



# Core Concept Compilations

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## What is Rapport?

A Compilation of Quotations for Professionals  
working in Diverse Contexts

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**Reference for this compilation**

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The term 'Rapport' is widely used in different fields (e.g. healthcare, investigative interviewing, sales/service encounters, intercultural communication) and typically regarded as extremely important for interactional 'success'. Yet the various strands of work often show little awareness of work in other disciplines and contexts and there is minimal integration. This compilation of quotations offers a first step in overcoming this weakness. I quote from work in different disciplines and contexts and organise the extracts under different themes. I do not comment on the extracts, but simply let them speak for themselves.

If you are interested in rapport from an intercultural or diverse context perspective, I encourage you to reflect all the way through on how applicable or suitable the frameworks, recommended strategies/tactics etc. are for different cultural settings and professional contexts.

The compilation of quotations covers the following aspects:

- Section 1: Conceptualising rapport
- Section 2: The importance/impact of rapport – a few examples
- Section 3: Rapport frameworks and approaches
- Section 4: Managing rapport
- Section 5: Establishing/building rapport
- Section 6: Rapport and the professions
- Section 7: Judging & assessing rapport
- Section 8: Culture and rapport
- Section 9: Rapport and related terms/concepts

If you would like help in understanding and/or addressing any rapport issues in your workplace, just get in touch: [info@globalpeopleconsulting.com](mailto:info@globalpeopleconsulting.com)

## Section 1. Conceptualising Rapport

### Defining rapport

Rapport exists only in interaction between individuals. It is not a personality trait although an individual may be particularly adept at developing rapport in certain situations.

(Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990b, p. 286)

Rapport may be considered a 'state of communicative alliance'—that is, rapport has meaning only as a description of a dyad or group. [...] rapport does not characterise the individual but rather the smoothness of the interaction.

(Abbe & Brandon, 2013, p. 238)



We use the term 'rapport' to refer to people's subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony, smoothness–turbulence and warmth–antagonism in interpersonal relations.

(Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 102)

We define rapport as a working relationship between operator and source based on a mutually shared understanding of each other's goals and needs, which can lead to useful, actionable intelligence or information.

(Kelly, Miller, Redlich, & Kleinman, 2013, p. 169)

Rapport is a customer's perception of having an enjoyable interaction with a service provider employee, characterized by a personal connection between the two interactants.

(Gremmler & Gwinner, 2000, p. 92)

Rapport remains an elusive concept to define, observe, and measure.

(L. J. Alison, Alison, Noone, Elntib, & Christiansen, 2013, p. 412)

### Characterising rapport

Relationships in which individuals experience rapport are characterized by mutual liking, trust, empathy, comfort, responsiveness to the other's needs, and self-reported feelings of closeness and harmony.

(Lakin, 2009, p. 1329)

Rapport does not necessarily imply that the two parties must have affection for one another [...]. Instead, rapport is based on respect [...], mutual trust [...], empathy [...], and reciprocity [...].

(Kelly et al., 2013, p. 169)

### Rapport – dynamic and co-constructed

Because rapport is a dynamic state, it can increase, decrease, or otherwise change over the course of an interaction. Monitoring the levels of attention, positivity, and coordination throughout the interaction can help alert an interviewer to signals that the source is becoming more or less receptive (and vice versa). In addition, it may be necessary to re-establish rapport in subsequent interactions with the same source, although this presumably happens more readily where there is an existing relationship.

(Abbe & Brandon, 2013, p. 241)

Because rapport is a dynamic state, it should be considered as distinct from the overall relationship that two parties have with one another. That is, one may have good rapport with another individual in a particular interaction, even if the relationship is not generally close or positive. Alternatively, one may experience days of being 'out of sync' with loved ones, where rapport is low but the overall relationship is valued and positive.

(Abbe & Brandon, 2013, p. 238)

It is the give-and-take, interactional nature of rapport, based on a respectful relationship between two humans that sets rapport apart from the other domains.

(Kelly et al., 2013, p. 169)

The mercurial nature of rapport makes it possible to be experienced by one party in the interview but not the other at certain times during the interview but not others.

(Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2015, p. 86)



We are assuming rapport to have a nature, to be real, rather than entirely a construction. We fall somewhere between the realist and constructivist positions. We believe that there is a nature that is directly available to our senses, but to some degree our perceptions are guided by our constructions. (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990a, p. 324)

## Section 2. The Importance/Impact of rapport – a few examples

Clinicians try to develop it with patients, sales personnel try to use it to make a deal, and new acquaintances try to predict from it the future of a relationship with one another. The concept of rapport is so familiar to psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, social workers, ministers, managers, and the general public that almost everyone has a rough-and-ready working definition of it. (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990b, p. 285)

Being able to build rapport with others is an essential life skill for forming solid, intimate relationships, but it can also be critical in most professional contexts. (E. Alison & Alison, 2020, p. 7)

Rapport is essential to high quality interactions and may be one way that various relationship types can provide the nutrients of healthy functioning. (Baker, Watlington, & Knee, 2020, p. 329)

### Rapport & the accomplishment of tasks

Individuals in rapport are likely to cooperate with one another to accomplish tasks and objectives that could not be accomplished alone as effectively, as efficiently, or at all. Cooperation facilitates many of the tasks of everyday living, including those most basic to species survival—eating, protection against harm, or procreation—as well as those involved in the actualization of human potential. The child in rapport with the parent is fed and nourished, workers in rapport achieve the project deadline, and the student and teacher in rapport pass knowledge on to the next generation. (Tickle-Degnen, 2006)

### Rapport and patient care

Developing and establishing rapport is crucial for a successful doctor–patient relationship, thereby avoiding dissatisfied patients later. (Kern, 2017, p. 2520)

### Rapport and student outcomes

Professor–student rapport is related to positive attitudes toward a course [...], positive attitudes toward an instructor [...], increased self-reported learning [...], increased attendance [...], and increased motivation [...]. Additionally, rapport is positively correlated to final course grades [...] and remaining enrolled in a class [...]. (Schriver & Kulynych, 2021)

### Rapport and offender outcomes

Parolee–parole officer rapport is vital to the post-release success of former prisoners in a number of ways: compliance [...], lower drug use [...], and lower rates of reoffending [...]. All of these outcomes



are predicated on having contact with a parole officer. Rapport—supportive or non-supportive—cannot be built without contact. [...]

Our study suggests that offender outcomes might also be significantly improved by simply enhancing the supervision process to incorporate techniques associated with the establishment of supportive rapport.

(Chamberlain, Gricius, Wallace, Borjas, & Ware, 2018, pp. 3586, 3597)

### Rapport and data collection for research purposes

Although it is generally acknowledged that rapport is important in [research] interview settings, it is possible that rapport could have both a negative or positive effect on the quality of the data obtained. [...]

The results showed that rapport between the interviewers and the respondents was associated with measures of data quality. However, the direction of the effects that we found differed depending on which measure of data quality was analysed. Missing responses were less likely to occur in cases where there were high levels of rapport. This finding is in line with previous studies, which indicated that rapport seems to promote more complete answers. Rapport seems to motivate respondents to cooperate with the interviewer, thereby preventing missing data.

Besides this positive effect of rapport on data quality, the results also showed a negative effect of rapport on data quality. When there is a high level of rapport, respondents are less likely to respond to sensitive questions in a socially undesirable and, therefore, honest manner. As previously stated, [...] participants generally give socially desirable answers to avoid embarrassment, and to avoid offending the interviewer. In that light, our finding does not seem surprising. When building rapport, or when it has already been established, respondents want to protect the existing level of rapport by avoiding any responses that might cause embarrassment or offense.

Finally, we studied the effect of rapport on the consistency of answers by comparing a question from the self-report questionnaire with a question posed during the face-to-face interview. We found that rapport has no significant effect on the consistency of the responses.

(Horsfall, Eikelenboom, Draisma, & Smit, 2021)

## Section 3. Rapport frameworks & approaches

### Competence approach

[There are] four cornerstones of rapport: honesty, empathy, autonomy and reflection (HEAR). The HEAR principles provide a blueprint for enhancing your interactions with others and improving your chances of getting the outcome you want. The second aspect is mastering the four fundamental styles of communication. We often summarise these by representing each with a totemic animal:

- T-Rex. How to manage confrontation: when you argue or challenge, be frank and forthright. Do not be attacking, sarcastic or punitive.
- Mouse. How to capitulate: when you need to concede or show deference, demonstrate humility and patience. But avoid weakness and uncertainty.
- Lion. How to establish control: good leaders are clear, in charge, set the agenda and support others. They are not demanding, dogmatic and pedantic.
- Monkey. How to build cooperation: when you want to create connection, show warmth, concern and togetherness. But be careful of drifting into overfamiliarity and inappropriate intimacy.

(E. Alison & Alison, 2020, pp. 11-12)

## Engagement approach

Rapport appears to be a multidimensional construct. From a study that included 41 depth interviews, we found that two particular dimensions of rapport—enjoyable interaction and personal connection—appear to be particularly salient in services contexts.

(Gremler & Gwinner, 2000, p. 94)

## Explanatory approach

Rapport management (the management of harmony–disharmony among people) entails three main interconnected components: the management of face, the management of sociality rights and obligations, and the management of interactional goals.

People often (although not always) have specific goals when they interact with others. These can be relational as well as transactional (i.e. task-focused) in nature. These ‘wants’ can significantly affect their perceptions of rapport because any failure to achieve them can cause frustration and annoyance.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, pp. 13, 17)



The Bases of Rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, p. 14)

‘Face’ is a key concept that is integral to rapport. It is a concept that is intuitively meaningful to most people, but one that is difficult to define precisely. It is concerned with people’s sense of worth, dignity and identity, and is associated with issues such as respect, honour, status, reputation and competence. [...] We have a fundamental desire for others to evaluate us positively, and so we typically want others to acknowledge (explicitly or implicitly) our positive qualities, and NOT to acknowledge our negative qualities. Face is associated with these affectively sensitive attributes [...] As the popular phrase ‘lose face’ conveys, we do not always receive the respect from others that we would like. People may criticize us or boss us around, insult us and call us names; and when they do, we typically feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

(Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, pp. 109-110)

Rights are the things that people feel entitled to expect from others and obligations are the things they feel others should (or should not) do or say. If a person breaches someone else’s perceived rights and/or obligations (and hence contravenes expected behaviour), interpersonal rapport is likely to be affected, and the affected person may appeal (explicitly or implicitly) to the notion of rights and obligations to justify their reaction.

(Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021, p. 138)

People’s perceived sociality rights and obligations can sometimes be based on legal/contractual requirements; more frequently, however, they derive from normative behaviour. People develop conceptions as to what frequently or typically happens in a given context and come to expect that. They may then develop a sense that others should or should not perform that behaviour, and prescriptive or proscriptive overtones become associated with that behaviour. As a result, people



start perceiving rights and obligations in relation to them, with the result that if the expected behaviour is not forthcoming, those people may then feel annoyed.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, pp. 15-16)

Sometimes behavioural norms and conventions are not arbitrary. They may [...] also be manifestations of more deeply held values. People typically hold value-laden beliefs about the principles that should underpin interaction. I label these beliefs as sociopragmatic interactional principles (SIPs) [...] and suggest that two fundamental ones are equity and association:

*Equity:* We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon, that we are not unfairly ordered about, and that we are not taken advantage of or exploited. There seem to be two components to this equity entitlement: the notion of *cost–benefit* (the extent to which we are exploited or disadvantaged, and the belief that costs and benefits should be kept roughly in balance through the principle of reciprocity), and the related issue of *autonomy–imposition* (the extent to which people control us or impose on us).

*Association:* We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to social involvement with others, in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them. These association rights relate partly to *interactional involvement – detachment* (the extent to which we associate with people, or dissociate ourselves from them), so that we feel, for example, that we are entitled to an appropriate amount of conversational interaction and social chit-chat with others (e.g. not ignored on the one hand, but not overwhelmed on the other). They also relate to *affective involvement – detachment* (the extent to which we share concerns, feelings and interests). Naturally, what counts as ‘an appropriate amount’ varies according to the nature of the relationship, as well as sociocultural norms and personal preferences.

On different occasions, and for contextual and goal-related reasons, people may give greater weight to equity than association, or vice versa.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, p. 16)

## Behavioural indicator approach

Our conceptualization of the nature of rapport is derived from an examination of the experience of rapport and the language of everyday conversation used to describe that experience. [...]

Furthermore, our conceptualization is guided by our goal of uncovering the behavioral correlates of the experience of rapport. We seek to describe a simple model that reflects not only the affective nature of rapport – that is, how it feels – but also reflects the behavioral expression of rapport. [...]

### Three Essential Components

During the experience of a high degree of rapport, participants in the interaction form a cohesiveness, become unified, through the expression of mutual attention to and involvement with one another. Their focus is directed toward the other, is other-involved. They experience the feeling as one of intense mutual interest in what the other is saying or doing. This *mutual attentiveness*, which creates the focused and cohesive interaction, is the first of three essential components that, we propose, form the structure of rapport.

The second essential component is the *positivity* present in the interaction. Interactants feeling in rapport with one another feel mutual friendliness and caring. Although positivity is closely related to the degree of involvement and attentiveness, a high level of one component does not necessarily imply a high level of the other component. Mutual attentiveness may be negative, as when teenage boys confront one another in verbal combat, or positive, as when boys engage in friendly banter.



Feelings of rapport emerge more readily when both a high degree of mutual attention and positivity are present, although [...] the relative importance of these components in the feeling and expression of rapport changes over the development of a relationship between individuals.

The third, and final, essential component of rapport is *coordination* between the participants. The terms *balance*, *harmony*, and *"in sync"* come to mind when thinking of the experience of rapport, and even though these terms have connotations, there is something more to them than just positive valence. In an interpersonal context they convey an image of equilibrium, of regularity and predictability, of coordination between the interactants. This high degree of behavioral coordination in informal social interaction has been described using analogies such as the smooth actions of a well-functioning athletic team [...] or the rhythm and synchronization of the members of an orchestra [...].

(Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990b, pp. 285-286)

Although not included in Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal's model, coordination not only can emerge in behaviour but also may emerge in cognition, in the form of shared understanding. Shared understanding is a common mental model of the situation, the parties' respective roles, and/or the goals for the interaction. Shared understanding may be pre-existing, if the parties come into the interaction with similar expectations and framing of the situation, or a shared history of interaction. Or it may be established through the interaction itself, through the mutual exchange of information, expectations, and preferences.

(Abbe & Brandon, 2013, p. 240)

## Section 4. Managing Rapport

### Rapport orientations

Speakers can hold any of the following four types of rapport orientation:

1. Rapport enhancement orientation: a desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations between the interlocutors;
2. Rapport maintenance orientation: a desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations between the interlocutors;
3. Rapport neglect orientation: a lack of concern or interest in the quality of relations between the interlocutors (perhaps because of a focus on self);
4. Rapport challenge orientation: a desire to challenge or impair harmonious relations between the interlocutors.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, p. 32)

### Rapport management domains

The following interrelated 'domains' all play important roles in the management of rapport.

1. *Illocutionary Domain*. This domain concerns the rapport-threatening/rapport-enhancing implications of performing speech acts, such as apologies, requests, compliments, and so on. Speech acts such as these need to be handled appropriately if harmonious relations are to be created and/or maintained.
2. *Discourse Domain*. This domain concerns the discourse content and discourse structure of an interchange. It includes issues such as topic choice and topic management (for example, the





inclusion/exclusion of personal topics), and the organization and sequencing of information. These issues need to be handled appropriately if harmonious relations are to be created and/or maintained, because the raising of sensitive topics, for example, can be rapport-threatening, as can frequent, sudden changes of topic.

3. *Participation Domain*. This domain (which usually is regarded as a component of discourse but can usefully be analysed as a domain in its own right) concerns the procedural aspects of an interchange, such as turn-taking (overlaps and inter-turn pauses, turn-taking rights and obligations), the inclusion/exclusion of people present, and the use/non-use of listener responses (verbal and non-verbal). These procedural aspects need to be handled appropriately if harmonious relations are to be created and/or maintained.
4. *Stylistic Domain*. This domain concerns the stylistic aspects of an interchange, such as choice of tone (for example, serious or joking), choice of genre-appropriate lexis and syntax, and choice of genre-appropriate terms of address or use of honorifics. These stylistic aspects need to be handled appropriately if harmonious relations are to be created and/or maintained.
5. *Non-verbal Domain*. This domain concerns the non-verbal aspects of an interchange, such as gestures and other body movements, eye contact, and proxemics. These non-verbal aspects also need to be handled appropriately if harmonious relations are to be created and/or maintained.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, pp. 20-21)

## Handling rapport-sensitive speech acts

Let us first consider how a selection of common speech acts can be viewed from a rapport management perspective.

- (1) *Orders and Requests*: [...] orders and requests can easily threaten rapport, because they can affect our autonomy, freedom of choice, and freedom from imposition, and thus can threaten our sense of equity rights (our entitlement to considerate treatment). They need to be worded, therefore, in such a way that we feel our rights to fair treatment have been adequately addressed, otherwise they may make us feel irritated or annoyed. However, not all orders and requests threaten our sense of equity rights. If we perceive a directive as being within the scope of our obligations, we are less likely to regard it as an infringement of our rights. [...]: [orders and requests] may be face-threatening, but need not always be. For example, if we are ordered to do something menial that we feel is 'below us', and we feel devalued in some way, then we may perceive the order to be face-threatening. On the other hand, on a different occasion, we may feel pleased or even honoured if someone asks us for help, feeling that it shows trust in our abilities and/or acceptance as a close friend. In this case, the request can 'give' us face. At other times, though, when people ask us to do something, we simply feel inconvenienced or imposed upon, but do not feel we have lost credibility or been devalued. In this case, the request has simply infringed our sense of sociality rights. In other words, orders and requests are rapport sensitive speech acts, and thus need to be managed appropriately. However, whether they are perceived to be threatening/enhancing of face or infringing/supporting of sociality rights (or a combination of these), depends on a range of circumstantial and personal factors.
- (2) *Apologies*: apologies are typically post-event speech acts, in the sense that some kind of offence or violation of social norms has taken place. In other words, people's sociality rights have been infringed in some way; e.g. if they have been kept waiting for an hour, their equity rights have been infringed through the 'cost' of wasting their time; or if they have been excluded from a conversation because of others using a language they do not know or because of their choice of



an unfamiliar topic, their association rights have been infringed. In these circumstances, there is a need to restore the 'balance' by the other person giving an apology. [...] there are two elements involved: the impact on the offender's face of other people's awareness of the offence, and the impact on the offender's face of the act of apologizing. Both are likely to be affected by the seriousness of the offence. If the offence is minor, neither are likely to be face-threatening to the offender. However, if the offence is more substantial, both can be very face-threatening to the offender: it can threaten his/her face in terms of personal competence, and if many people know about it and/or the apology is very public, it can also threaten his/her face in terms of general reputation or standing among others. Yet if no apology is forthcoming, perhaps for strategic reasons, this can be rapport-threatening to the offended person. It can aggravate his/her sense of sociality rights, because no (verbal) repair has been made for the infringement that occurred through the offence. And if the offended person feels that s/he has been treated with too much contempt, this can also result in a sense of face loss. [...]

These examples illustrate (but not exhaustively) how complex it is to manage rapport effectively. Rapport threat and rapport enhancement are subjective evaluations, which depend not simply on the content of the message, but on people's interpretations and reactions to who says what under what circumstances.

To complicate matters further, rapport management is not only a matter of handling selected speech acts appropriately. [...] all use of language (in other words, not only the performance of certain speech acts, but other aspects too) can affect people's interpretations of how appropriately face, sociality rights and interactional goals are managed, and can therefore affect rapport.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, pp. 19-20)

### Managing rapport through directness–indirectness

Directness–indirectness has traditionally been regarded as one of the most important ways of handling politeness. It can be viewed from three perspectives: linguistic, pragmatic inferential and interpersonal.

From a linguistic perspective, directness–indirectness is related to explicitness–implicitness. Explicitness is the extent to which a message is coded unambiguously in the words that are chosen; for example, *I can't come* is a more explicit refusal than *I need to work on my essay tonight*, and *Thanks very much* is a more explicit expression of gratitude than *That's really kind of you*. An explicit message is more direct than an implicit message. [...]

