susan T. Fiske<sup>1</sup>, Amy J.C. Cuddy<sup>2</sup> and Peter Glick<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, Green Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08540, USA

<sup>2</sup>Management and Organizations Department, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, 2001 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL 60208, USA

<sup>3</sup>Psychology Department, Lawrence University, PO Box 599, Appleton, WI 54912, USA

Warmth

Competence







*Psychotherapy Research*, 2022

Vol. 32, No. 2, 139–150, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2021.1916640>



EMPIRICAL PAPER

## **It's the therapist and the treatment: The structure of common therapeutic relationship factors**

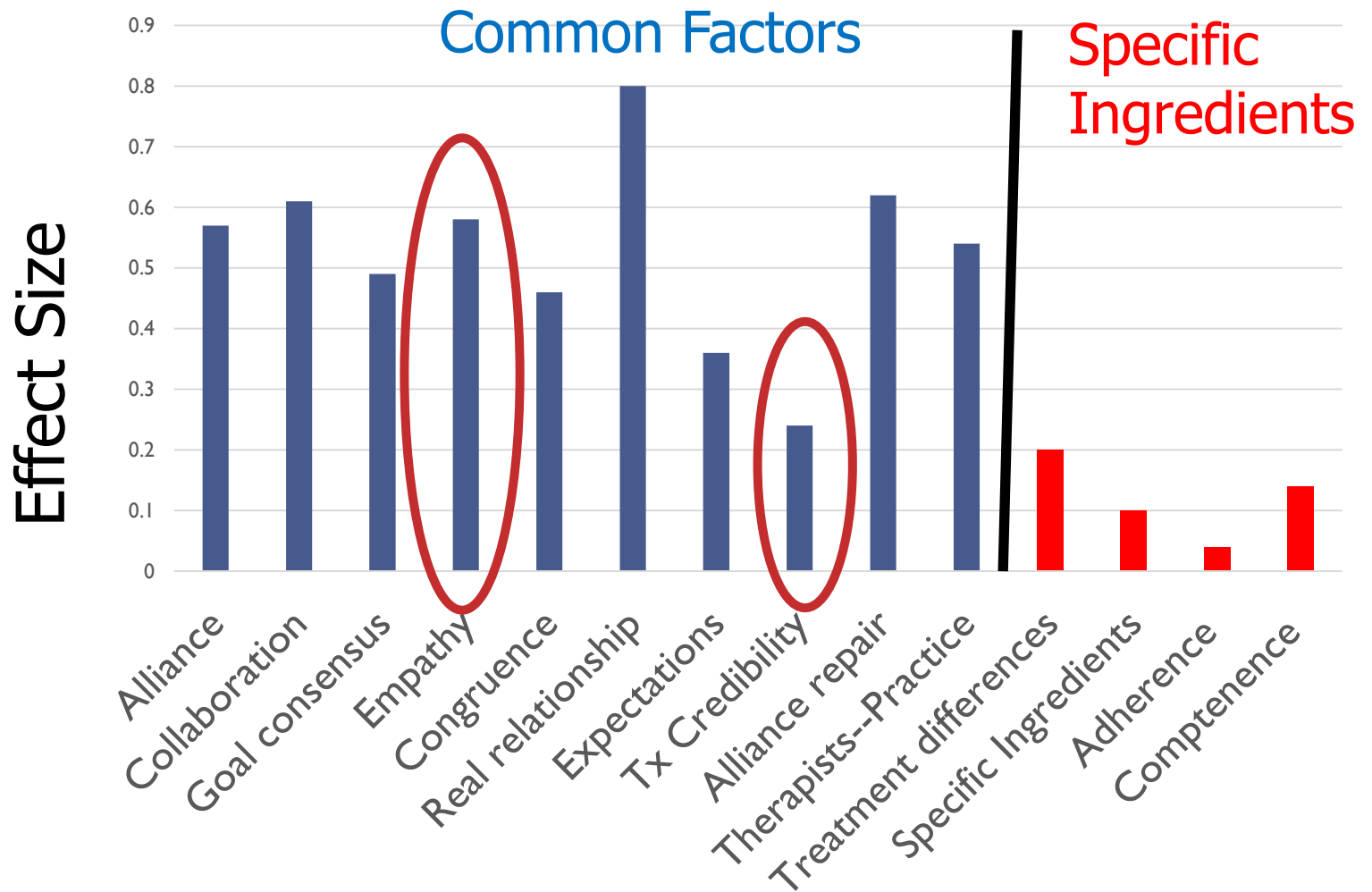
INGVILD FINSRUD <sup>1,2</sup>, HELENE A. NISSEN-LIE <sup>2</sup>, KARIANNE VRABEL <sup>1,2</sup>,  
ANDREAS HØSTMÆLINGEN <sup>2</sup>, BRUCE E. WAMPOLD <sup>1,3</sup>, & PÅL G. ULVENES <sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Modum Bad Research Institute, Vikersund, Norway;* <sup>2</sup>*Department of Psychology, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway* &