From a pragmatic inferential perspective, directness–indirectness is not only related to explicit encoding but also to communicative strength in a specific interaction. Communicative strength refers to the extent to which a message is clear or ambiguous in the particular context in which it is uttered. For example, suppose a shop customer selects two products and takes them to the cashier; if the cashier says *That's £10*, the meaning is very clearly *Pay me £10*. However, those same words in a different context could mean something different; if two friends were browsing in a shop, and one pointed at an object and said *That's £10*, s/he would not be asking for payment, but simply commenting on the cheapness (or costliness) of the product. The notion of conventionality has a major impact on judgements of communicative strength. For example, *Can you open the window* is technically an implicit request, because literally the words ask whether the person is able to open the window; however, the *can you ...* pattern is used so frequently for requests in English that few people would perceive it as implicit. This is a very important point for intercultural communication, because conventionalized patterns may be different across languages and cultures. For example, a rhetorical question may be conventionalized as a normal way of expressing disagreement in one



language/culture (and hence be perceived as a clear and unambiguous expression of disagreement) but not in another (and hence be perceived as an indirect expression of disagreement). [...]

From an interpersonal perspective, directness-indirectness is also related to bluntness. Bluntness is the extent to which the message is softened or mitigated. It can be managed in various ways:

- through the use of minimizers/intensifiers; for example, *I'm sorry I can't come* is less blunt than *I can't come*; and *tidy up, will you?* is less blunt than *tidy up*.
- through the number of elements that are used to convey a message; for example, *I'm sorry I'm late* is more blunt an apology than *I'm sorry I'm late. The traffic was terrible. I hope you aren't too cross with me*.
- through discourse structure and timing; building up to a major request is less blunt than asking it immediately, and asking sensitive questions shortly after meeting someone is more blunt than waiting until you know the person well.

A blunt or 'bald' [...] message is more direct than a cushioned message.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, p. 30)

## Rapport and giving directives

Effect on rapport of different wordings by a physician

Goal	Rapport neglect version	Rapport tending version
To get the baby's mother to stop putting her baby to sleep on his/her stomach	<i>When you put your baby on his stomach to sleep, you increase the risk of SIDS.</i> <i>Your mother's advice to put your baby on his stomach to sleep increases the risk of SIDS.</i> (Threatens face through criticising the mother and those she is close to)	<i>Although most mothers used to place babies on their stomach to sleep, we now know that it increases the risk of SIDS.</i> <i>It was common for mothers to place babies on their stomach to sleep when you were a baby, but we know now that it increases the risk of SIDS.</i> (Tends the face sensitivities of the mother and those she is close to)
To get the patient to take his/her medication every morning	<i>You must take your medication every morning</i> (Threatens autonomy rights) <i>You must take your medication every morning [walks towards door]</i> (Threatens association rights)	<i>I know you don't always feel like you need it, but you must take your medication every morning.</i> (Tends autonomy rights) <i>Why do you need to take your medication every morning?</i> [listens before walking towards door] (Tends association rights)

(Campbell, 2005, pp. 425, slightly adjusted)

## Handling conflict and disagreement

Very often in disagreement and conflict situations, participants simply talk at each other, asserting 'the truth' and not really listening to the other person's arguments. While one is talking, the other is rehearsing rebuttals. As Scharmer (2016, p. 10) puts it, they are 'downloading' because it seems they are accessing the same music track in their heads over and over again, confirming to themselves why they are right and others are wrong. Kahane (2004) explains that differences of opinion can become intractable with that kind of approach. To gain the benefits of diverse perspectives, participants need to move from 'telling mode' to 'inquiry mode', and from 'downloading listening' to 'learning mode' listening.



This, of course, is not always easy to achieve, especially when the disputed issue is of critical importance to the participants, perhaps more so than their relationship. Spencer-Oatey (2008a, p. 32) points out that sometimes people hold a rapport challenge orientation, and purposefully engage in debate and argument.

(Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021, p. 237)

## Responding to objections and criticisms

### Overcoming buying objections

When sales representatives voice their disagreement, they threaten rapport with their customers. Sales-training materials sometimes advise that sales representatives should never argue with their customers. However, any attempt to overcome a buying objection will necessarily involve an “argument,” which will intrinsically threaten rapport. The salient point, we believe, is that the sales representative must mitigate that threat by explicitly managing rapport through his or her verbal choices during interaction: tending to the customer’s face wants and sociality rights while denying the customer’s claims. [...]

We suggest that sales representatives might improve their effectiveness in interactions with customers by choosing a communication strategy based on the following heuristic:

1. What is the quality of my current relationship (i.e., rapport level) with the customer?
2. Are the customer’s (quality or social-identity) face wants threatened in this interaction? If so, how can I mitigate that threat?
3. Are the customer’s sociality rights related to autonomy or association threatened in this interaction? If so, how can I mitigate that threat?

(Campbell & Davis, 2006, pp. 54, 63)

## Handling embarrassing situations

How pharmacy frontline sales employees (FLSEs) try to build rapport with customers who feel embarrassed about their issue.

Type of Behaviour	Type of Rapport Strategy Used	Example of FLSE Behaviour
Nonverbal behaviour	Proxemics	Approaches the customer so the interaction can be more discreet (e.g., leaves the counter and goes to a corner of the store).
	Paralanguage	Adapts the voice to the same volume used by the customer.
	Camouflage	Removes products from the package or delivers them very discreetly so that it cannot be identified.
	Agility	Provides more agile service than is normal so that the customer can make the purchase as quickly as possible.
	Omission	Establishes a certain distance, aware that customers feel even more embarrassed when recognized. Hence, this category was used in its opposite pole: non-recognition of the customer on purpose, seeking anonymity.
	Gender	Notes that the customer would prefer to be served by someone of the same sex.



Multifaceted behaviour (complex pattern of behavior)	Warm treatment	Acts respectfully, but friendly and warmly.
	Treatment with professional distance	Acts respectfully, maintaining seriousness and professional distance.
	Natural service	Acts respectfully, maintaining a tone of naturalness in the entire encounter.
	Discreet service	Acts respectfully, maintaining discretion in all details.
Behavior with verbal emphasis	Reassurance	Talks with customers, trying to calm them about the purchase, saying that buying these products is natural.
	Small talk	Engages in small talk with the customers, trying to put them more at ease.
	Information sharing	Shares information about products, brands, availability and prices, but does not give an opinion in this respect.
	Questioning	Asks specific questions to identify the type of product or medicine the customer is looking for.
	Nominal imitation	Refers to the products in the same terms the customers use.

Behaviors to establish rapport in embarrassing situations in pharmacies

(d'Abreu, Troccoli, & Sauerbronn, 2021)

## Section 5. Establishing/Building Rapport

### The Importance of context

There are relatively few rapport-building behaviors that are effective across all situations.

(Abbe & Brandon, 2014, p. 215)

There are some clear differences between social and professional contexts, and it is reasonable to suggest that the process of developing rapport might differ between the two. Social contexts feature the freedom to interact on an equal footing with others who share similar interests and goals, and mutual rapport can develop naturally (or not) over time. In contrast, professional contexts are often characterized by one individual purposefully attempting to develop rapport with another, often within a short period of time. Further, rather than being on an equal footing, professional contexts often feature imbalances of power or status, differences in motivation to engage, and differences in desired outcomes from the interaction. For example, in an investigative interview there is an inevitable power imbalance between the interviewer and interviewee. Interviewees may lack motivation to cooperate or may even deliberately resist developing rapport with the interviewer. There are also status imbalances, whereby whether someone is the giver or receiver of information is defined by their formal role in the interaction. [...] We believe that drawing the distinction between rapport that occurs naturally and rapport that is engineered is likely to be helpful for practitioners who are expected to attempt to build rapport in professional interactions, and yet might never achieve genuine mutual rapport as traditionally conceptualized.

Given the differences in the development of rapport in professional versus social contexts, we propose the idea that the term “professional rapport-building” is useful to describe the process of building rapport within a task-oriented professional interaction. Professional rapport-building can be



understood as an intentional use of rapport behaviors to facilitate a positive interaction that may, or may not, lead to establishing genuine mutual rapport.

(Gabbert et al., 2021, p. 330)

## The process of rapport building

A useful framework that addresses relational development comes from work on the Chinese concept of *guanxi* 关系 (relations). *Guanxi* is a complex concept and one that some people interpret in an instrumental way; namely, drawing on personal connections in order to secure favours. However, [...] this is too a narrow interpretation. In fact, Chinese people use it extremely frequently in their daily lives with a range of meanings, sometimes with broad meanings such as connections/relations (in general), and sometimes with more specific meanings, such as relationships or rapport. [...]

Chen and Chen (2004, p. 310) propose a very helpful process model of *guanxi* development which has three main stages: initiating, building, and using.

<b>Guanxi stages</b>	<b>Guanxi objectives</b>	<b>Interactive activities</b>	<b>Operating principles</b>
Initiating	Setting up bases by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building common social identities</li> <li>• Establishing common third parties</li> <li>• Anticipating future mutual benefits</li> </ul>	Familiarizing	Mutual self-disclosure
Building	Enhancing quality by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing trust (<i>xinren</i>)</li> <li>• Increasing feeling (<i>ganqing</i>)</li> </ul>	Expressive & instrumental transactions	Dynamic reciprocity
Using	Getting benefits, re-evaluating <i>guanxi</i> quality	Exchanging favors	Long-term equity

(Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021, pp. 288-289)

## Issues of timing

In general, rapport should be a consideration throughout the interview. Rapport is likely more critical in the earlier stages of the interview and often appears explicitly as an early stage of interview techniques, such as in the 'Engage and Explain' phase of the PEACE model. But treating rapport as a stage can be misleading because, although important to develop early on, rapport can fluctuate over the course of an interview. One should not assume that once established, rapport can be assumed without further effort and therefore ignored.