<sup>3</sup>*University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA*

*(Received 26 November 2020; revised 30 March 2021; accepted 31 March 2021)*

# Science: Empathy, tx credibility



# SPECIFIC Pathway

- In medicine:
  - Antibiotics/Proton pump inhibitor for gastric ulcer
  - Appendectomy for appendicitis
  - mRNA vaccines as prophylaxis for COVID
- In Psychotherapy:
  - Exposure for anxiety
  - Cognitive restructuring for depression
  - Empty chair
- But no differences

# NO DIFFERENCES!

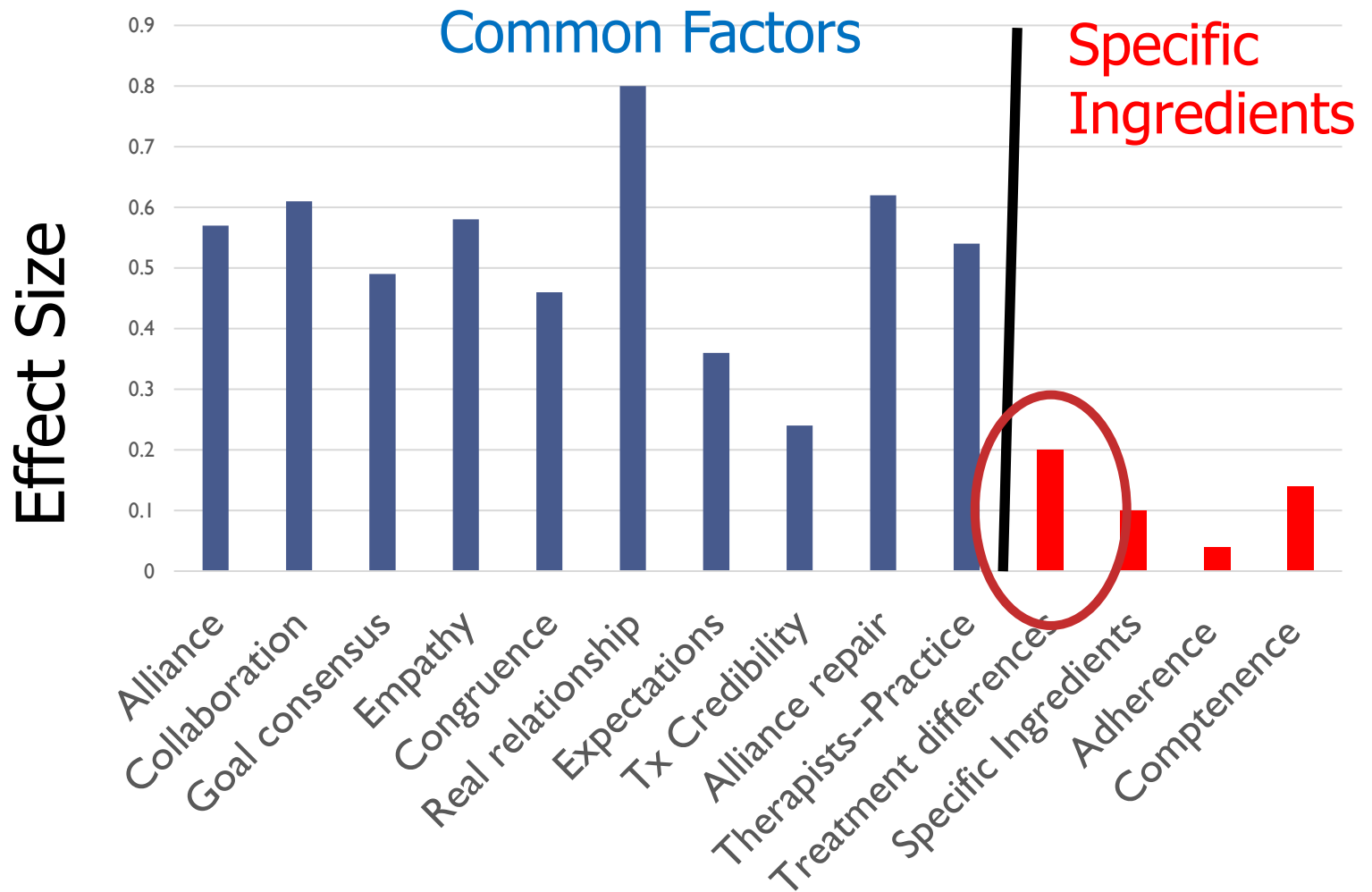
- Depression
- PTSD
- Anxiety (panic, SAD, GAD)
  - Simple phobias (stay tuned)
- Childhood disorders (incl. externalizing Dx)
- Eating disorders
- Alcohol/substance use disorders
- OCD?



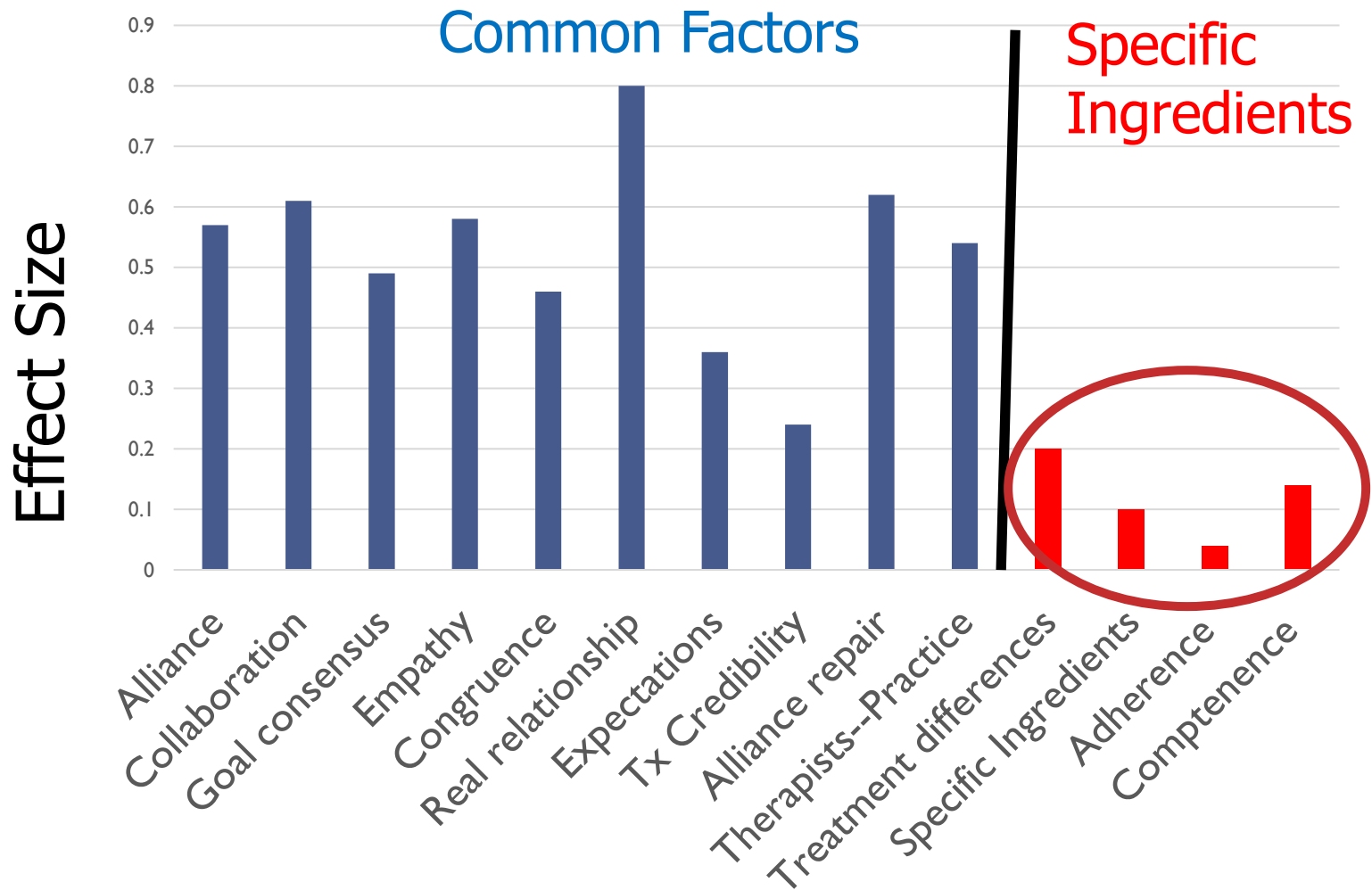
# Naturalistic Settings

- Data from NHS in Great Britain
- CBT = PD = Person Centered (stiles et al., 2017)
- Depression: CBT = Generic Counseling (Pybis et al., 2017)
  - But in fewer sessions!
- And many others....

# Science: Specific Ingredients



# Science: Specific Ingredients



# For optimal healing

- Desire for relief, distress reduction
- Belief that intervention works

- Explanation

- Symbolic



- Focus on problem (source of distress)
- Ritual (hard work)—attribution that change is due hard work and not external cause.

# Explanation

- The treatment rationale “includes an explanation of the **cause** of the patients’ distress and a **method for relieving it**” (Frank, 1971)
- Culturally acceptable
- Tailored to patient’s specific situation
- Provides a precise plan to achieve goal state
- Promotes HEALTHY actions
- But what makes an effective therapy?