(Abbe & Brandon, 2013, p. 241)

## Cornerstones of rapport

Rapport should be built on four core foundations (HEAR):

1. Honesty: avoid using deceit or trickery; be clear and objective; keep calm – leave your emotions at the door.
2. Empathy: try to genuinely understand what a person is thinking and feeling. It doesn't require softness or warmth, but it does require that you show an analytical interest in uncovering the other person's core beliefs and values.
3. Autonomy: emphasise other people's free will and right to choose. Freedom to choose appeals to an instinctive drive within all of us to be in control of our own destiny.



- Reflection: identify and repeat back those elements that are significant, meaningful and tactical to help guide a conversation towards a goal.

(E. Alison & Alison, 2020, Chapter 3)

## Section 6. Rapport and the Professions

### Business

#### Customer service

Our review of the extant literature and the analysis of our interview data suggest that an enjoyable interaction and personal connection are common and important facets of rapport. [...]

We contend that rapport is related to three outcomes of interest to marketers: satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of mouth communication. [...]

For some types of services, customers prefer not to engage in exchanges with relational consequences. In fact, some customers may perceive customer-provider relationship building as intrusive. [...] However, we believe that in most exchanges customers still desire an enjoyable interaction with the service employee. [...]

The enjoyable interaction dimension of rapport can be achieved by (a) relating to the customer's needs, (b) caring about the customer's service outcome, and/or (c) using humor to place the customer at ease, without any appreciable lengthening of the transaction and without the need for multiple interactions with the same employee. This discussion suggests two research questions: Do consumers classify an enjoyable interaction without a personal connection as rapport? Does rapport still have a significant impact on the customer's experience if the personal connection element is not present?

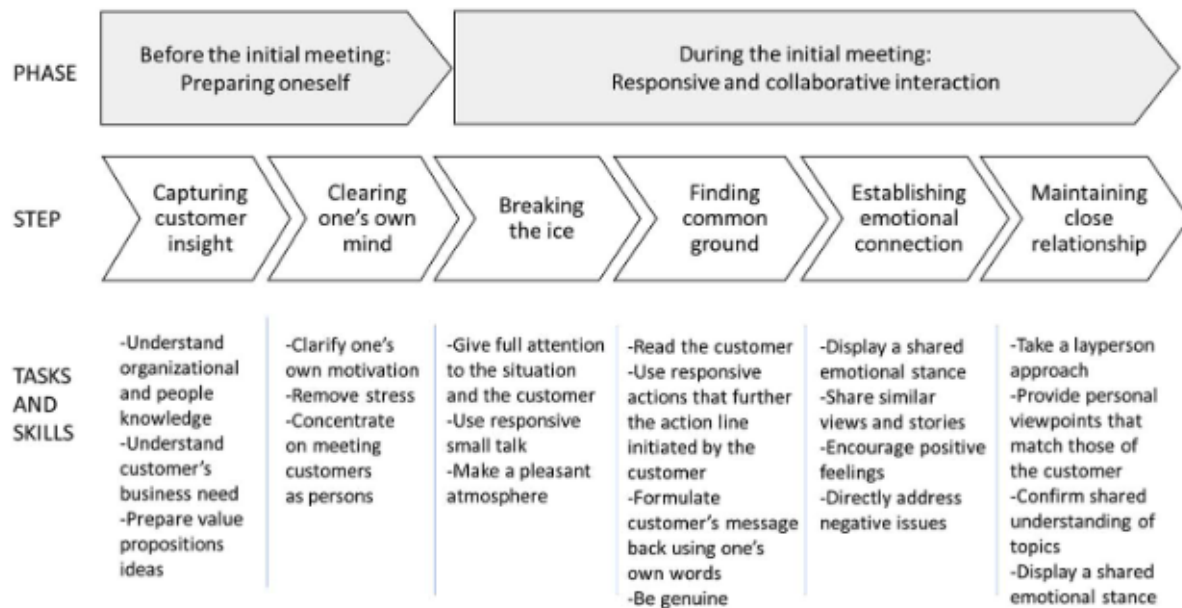
(Gremler & Gwinner, 2000, pp. 91, 94, 100)

#### Sales – Study 1

“Rapport-building in authentic B2B sales interaction”

Categories	Explanation
1. Undergoing mental preparation and orientation	Previewing the customer's profile and planning accordingly. Self-talk and meditation before entering the initial meeting. Thinking about and clarifying one's own motivation and inspiration
2. Showing informality and originality	Taking a purposefully informal approach through talking style (e.g., dialect) and clothing, making human “mistakes,” and using humor. Being a genuine person, avoiding the impression of a well-trained “stereotypical” salesperson
3. Engaging in small talk	Finding a shared tone and speed, using humor, discussing non-business topics on shared interests, collecting background information to get the right “handles” for later business talks
4. Demonstrating similarity	Observing customer behavior (speed, willingness to control, extroversion, knowledge orientation, sense of humor, decision-making style) and emotional stances to adapt one's own behavior accordingly.
5. Listening	Showing empathy and genuine interest in the customer both personally and professionally. Asking questions and following up on the customer's interests and his/her line of action. Using eye contact and body language
6. Facilitating positive feelings	Identifying and removing customers' potentially negative feelings or addressing customers' disconnectedness and absentmindedness. Intervening and turning the tide when necessary. Reestablishing the purpose and inspiration for the meeting

Categories of salespeople's rapport building actions as recalled by the participants themselves. (Kaski, Niemi, & Pullins, 2018, p. 241)



A model to build rapport in B2B services and solution selling. (Kaski et al., 2018, p. 247)

### Sales – Study 2

“The Antecedents and Consequences of Rapport between Customers and Salespersons in the Tourism Industry”

First, the results of data analysis showed that relational interaction was an important predictor of rapport between customers and salespeople [...] The finding can be interpreted as implying that when a salesperson makes customers feel at ease, customers perceive that they have a good relationship with that salesperson.

Second, the results of the data analysis revealed that ethical interaction plays an important role in the formation of rapport. The focus of our study was on examining the effect of ethical interaction on rapport in the context of duty-free shops. It showed that when a salesperson treats customers ethically, customers are more likely to be comfortable interacting with that salesperson. Thus, the salesperson should not deceive customers to boost his or her sales performance.

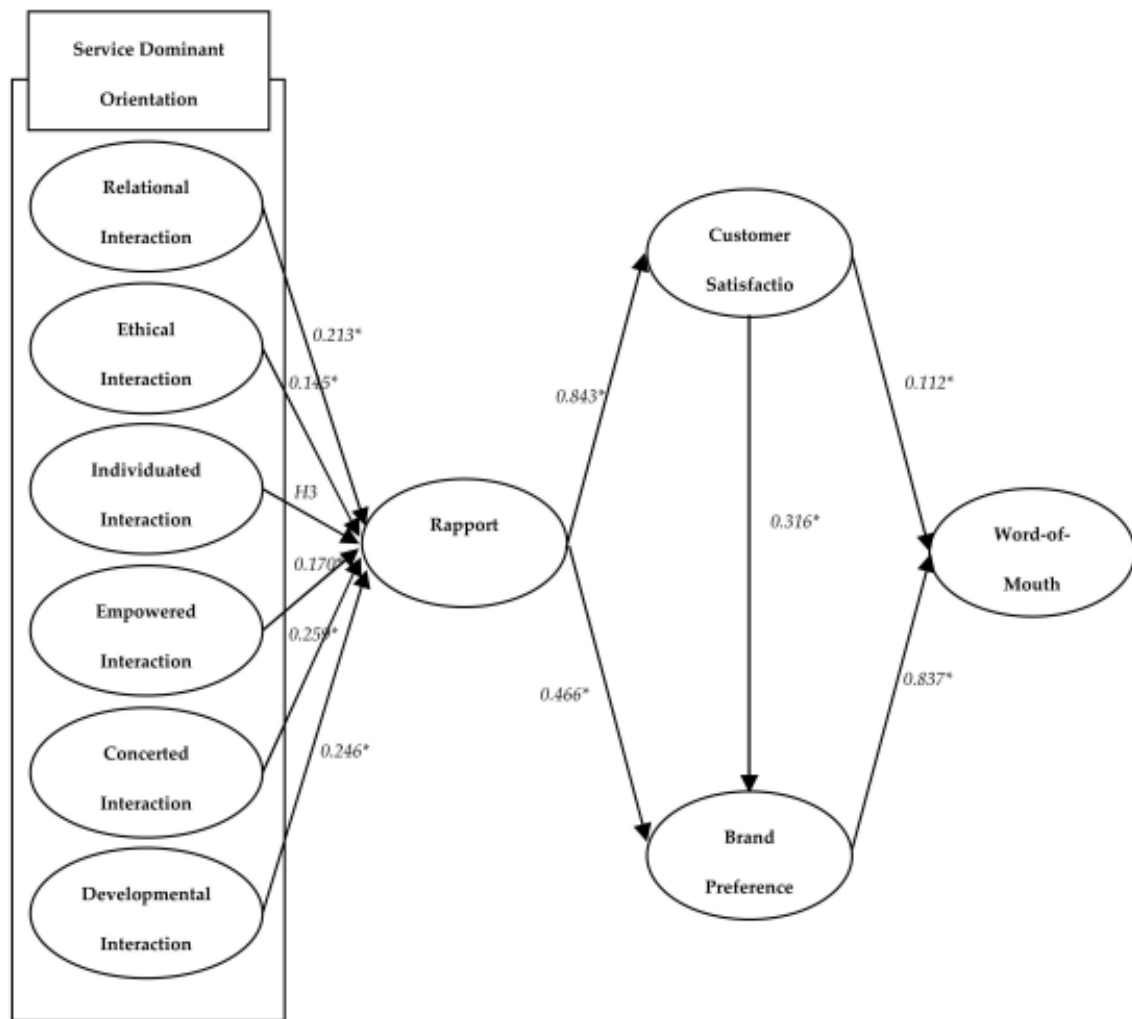
Third, contrary to our expectation, Hypothesis 3, which proposed the effect of individuated interaction on rapport, was not statistically supported. The findings of this study in this regard are different from those of previous studies. Due to the nature of duty-free shops, the interactions of most employees tend to be with foreign tourists rather than regular customers, and for this reason, it is more difficult for employees to satisfy their individual needs. It appears, therefore, that individuated interaction has no significant effect in the context of duty-free shops.