# Therapists— the forgotten factor

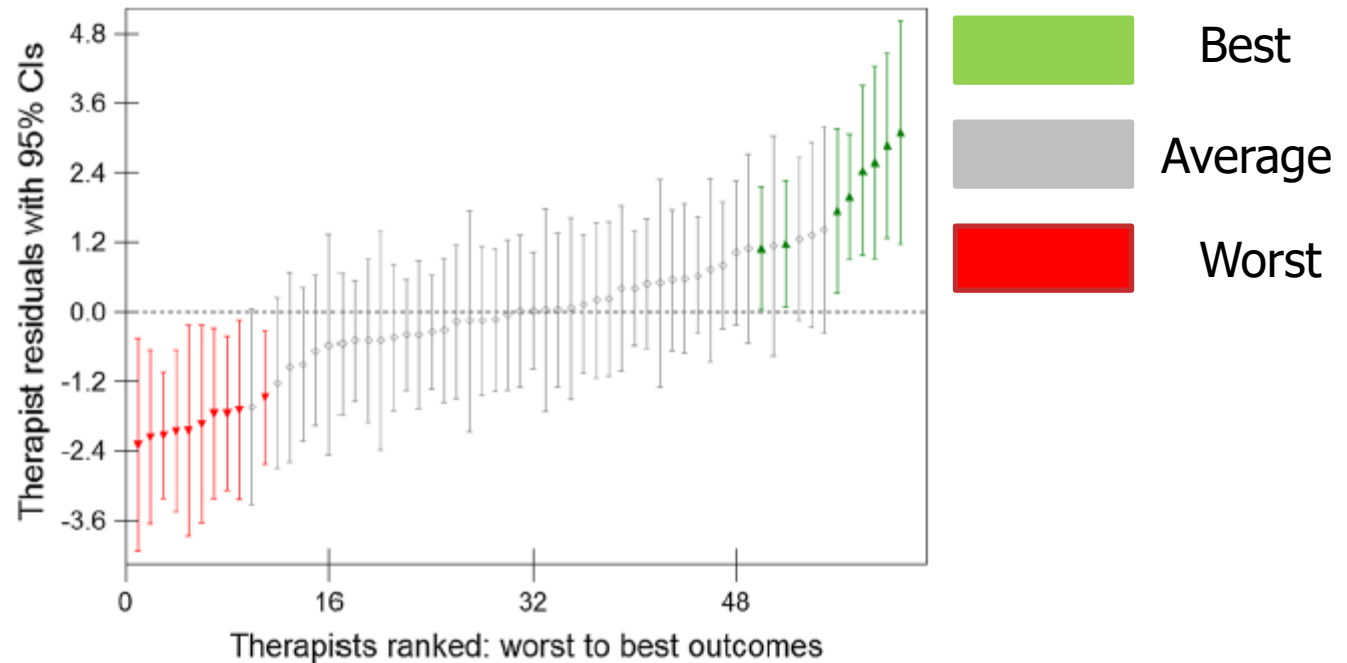
- Definition: Some therapists consistently attain better outcomes than other therapists
- Not due to contribution of patients
- Not due to chance (i.e., **luck!**)
- Compare to effects for other factors (e.g., treatment differences)
- Definition: **OUTCOMES**

# Therapist Effects—The Evidence

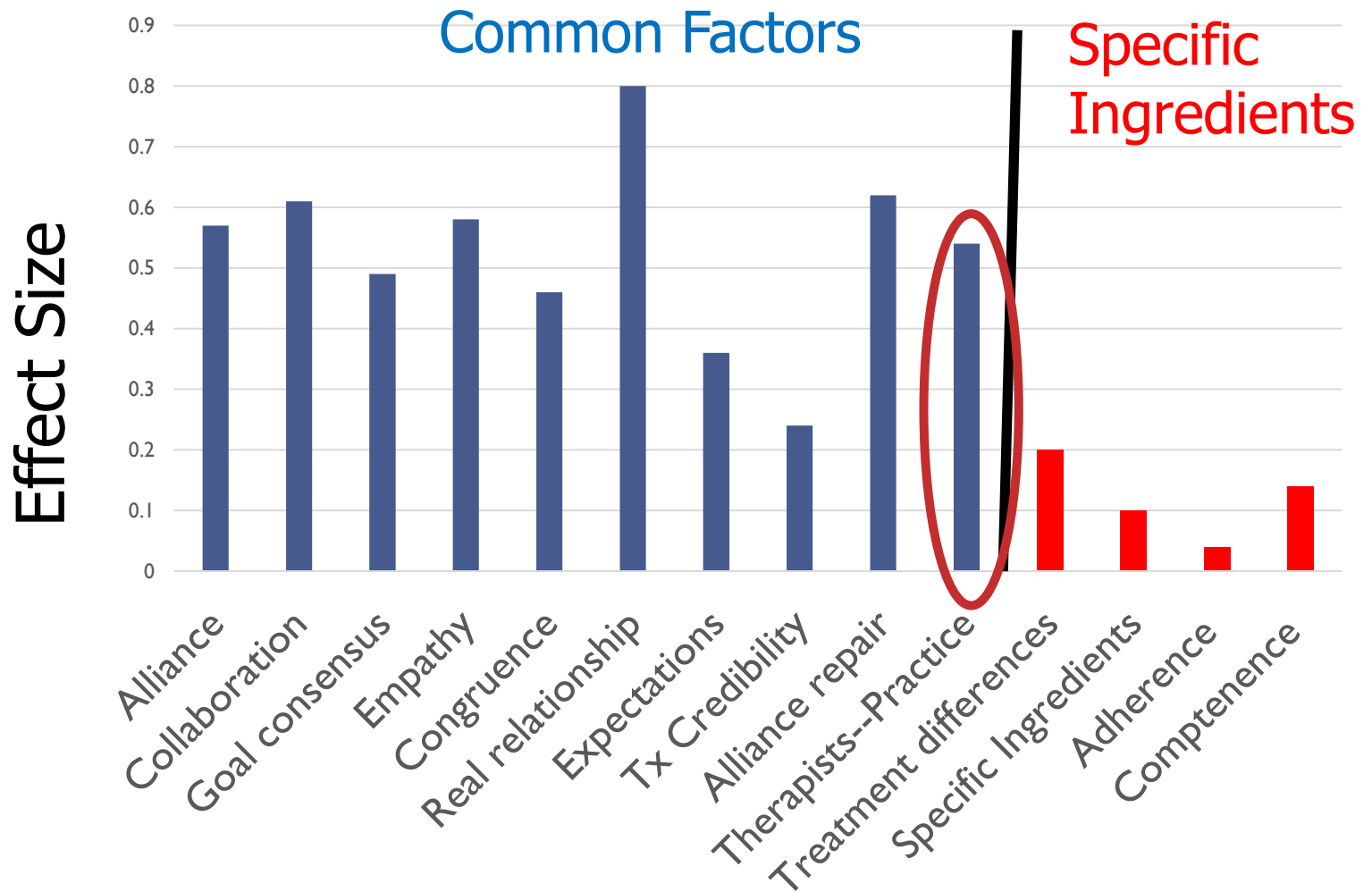
- Clinical Trials
  - Selected, trained, supervised and monitored
  - 3% of variability due to therapists (Baldwin & Imel, 2013; Wampold & Owen, 2021))
- Naturalistic settings
  - 7% due to therapists (Baldwin & Imel, 2013; Wampold & Owen, 2021)

# Illustration: therapist effects

(Saxon, Firth, & Barkham, 2017)



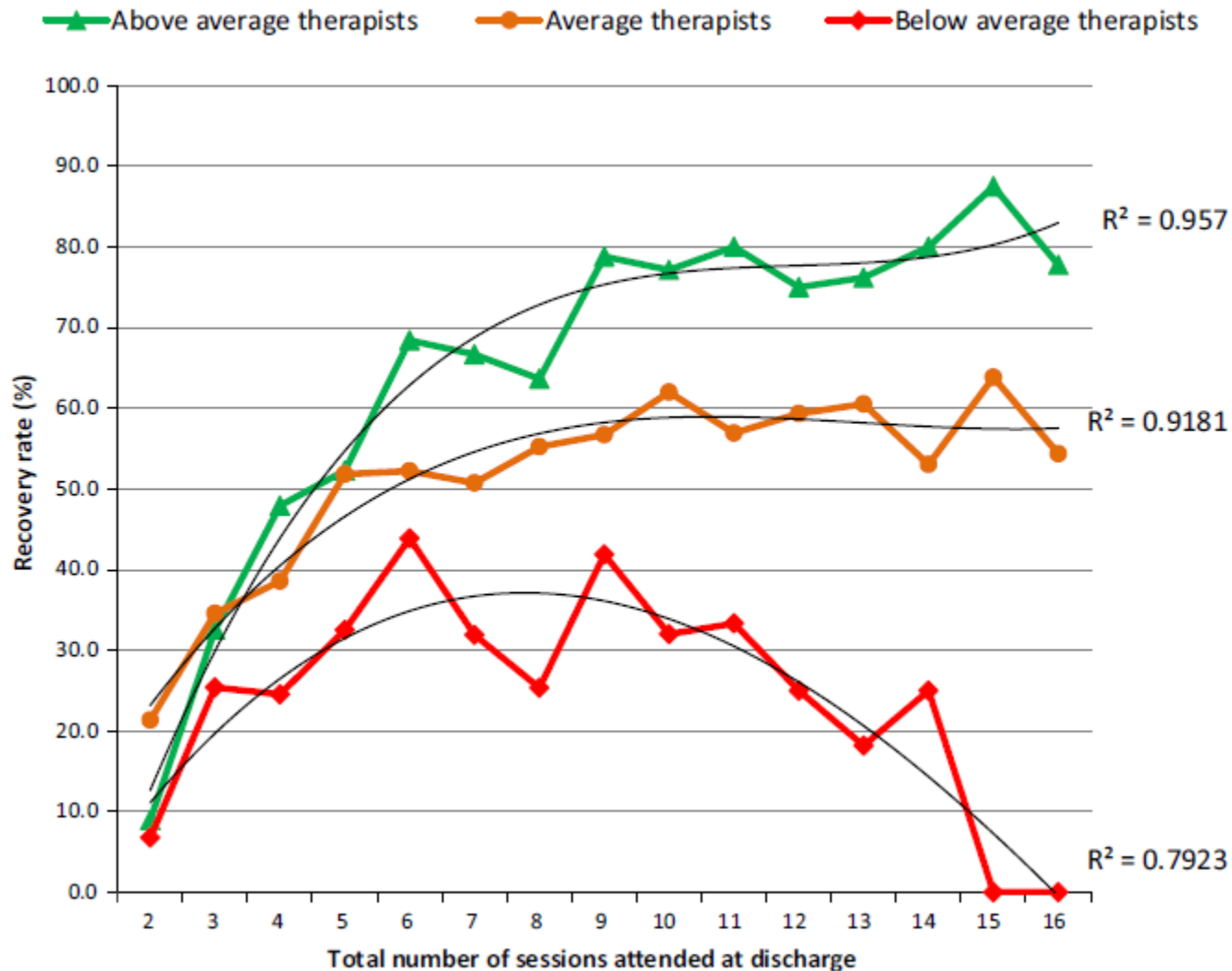
# Science: Therapists



# Importance of Therapist Effects

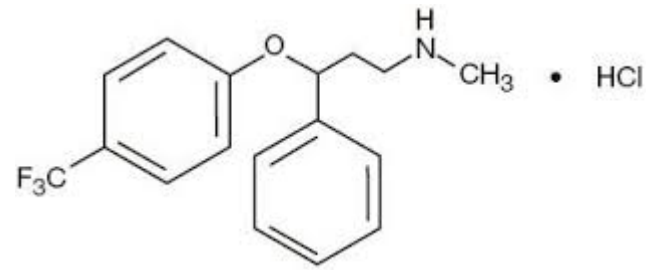
- Wampold & Brown (2005):
  - Top and bottom quartiles in year 1 compared to year 2
  - Top quartile had twice as large effects
  - Some therapists never helped a patient
- Saxon & Barkham (2012)
  - 19 of 119 therapist “below average”
  - Reassign their 1947 patients to average therapists
  - Additional 265 patients would have recovered

# Recovery Rates for Best and Worst therapists





# Psychiatrist Effects— Psychopharmacology

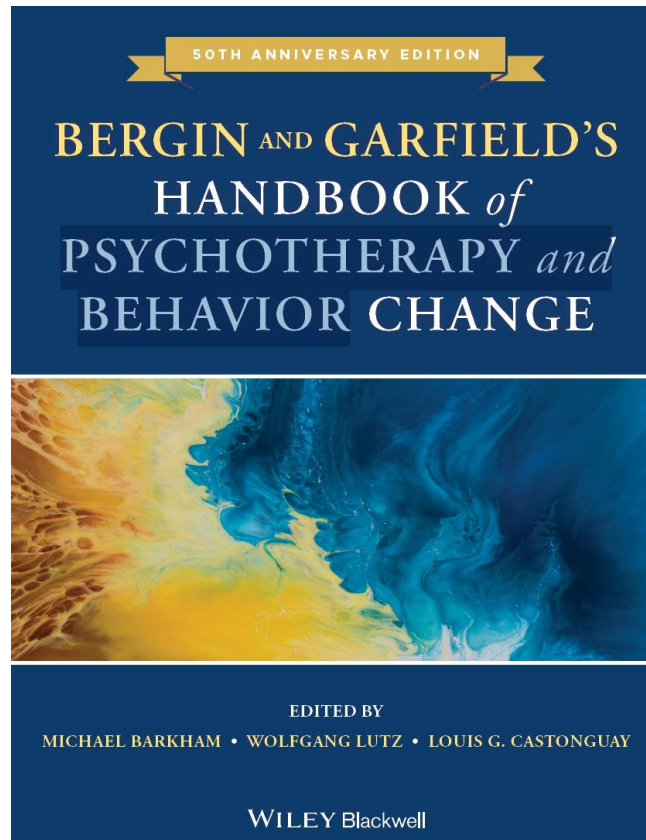


- Antidepressants: AD v. Placebo
- 45 minute initial,  $\approx$  20-30 mins/wk
- 3% due to treatment
- 9% due to psychiatrist administering the pill
- Best psychiatrists got better outcome with placebo than worst psychiatrists with antidepressant (McKay, Imel & Wamold, 2006)

# Characteristics and Actions of Effective Therapists?

- Consult Buetler (*Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change*) 2004
- We don't know
- And we don't care