Fourth, we found that empowered interaction has a positive influence on rapport. That is, customers are more likely to establish a close relationship with salespersons when they shop. Specifically, this study aimed to examine the relationship between empowered interaction and rapport in the context of duty-free shops.

Fifth, this study proposed that concerted interaction has a significant impact on rapport. This finding can be interpreted as follows: If salespersons work together seamlessly when selling



products, then customers will enjoy interacting with them. This study further expanded our understanding of the role of concerted interaction by empirically determining its effect on rapport in the context of duty-free shops.



**Figure 2.** Standardized theoretical path coefficients.

Sixth, the results of this study also showed that developmental interaction has a positive influence on rapport. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies which have suggested that developmental interaction is a vital part of employee service quality. That is, when customers perceive that a salesperson is knowledgeable about his or her job, they are more likely to develop a harmonious relationship with that salesperson.

Seventh, this study found that rapport has a positive influence on customer satisfaction and brand preference, which in turn positively affects word-of-mouth exchanges. When customers have a good relationship with a salesperson, they are satisfied with and prefer duty-free shops. Furthermore, they are likely to recommend the duty-free shop to others. [...]

Lastly, the data analysis result indicated that brand preference has a positive influence on word-of-mouth, suggesting that when customers prefer a certain brand, they are more likely to say positive words about the brand.

(Hwang, Lee, & Kim, 2021)



## Education

### The impact of rapport

Students who perceive a greater amount of rapport with an instructor tend to experience more positive affect than students who experience a weaker sense of rapport with that instructor [...]. The positive association between student-instructor rapport and student affect is often linked to increases in student engagement during class [...], expectancy for success [...], and academic achievement [...]. The affective and learning benefits stemming from student-instructor rapport are especially pronounced for participation-apprehensive students, who are more likely to participate in ongoing classroom activities when they experience a strong sense of rapport with their instructor [...]. Furthermore, students feel a stronger sense of classroom connectedness and are less likely to miss class when they feel a sense of rapport with their instructor [...]. Given the consistent link between rapport and learner affect, instructors should be mindful of promoting a healthy sense of student-instructor rapport in their classrooms.

(Flanigan, Ray, Titsworth, Hosek, & Kim, 2021)

### Rapport strategies

Phenomenological interviews with 21 college instructors indicated that instructors rely on different strategies and contextual factors to initiate and to maintain rapport with students across the semester. At the beginning of the semester, these instructors rely on a variety of connecting, common grounding, and information sharing behaviors and leverage baked-in rapport to cultivate a sense of rapport from their students. After rapport has been initiated, these instructors place more emphasis on attentive and courteous behaviors, while continuing to engage in connecting behaviors. Furthermore, these instructors identified personalized instruction and tactful responses to delicate situations as essential for maintaining a strong sense of rapport across the semester.

Category	Description	Exemplars
<b>Rapport Initiation categories</b>		
Connecting behaviors	Behaving in ways that communicate to students that the instructor is open, approachable, and willing to form rapport.	'You have to let them know that you are human, that you make mistakes, that you are not perfect. Humanity is key.'
Common ground behaviors	Identifying similarities, shared interests, and common goals between students and instructors.	'Spending the first class period sharing who we are and finding out what we have in common helps break some of that ice.'
Category	Description	Exemplars
Information-sharing behaviors	Instructor builds course with an organized structure and clearly communicates policies and expectations.	'I try to give them a roadmap of where we're going.'
Class size	Easier to initiate rapport in classes with smaller enrollment sizes.	'It's tough to make connections with individual students in large classes.'



Baked-in rapport	Rapport initiation can be influenced by instructor reputation and the perception of the instructor students bring with them into the class.	'Maybe they had a friend who had you previously and that friend said nice things about you.'
Facilitate student-student rapport	Helping students feel comfortable with each other can make them more receptive to the instructor's rapport initiating overtures.	'I encourage students to talk to each other. They become more conversational amongst themselves. I think they develop a rapport with each other and are more willing to do so with me. We become a community.'
<b>Rapport Maintenance categories</b>		
Attentive behaviors	Being attentive and responsive to student needs.	'I try to reach out to those struggling students and give them individual encouragement.'
Courteous behaviors	Being considerate and fair towards students.	'Especially during the busy times, I'll make sure to send email reminders about what's coming up and when.'
Connecting behaviors	Continuing to behave in ways that communicate to students that the instructor is open and approachable.	'I always get to class a bit early and use that time to chat, make small talk, and ask how their weeks are going.'
Provide personalised instruction	Providing a variety of learning experiences to tap into student needs; Embedding what instructor knows about students into instruction.	'In my research class, I try to find studies that are meaningful to the students I teach based on what I know they are personally interested in.'
Tactful responses to delicate situations	Responding to student misbehaviors in ways that do not deteriorate the quality of student-instructor rapport.	'I'll just come by and gently try to pull them back in ... I think punishment messes with the ecosystem.'

(Flanigan et al., 2021, Abstract & Appendices E & F)

## Healthcare & Therapeutic Contexts

### Rapport building strategies

I believe it is indisputable and irrefutable that rapport is the critical component for a successful surgeon-patient relationship. It is generalized that many patients are unhappy with their doctors when there is poor rapport, poor communication, and when the patient perceives a lack of concern by the physician for the patient and their family. [...]

Humans need to be heard. Active listening is a pivotal skill, which can be learned and used daily in any medical practice. The most compelling tools for building patient rapport are active listening combined with a specific body language posture. The ABCs of rapport building are: A, active listening; B, body language; and C, candor. [...]

Active listening [is] where the second person (listener) paraphrases back to the first person a summary of what was just said. This type of listening reaffirms to the first person that the second person (listener) clearly understands what the first person is saying. The second person (the active



listener) can use miniprompts such as, “tell me more,” “okay,” “go ahead,” or merely use a head nod to signal understanding, which encourages a continuation of the dialog. [...]

The mnemonic SOLER summarizes the body language specific posture that facilitates rapport building: S = sit facing the patient, O = open posture (without crossed arms or legs), L = lean forward (toward the patient), E = eye contact, and R = relaxed.

The final letter in the ABCs of rapport building is C for candor. Rapport is exponentially facilitated when establishing trust; trust comes with candor. Be honest and truthful, like our parents taught us. I tell the patients in the preoperative discussion—when discussing goals, risks, complications, and possible revisions— that there is about a 90% to 95% chance for improvement and a 1% to 2% chance that I may make you worse. That is not my intention, but I cannot control nature; I cannot control healing; I cannot control scar tissue formation. If that occurs, I will care for you and, if needed, I may need to do a touch-up or revision operation. Being candid, you prepare the patient for a possible second operation before you do the first. [...]

(Kern, 2017, p. 2519)

### The role of affect

Because much of the literature on rapport has focused on interactions between clinicians and patients or clients, there has been an understandable focus on warmth and liking in building rapport. The concept of ‘unconditional positive regard’ has been widely adopted in therapeutic contexts [...]. However, there are dissenting views, and some have proposed alternative orientations that allow a clinician to build rapport and trust without depending heavily on positivity [...]. Aiming for ‘unconditional neutral regard’ may be more realistic in certain contexts [...].

(Abbe & Brandon, 2013, p. 239)

## Interpreting

### Rapport, interpreting and the role of familiarity

Interpreting Studies literature highlights how face-threatening interpreted interaction can be [...]. The dialogue coordination that interpreters are involved in ([...] is one aspect of this potential face threat to other participants. Another potential source of this face threat may be the lack of attention interpreters give to the strategies their clients use to promote rapport [...]. If interpreters’ primary focus is on informational content rather than the way people are relating to one another, this is unlikely to assist the development of rapport between their clients and is likely to make the interaction less comfortable for them. Research indicates that the face threat generated by interpreters can be mitigated when the people involved in an interpreted event are more familiar with each other. [...] The value of interpreter continuity therefore needs to be recognised by service providers, with steps taken to ensure that procurement arrangements for interpreters facilitate continuity of provision rather than prevent it.

(Mapson & Major, 2021, pp. 71-72)

### Rapport and interpreting in healthcare

Interpreted medical discourse presents significant challenges for communication because portions of the original message are often reduced, omitted, or revised, particularly by untrained interpreters. Linguistic devices that contribute to rapport and politeness may be perceived as unimportant or unnecessary and therefore are omitted. Thus, when messages are conveyed without interpretation of politeness and rapport attempts, pragmatic issues and misunderstandings occur. This investigation examined 43 transcriptions of interpreted medical consultations at a family medicine clinic. We quantified rapport-building attempts that frequently occurred, yet were not interpreted.



Over 82% of clinicians' attempts to establish rapport were not interpreted. We then examined specific and general effects of non-interpretation and noted potential consequences for physician–patient communication. Building on both linguistic and communication frameworks, results align with previous research suggesting that rapport-related variables including verbal immediacy are not secondary to “more important” information communicated by doctors; instead, patients' impressions of rapport may be even more important than the health-related information itself.

(Allison & Hardin, 2020, pp. 494, 499)

### **Rapport and interpreting in police interviews**

The present paper reports the development of an information sheet designed to aid interpreters in police interviews in recognizing, conveying and inadvertently obstructing rapport-building efforts by police interviewers. The contents of this sheet were informed by past research defining rapport, and rapport uses in police interviews. We used a mixed experimental design to test the information sheet. One group (Intervention, n = 35) was randomly assigned to read an information sheet before responding to short vignettes of police interviewing foreign non-English speaking suspects about international crimes, while another (Control) group (n = 37) simply responded to the vignettes. Perceptions of rapport cues by the intervention group exceeded that of the control group. However, the groups performed equally well at identifying appropriate methods to convey/avoid obstructing rapport. Feedback from the intervention group on the helpfulness of the information sheet was largely positive. The findings were used to improve the information sheet which can be used to alert interpreters to the importance of rapport in suspect interviews.

(Dhami, Goodman-Delahunty, & Desai, 2017, p. 291)

### **Investigative interviewing**

#### **The importance of rapport in investigative interviewing**

Rapport is essential and good rapport between interviewer and witness can improve both the quantity and quality of information gained in the interview. Rapport therefore has a direct impact on the interview process itself. Rapport is especially important where the type of information required is highly personal. Rapport should not be regarded as something that is confined to the first phase of an interview; it begins when the interviewer first meets the witness and continues throughout the interview.