## CHAPTER 9

### THERAPIST EFFECTS: HISTORY, METHODS, MAGNITUDE, AND CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE THERAPISTS

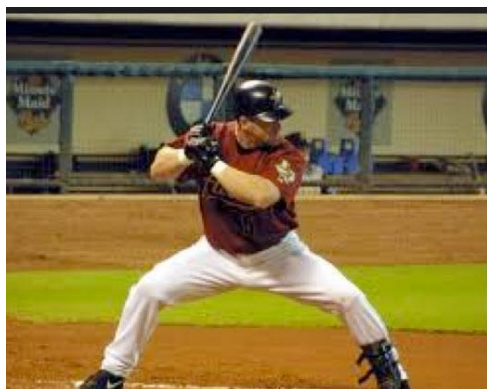
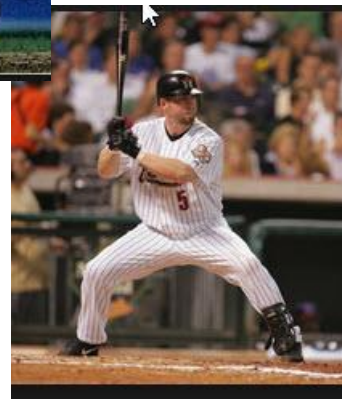
BRUCE E. WAMPOLD AND JESSE OWEN

#### Abstract

This chapter reviews the historical and current trends in the study of therapist effects. We discuss statistical methods for investigating therapist effects, with a primary focus and suggestion to utilize multilevel modeling to properly account for and understand therapist effects. Next, we review studies of therapist effects in randomized clinical trials and naturalistic treatment settings. The overall magnitude of therapist effects tends to be slightly greater in naturalistic settings than in randomized clinical trials, but it is sizable in comparison to other effects in psychotherapy. Then, we review the characteristics and actions that typify more effective therapists. It appears that more effective therapists have a sophisticated set of interpersonal skills that is displayed in interpersonally challenging situations. Finally, we provide some conclusions for research, practice, and training.