(Forensic Interview Solutions (FIS), n.d., p. 13)

It is essential that as an interviewer you establish and maintain rapport with those whom you interview. This means adopting an open and interested approach that treats the person with respect and is not influenced by personal views or bias. This approach shows a genuine interest in the interviewee and is supported by the interviewer being communicative and helpful. It does not mean that you like the interviewee or share their values or views. Your personal feelings should not affect your approach or stand in the way of building rapport and trust, which have been shown to motivate interviewees, even hardened terrorists, into divulging accurate, reliable and important information. Rapport is a fundamental requisite for good interviewing.

Building rapport is critical. Skilled interviewers with experience of dealing with the most serious and hardened offenders, including terrorists, all emphasise the need to build rapport in order to obtain information. Do not confuse “rapport” as meaning that you in any way condone the offences under investigation or that you have a personal liking for the person being questioned. Look for opportunities to empathise with the suspect, where for example they may refer to some difficulty



they are experiencing in relating information or stress they feel over being interviewed, which allow you to acknowledge these feelings and express understanding.

Boyle and Vullierme (2018, p. 21)

#### Approaches to rapport building in investigative interviewing

	<b>Relationship-based rapport building approach</b>	<b>Procedure-based rapport building approach</b>
Description	The interviewer seeks to elicit liking and build a positive personal	The interviewer seeks to elicit liking and build a positive personal
Relation techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly and close attitude (e.g., the use of first name, speaking in a casual warm tone)</li> <li>• Initiating small talk (e.g., asking 'icebreaking' questions unrelated to the interrogation process)</li> <li>• Bidirectional self-disclosure (e.g., the interviewer talks about his or her background or feelings and encourages the interviewee to do the same)</li> <li>• Positive nonverbal behaviors (e.g., smiling, open body posture and/or frequent eye contact)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal and polite attitude (e.g., the use of full name and/or speak in a professional manner)</li> <li>• Provide explanations with patience (e.g., explaining the rights, purpose, and plan of the interrogation and asking whether the suspect understands)</li> <li>• Let interviewees have their say (e.g., explaining that the interview is an opportunity to give their account and/or that they can interrupt anytime)</li> <li>• No obvious positive nonverbal behaviors</li> </ul>

We found that participants were more likely to confess in the procedure-based condition than in the relationship-based and control conditions. However, both approaches did not have an effect on the number of details participants were willing to disclose.

(Huang & Teoh, 2019, pp. 253,256)

#### Rapport-based tactics in investigative interviewing

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of a rapport-based approach to [investigative] interviewing that includes productive questioning skills, conversational rapport, and relational rapport-building tactics.

**Hypotheses:** We predicted that training police investigators in a rapport-based approach would significantly increase the use of rapport-based tactics and that such tactics would directly influence the interviewee's perceptions of rapport and indirectly lead to increased cooperation and disclosure of information. The hypotheses were upheld.

**Productive questioning tactics:**

- Use of open-ended questions
- Use of affirmations (e.g. I appreciate your honesty)
- Use of reflections (e.g. repeating back of certain words or phrases)
- Use of summaries (e.g. concise yet detailed encapsulation of what the other has said)

**Conversational rapport tactics** (see L. Alison & E. Alison, 2017):

- **Autonomy** – allow an individual to provide their own account of an event without pressure or direction from the interviewer
- **Adaptation** – adjust questioning based on an individual's responses

- Evocation – draw out an individual’s emotions and motivations
- Acceptance – display unconditional positive regard
- Empathy – seek to understand the individual’s perspective

Relational rapport-building tactics:

Relational techniques generally attempt to build rapport by facilitating a relationship between the interviewer and subject through the exchange and validation of personal information. E.g.

- Self-disclosure – can induce self-disclosure from the other
- Highlighting of similarities
- Affirmations of the other
- Trust tactics that engage reciprocity, e.g. offering water or food, providing useful information or assistance.

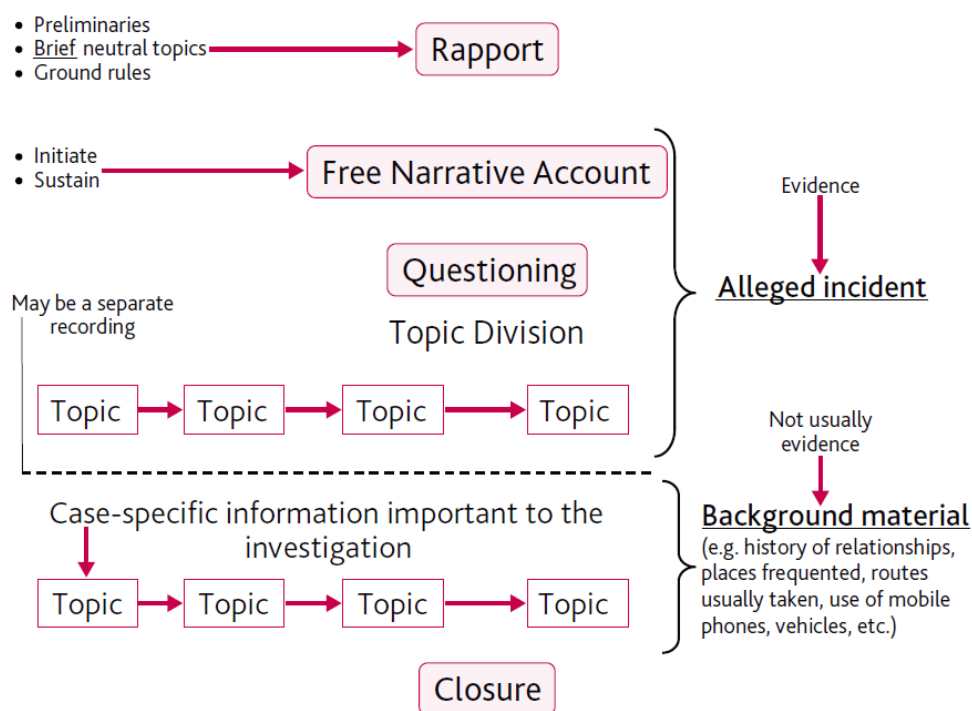
Our findings demonstrated that such a model of evidence-based interviewing could be successfully trained, and that the use of such tactics facilitated the development of rapport and indirectly increased interview subjects’ cooperation and disclosure of information.

(Brimbal et al., 2021, pp. 55, 57, 65)

### Rapport and investigative interview structure

Ministry of Justice Guidance

**Figure 3.1: Typical interview structure**



### Opening the Interview: Personalising the Interview, Building Rapport and Engaging the Witness

#### Personalising the Interview

H.2.1.1 The opening phase of an interview will often determine the success of the interview as a whole. At the outset it is necessary to establish trust and lay the foundations for successful communication. The interviewer is often a person who is unfamiliar to the witness and thus, in order to reduce possible tension and insecurity felt by the witness, it is essential that the interviewer should introduce themselves by name and greet the witness by name (i.e. personalise the interview). Greeting should occur because it is at the heart of effective rapport development, the next step of the interview process.



- H.2.1.2 Paying attention to the appropriate form of address at this initial greeting phase can help send a message of equality both now and throughout the interview. This is essential as it reduces the perceived authority differential between interviewer and witness, so that witnesses are less likely to comply with leading questions. As no interview can be perfect, it is essential to build resistance against inappropriate questions, which may unwittingly be used by an interviewer later in the interview.
- H.2.1.3 The interviewer needs to treat the witness as an individual with a unique set of needs as opposed to being 'just another witness'. Obtaining maximum retrieval is a difficult task requiring deep concentration. A witness therefore needs to feel that they are an integral part of the interview in order to be motivated to work hard.
- H.2.1.4 As noted above, interviewers need to present themselves as an identifiable person. This is because people dislike the unknown and prior to the interview may draw upon past experiences and knowledge about the police and interviews to help them think about what to expect. This information may be obtained from media representation and as a result may not be particularly favourable. Thus, it is the job of the interviewer at the outset, and throughout the interview, to lessen any 'stereotypes' the witness may have. This can start through personalising the interview. Interviewers who are in uniform may have to spend more time on this and the next phase of the interview to overcome any barriers set up by their clothing.
- H.2.1.5 First impressions count, and the clothing an interviewer wears is a matter that can be considered before an interview. For example, interviewers in too formal attire may have more difficulty in personalising the interview and developing rapport, especially when interviewing younger individuals.

### ***Building Rapport and Engaging the Witness***

- H.2.2.1 Rapport is essential and good rapport between interviewer and witness can improve both the quantity and quality of information gained in the interview. Rapport therefore has a direct impact on the interview process itself. Rapport is especially important where the type of information required is highly personal. Rapport should not be regarded as something that is confined to the first phase of an interview; it begins when the interviewer first meets the witness and continues throughout the interview. There are a number of reasons why rapport is so important and these will now be examined.
- H.2.2.2 The witness's anxiety, whether induced by the crime and/or the interview situation (or otherwise), needs to be reduced for maximum remembering. This is because people only have a limited amount of processing power available and the aim is to have the witness's full power devoted to retrieving as much information as possible. Anxiety may detract from this. The interviewer therefore needs to start to create a relaxing atmosphere and to make the witness feel secure and confident both with the interviewer and with the interview situation. One way to achieve this is to start by briefly asking some neutral questions not related to the event which can be answered positively and, therefore, create a positive mood. However, if the interview plan suggests that discussing neutral topics for more than a few minutes may be beneficial it should take place as part of witness preparation before the interview commences.
- H.2.2.3 Rapport requires that the interviewer interacts meaningfully with the witness, contributing as an interested party and not simply asking a list of predetermined short-answer questions. Standardised phrases should be avoided as their use will convey to the witness that they are 'just another witness', which is likely to depersonalise the interview. It is a good idea for interviewers to talk about themselves too, as this openness can serve as a model to





demonstrate what is required of the witness and help to further personalise the interview by making the interviewer more identifiable.