# Most effective therapists

- Observe therapy
- What would be observed?
- What about outcomes?
- Can you identify the most effective therapist?
- Ready? ....





# What does **NOT** make a difference in therapist outcomes

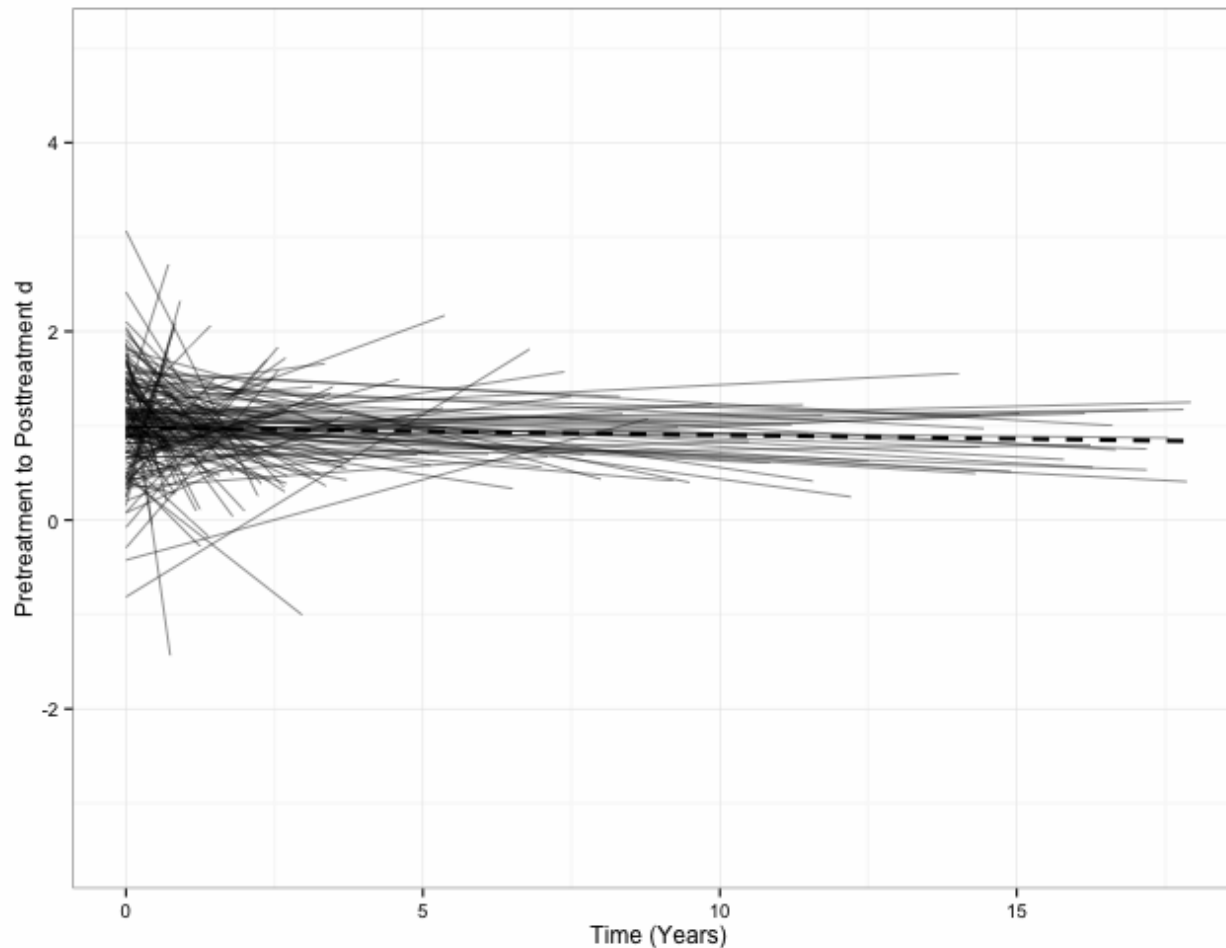
- Theoretical approach used in treatment
- Age
- Personality
- Self-reported social skills
- Professional degree (e.g., psychology, psychiatry, counseling, social work)
- Interviews of therapists by experts
- Experience?