- H.2.2.4 The use of open-ended questions in the developing of rapport will teach the witness at the earliest phase in the interview what will be required later, i.e. elaborated responses. The interviewer should encourage the witness to speak without interruptions when they are describing a familiar event (e.g. a recent holiday). Thus, rapport is also a 'training' phase of the interview, training the witness what to expect later (i.e. that detailed responses are required).
- H.2.2.5 Witnesses have different levels of language, and skilful interviewers tailor their own communication level to that of the witness. It is in this rapport phase of the interview that the interviewer can assess the witness's communication abilities (this should also occur in planning and preparation) and this will allow the interviewer to develop an interactive model of interviewing determined and defined by the witness. This is easier to do when examining the witness's responses to open-ended questions. For example, it is often useful to count how many words on average a witness uses per sentence, and use this figure as a guide to the length of sentences/questions the interviewer should use.
- H.2.2.6 A guiding principle for developing rapport is to communicate empathy. Here the interviewer needs to demonstrate a willingness to try to understand the situation from the witness's perspective. Some witnesses may be unhappy or feel shame or resentment about being questioned, especially on personal matters. In the rapport phase, and throughout the interview, the interviewer should convey to the witness that they have respect and sympathy for how the witness feels.
- H.2.2.7 A witness may be apprehensive about what may happen after the interview if they provide an account of what happened. While every effort should have been made to address these concerns while preparing the witness for the interview, they should be addressed during this phase if they emerge again.
- H.2.2.8 At the start of the interview the interviewer could allow the witness to vent their concerns and emotions about the incident(s) in question. These in turn can be used to explain the interviewer's needs. This can help to initiate the next phase of describing the aims of the interview (i.e. setting the ground rules).

(Ministry of Justice, 2011, pp. 69, 187-189)

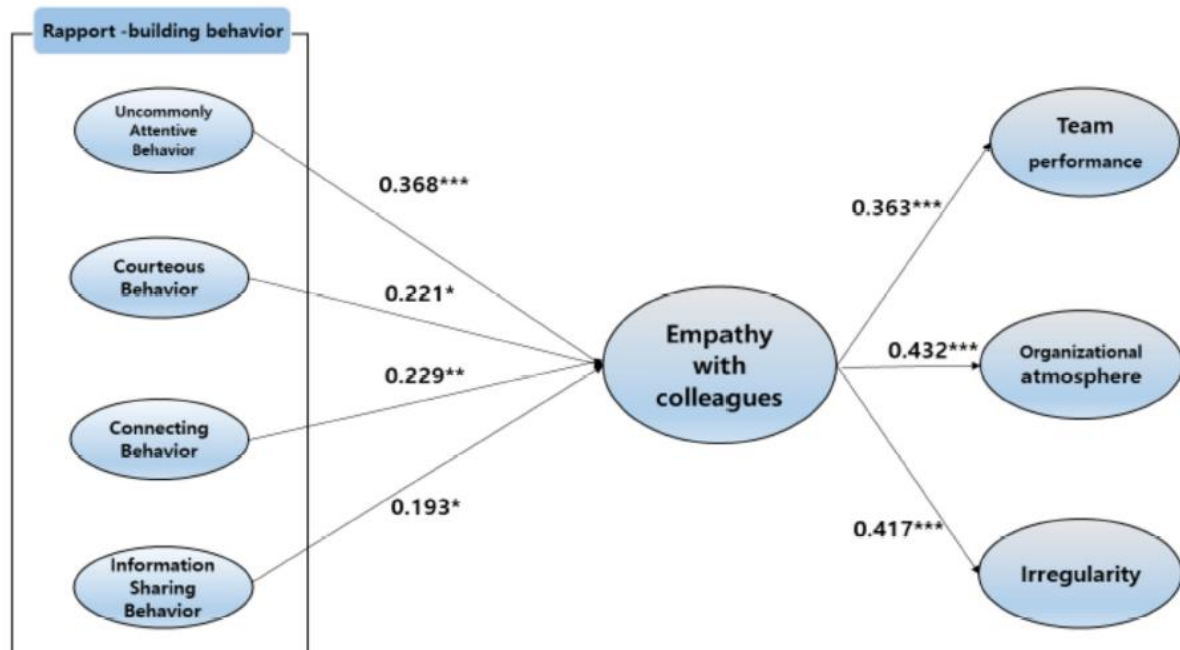
## Workplace teams

### Air cabin crew rapport and team performance

For an airline cabin crew, communication and empathy between colleagues are extremely important for a congenial work environment. Team members frequently interact with each other from the briefing stage before starting the flight to carrying out their work during the flight. During regular safety training, including emergency water landing drills, the cabin crew members need to have strong empathy and be attuned to each other's thoughts, so that they can cooperate and prevent emergency situations or making excessive demands on each other, allowing them to respond rapidly with minimal loss. In this regard, rapport-building behaviors and empathy are extremely important, even beyond the basic demands of cordial relationships between colleagues.

Cabin crew work in a team-based system and constantly meet new colleagues due to varied work schedules. The results of this study indicated that rapport-building behaviors between colleagues and empathy toward colleagues increased team performance, improved the organizational

atmosphere, reduced the rate of irregularities, and also had positive effects on timely responses to irregularities through active communication and cooperation between cabin crew colleagues. Our study on rapport-building behaviors and empathy among cabin crew members serves as a basis for research on a broader population. By demonstrating an important factor for the reduction of safety-related accidents (irregularities) that are directly related to organizational and team performance and human lives, this research highlighted the influence and scope of research on airline cabin crew.



(Park & Hyun, 2021)

## Section 7. Judging & Assessing Rapport

There is limited consistency across studies in the way rapport is measured. Researchers have largely sought to quantify the presence of verbal and non-verbal rapport-related behaviors used by interviewers. Some measures have attempted to capture the experience of rapport, but there is sizeable variation in the types of questions asked to achieve this. However, the observation that: (a) when used as a manipulation check, participants in experimental rapport conditions endorse more rapport-related characteristics than control condition counterparts, and; (b) higher scores on measures of rapport (observed and self-report tools) are associated with greater cooperation and yield from interviewees, lends credence to the notion that these measures meaningfully capture the essence of rapport. Without further research, including direct comparisons between different measures of rapport, it is difficult to conclude which are the most effective.

(Gabbert et al., 2021, p. 335)

### Interactional indicators (i.e. behaviours looked for when assessing an interviewer's rapport building behaviour)

#### The ORBIT system

ORBIT (Observing Rapport-Based Interpersonal Techniques)

The ORBIT was developed as a coding manual by the authors to evaluate (i) the quality of interpersonal interactions between interviewers and suspects as well as (ii) the extent to which



useful intelligence and evidence is generated within an interview. The coding framework is designed around two core measures: 1) the interviewer’s application of a range of strategies, which are either consistent with or inconsistent with counseling-based approaches designed to build and sustain rapport and 2) a measure of the interpersonal style of communication being used by both the suspect and the interviewer over the course of the interaction.

(L. J. Alison et al., 2013, p. 415)

[ORBIT’s] Abridged Definitions and Examples of Measures used to Observe and Define Rapport in interrogation interviews

Measure	Definition
Acceptance	Unconditional positive regard/respect for the detainee; it does not mean agreeing with the detainee or condoning or being complicit with their views or behaviors. Efforts to “see the good” in the detainee despite the behavior he/she is suspected of participating in.
Empathy	Seeks to understand the detainee’s perspective, expressed through reflective listening. Seeks genuine understanding of another person’s motives or perspective.
Adaptation	Able to adapt to responses and manage a fluid format with timeline jumps and deviation from the interview plan.
Evocation	Draws out beliefs and views of detainee rather than putting forward one’s own views, suspicions, or advice. Remains curious and patient; does not “leak” assumptions about personal views or guilt.
Autonomy	Makes clear that it is the detainee’s choice not to talk or cooperate; conveys an understanding that the power to provide information is a choice that lies with the detainee; absence of force, coercion or persuasion. Concept is one of “leaving a door open” rather than trying to force someone through it.

(L. J. Alison & E. Alison, 2017, p. 272)

### Rapport behavioural indicators used across a range of studies

Verbal indicators of rapport	Operationalisation across studies
Active listening (66% of studies)	e.g. Backchannel responses (e.g. uh-huh), summaries, paraphrasing
Show personal interest/reciprocity (51% of studies)	e.g. Encourage or engage in topics that don’t fall within the remit of the interview
Use of self-disclosure (40% of studies)	Exactly what type of information, how much, and when, interviewers should disclose about themselves was rarely described
Empathic responses (37% of studies)	Extent to which interviewers show understanding of and concern for other’s position and emotions
Use of interviewee’s name (20% of studies)	
<b>Non-verbal indicators of rapport</b>	
Smiling (14% of studies)	
Open body language (11% of studies)	Relaxed vs stiff body posture; leaning forward vs. sitting upright.
Eye-contact (11% of studies)	
Head-nodding (11% of studies)	

<b>Para-verbal indicators of rapport</b>	
Tone of voice (23% of studies)	

(Gabbert et al., 2021, p. 334)

## Survey measures

### Survey measures used in Service encounters

Study of bank customers' and dental patients' perceptions of rapport

The 11 items for the two rapport dimensions included in the study, enjoyable interaction (6 items) and personal connection (5 items), were generated from several sources: in-depth interviews with service customers, other similar relational constructs in previous studies, and a review of the rapport literature. [...] All items were rated on 7-point Likert-type scales, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

<i>Enjoyable interaction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In thinking about my relationship with this person, I enjoy interacting with this employee.</li> <li>• This employee creates a feeling of “warmth” in our relationship.</li> <li>• This employee relates well to me.</li> <li>• In thinking about my relationship, I have a harmonious relationship with this person.</li> <li>• This employee has a good sense of humor.</li> <li>• I am comfortable interacting with this employee.</li> </ul>
<i>Personal connection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel like there is a “bond” between this employee and myself.</li> <li>• I look forward to seeing this person when I visit the bank.</li> <li>• I strongly care about this employee.</li> <li>• This person has taken a personal interest in me.</li> <li>• I have a close relationship with this person.</li> </ul>

(Gremler & Gwinner, 2000, pp. 94-95)

A Tourist Industry study of service perceptions of rapport

The antecedents and consequences of rapport between customers and salespersons in the tourist industry. The study explored whether rapport was affected by 6 facets of service orientation.