# Do therapists improve over time?

170 therapists, 6500 patients, up to 18 years of experience  
(Goldberg et al., 2016)

Therapists used ROM feedback



# Who are the best therapists?

- Ask therapists: “compare your clinical skills and performance to others”
- 25% said “In the top 10%”
- None said below average!
- None identified failing cases
- Dunning-Kruger effect
  - Math skills, wine tasting, medical knowledge, firearm safety among hunters, etc.
- Consequences: de-motivating
- Measure outcomes

# Therapist Skills

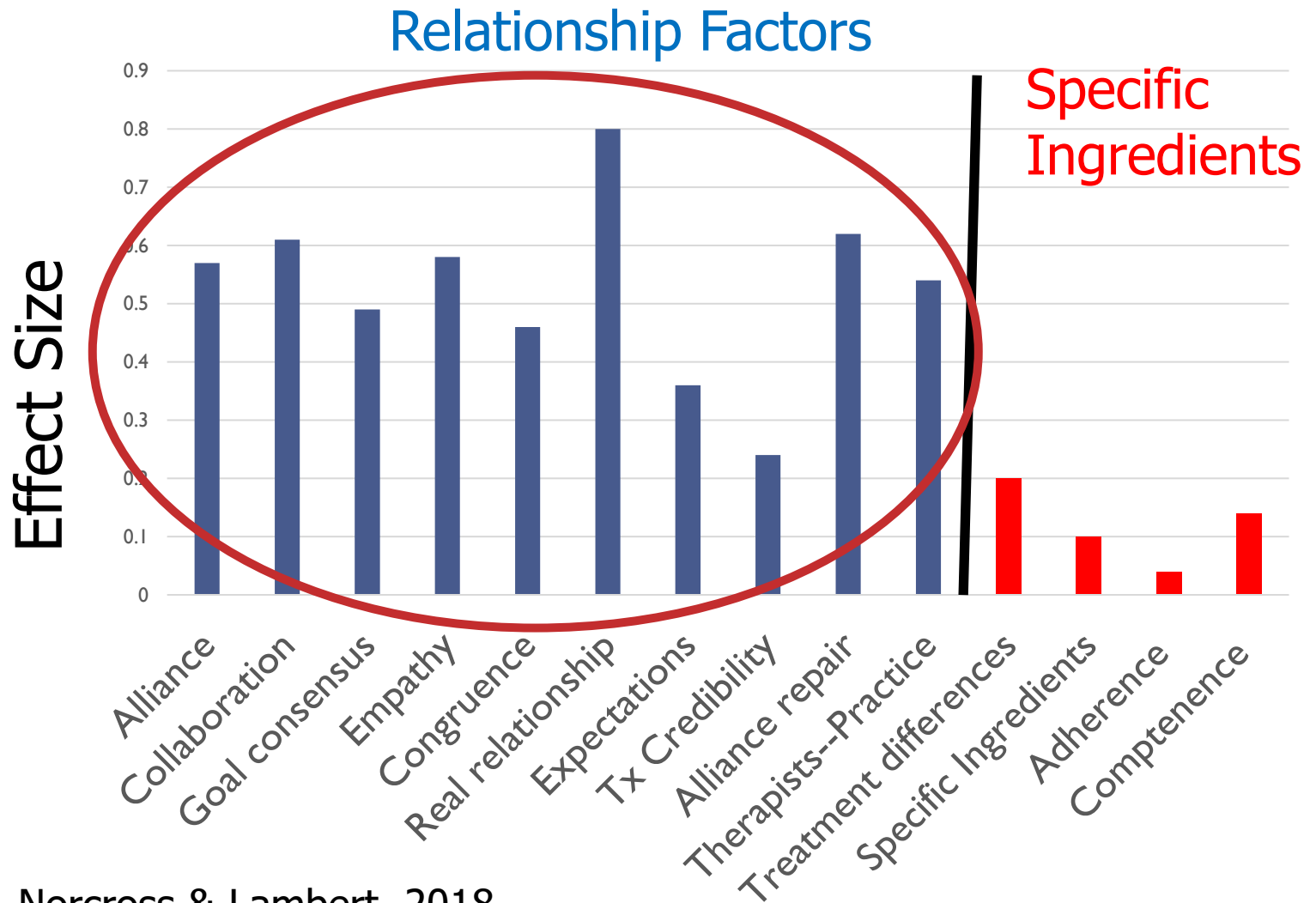
- Clever Experiment: Test therapists outside of therapy! (Anderson, 2009)



# Effective Therapists display Facilitative Interpersonal Skills (FIS)

- Verbal fluency
  - Persuasiveness
- } Competence
- Emotional perception
  - Affective modulation and expressiveness
  - Warmth and acceptance
  - Focus on other, understanding
- } Warmth
- Interpersonally challenging situations
  - Replicated by Schöttke et al. 2017

# Science: Therapists



Norcross & Lambert, 2018

Warmth

Competence







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EMPIRICAL PAPER

## **It's the therapist and the treatment: The structure of common therapeutic relationship factors**

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# Conclusions

- Psychotherapy works (whew)
- ... in multiple ways
  - CARE
  - EXPECTANCY
  - SPECIFIC
- Therapists, therapists, therapists
- Effective therapist have sophisticated set of interpersonal used in challenging affective situations
- Note: Evolved to respond to psychotherapy