All items were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale, anchored between “strongly disagree” [1] and “strongly agree”

6 Service orientations were probed to check their effect on rapport

<i>Service orientations</i>	
<i>Relational interaction</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The salesperson made me feel at ease.</li> <li>• The salesperson tried to establish a mutual relation with me.</li> <li>• The salesperson encouraged two-way communication with me.</li> <li>• The salesperson showed genuine interest in engaging me.</li> </ul>	<i>Ethical interaction</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The salesperson did not try to take advantage of me.</li> <li>• The salesperson did not pressure me in any way.</li> <li>• The salesperson did not mislead me in any way.</li> <li>• The salesperson did not try to manipulate me.</li> </ul>
<i>Individuated interaction</i>	<i>Empowered interaction</i>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The salesperson made an effort to understand my individual needs.</li> <li>• The salesperson was sensitive to my individual situation.</li> <li>• The salesperson made an effort to find out what kind of offering is most helpful to me.</li> <li>• The salesperson sought to identify my personal expectations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The salesperson let me interact with him/her in my preferred way.</li> <li>• The salesperson encouraged me to customize my shopping experience.</li> <li>• The salesperson allowed me to control my shopping experience.</li> <li>• The salesperson invited me to share my own ideas or suggestions.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Concerted interaction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The salesperson worked together seamlessly when selling products.</li> <li>• The salesperson acted as one unit when dealing with me.</li> <li>• The salesperson provided messages to me that were consistent with each other.</li> <li>• The salesperson ensured he/she had smooth procedures for interacting with me.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Developmental interaction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The salesperson shared useful information with me.</li> <li>• The salesperson helped me become more knowledgeable.</li> <li>• The salesperson provided me with the advice I needed.</li> <li>• The salesperson offered me expertise that I could learn from.</li> </ul>

**Rapport**

- I enjoyed interacting with the salesperson.
- I felt warm-hearted in the relationship with the salesperson.
- I was comfortable interacting with the salesperson.
- I felt like there was a bond between myself and the salesperson.
- I looked forward to seeing the salesperson when I shop at the duty-free shop next time.
- I wanted to have a close relationship with the salesperson.

(Hwang et al., 2021)

**Survey measures used in education**

The Professor–Student Rapport Scale (PSRS) – a scale to measure professor-student rapport from the student’s perspective.

<p><i>Perceptions of Teacher</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My professor is confident</li> <li>• My professor enjoys his or her job</li> <li>• My professor cares about students</li> <li>• My professor is enthusiastic</li> <li>• My professor wants to make a difference</li> <li>• My professor is receptive</li> <li>• My professor is reliable</li> <li>• My professor is a role model</li> <li>• My professor is compassionate</li> </ul>
<p><i>Student engagement</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My professor encourages questions and comments from students</li> <li>• I dislike my professor’s class*</li> <li>• My professor makes class enjoyable</li> <li>• I want to take other classes taught by my professor</li> <li>• My professor’s body language says, ‘Don’t bother me’*</li> <li>• I really like to come to class</li> </ul>

\* Reverse items



Students rated the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Only 'Student engagement' predicted student outcomes such as attitudes, motivation and several measures of learning.

(Wilson & Ryan, 2013)

Several rapport scales now exist, and in some cases, the items are quite different. Studies should compare these scales and further assess the reliability and validity of each.

(Lammers, Gillaspay, & Hancock, 2017, p. 149)

### Survey measures used with airline cabin crew teams

Participants responded to each question on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1 point) to "strongly agree" (5 points).

Uncommonly attentive behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My colleagues take special care of me during &amp; outside of working hours.</li> <li>• I have been emotionally moved by my colleagues' gestures.</li> <li>• My colleagues show a strong interest in me beyond concerns about work.</li> <li>• My colleagues initiate or try to sustain conversations with me &amp; make an effort to find common interests.</li> <li>• Apart from shared interests, my colleagues make an effort to perform activities that we can enjoy together.</li> </ul>
Courteous behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My colleagues apologise sincerely for their mistakes when a problem arises during service.</li> <li>• My colleagues are pleasant, polite, &amp; helpful, and they always behave respectfully.</li> <li>• My colleagues are friendly toward me and act in a way that makes me feel empathic. They show concern and apologize when a problem arises.</li> </ul>
Connecting behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My colleagues make an effort to connect with me through humour.</li> <li>• My colleagues always make an effort to create an enjoyable atmosphere.</li> </ul>
Information-sharing behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My colleagues provide useful suggestions regarding flight-related work.</li> <li>• My colleagues share their professional knowledge about flight work with me.</li> <li>• My colleagues share professional knowledge with me so I may enjoy a safe flight and provide smooth service.</li> </ul>
Empathy toward colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I consider other crew members more than my colleagues; I have empathy &amp; understanding for them just like my family. They also talk to me about their personal lives.</li> <li>• Before doing anything, I always try to think about how my colleagues would feel.</li> <li>• I can easily anticipate my colleagues' thoughts &amp; reactions.</li> <li>• Sometimes, I imagine things from my colleagues' perspective &amp; make an effort to understand them better.</li> </ul>
Team/group performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think that our team performs better than other teams.</li> <li>• My team provides better quality of service than other teams.</li> <li>• My team receives more praise from customers than other teams.</li> <li>• My team achieves work goals more effectively than other teams.</li> </ul>
Organisational atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My team members share good/friendly relationships with each other.</li> <li>• My team members help each other when performing difficult tasks.</li> <li>• My team members feel comfortable when working flights together.</li> <li>• My team members show active intention to participate in social gatherings.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My team members can share good news with each other.</li> </ul>
Irregularity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My team shows fewer irregularities than other teams.</li> <li>• Compared to other teams, the cabin crew in my team make fewer major mistakes.</li> <li>• Compared to other teams, my team shows much higher work satisfaction after completing a flight.</li> </ul>

(Park &amp; Hyun, 2021)

### Survey measures used in police/security/offender contexts

We delineate two types of parolee–parole officer rapport: supportive rapport and nonsupportive rapport.

Supportive rapport is meant to capture the positive elements of parolee–officer interactions, such as trust, professionalism, and helpfulness. It is important to stress that supportive rapport is not a measure of how well the parolee thinks he “gets on” with the parole officer; it is not a measure of sociability. Thus, the *supportive rapport* variable is a factor score constructed with principle components analysis and the following scale items: “My parole officer is helpful with my transition back to the community,” “My parole officer seems trustworthy,” “My parole officer gives me correct information,” “My parole officer treats me with respect,” and “My parole officer acts in a professional way.” Each of these items are scaled from 1 to 4 with 1 being *strongly disagree* and 4 being *strongly agree*. Supportive rapport is a robust factor score with an eigenvalue of 3.52; no other factors were prominent. In addition, factor loadings ranged from 0.78 to 0.87.

Nonsupportive rapport is meant to capture aspects of the parolee–parole officer relationship that may be damaging to creating rapport, trust, and social bonds between parolees and their parole officers. The *nonsupportive rapport* variable is also a factor score constructed with principle components analysis and the following scale items: “My parole officer acts too busy to help me” and “My parole officer doesn’t listen to me.” Each of these items are scaled from 1 to 4 with 1 being *strongly disagree* and 4 being *strongly agree*. Nonsupportive rapport is a strong factor score with an eigenvalue of 1.58; no other factors were prominent and factor loadings were around 0.88.

(Chamberlain et al., 2018, p. 3588)

### Survey measures used for research and training into rapport in investigative interviews

Attentiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The interviewer really listened to what I had to say</li> <li>The interviewer paid careful attention to my opinion</li> <li>The interviewer was attentive to me</li> <li>The interviewer was interested in my point of view</li> </ul>
Trust/respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The interviewer was generally honest with me</li> <li>The interviewer respects my knowledge</li> <li>The interviewer can generally be trusted to keep his/her word</li> </ul>
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The interviewer did his/her job with skill during the interview</li> <li>The interviewer performed expertly during the interview</li> <li>The interviewer made an effort to do a good job</li> <li>The interviewer acted like a professional</li> </ul>
Cultural similarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The interviewer and I have our culture in common</li> <li>The interviewer and I probably share the same ethnicity</li> <li>Interviewer probably shares my culture</li> </ul>
Connected well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The interviewer and I worked well together as a team</li> <li>Communication went smoothly between the interviewer and me</li> </ul>



	The interviewer and I got along well during the interview
Commitment to communication	I was motivated to perform well during the interview I wanted to do a good job during the interview I felt committed to accomplishing the goals of the interview

Items rated Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

(Duke, Wood, Bollin, Scullin, & LaBianca, 2018)

## Section 8. Culture and Rapport

### Potential areas of cultural difference that can affect rapport

Cultural differences in language use can have a major impact on people's assessments of appropriate language use, and hence rapport management outcomes. Variation can occur in at least the following aspects:

1. *Contextual assessment norms*: people from different cultural groups may assess contextual factors somewhat differently. For example, when assessing a role relationship such as teacher–student or employer–employee, people from different cultural groups may have differing expectations regarding the typical degree of power and distance, and/or rights and obligations associated with the role relationships.
2. *Sociopragmatic principles*: people from different cultural groups may hold differing principles for managing rapport in given contexts. For example, some societies may value overt expressions of modesty in interactions with acquaintances and strangers, while others might prefer more 'honest' evaluations. Similarly, some societies may value explicit expression of opinions and accept more open disagreement among new acquaintances than other societies do.
3. *Pragmalinguistic conventions*: people from different cultural groups may have differing conventions for selecting strategies and interpreting their use in given contexts. For example, two cultural groups may agree that an apology is necessary in a given context (and that the offence is equally severe), but have different conventions for conveying it. For instance, people from one group may typically include an explanation, whereas people from another group may typically use acknowledgement of fault as a key component. Similarly, 'let's think about it' (*kangaete okimashô*) functions as a formulaic preface to a negative assessment in Japanese, but has a more literal meaning in English.
4. *Fundamental cultural values*: research in cross-cultural psychology has identified a small number of universal dimensions of cultural values and found that both ethnolinguistic groups and individuals differ from each other in terms of their mean location on each of these dimensions. More research is needed to explore how these dimensions relate to contextual assessment norms and sociopragmatic principles.
5. *Inventory of rapport management strategies*: every language has a very large inventory of rapport management strategies. Some of these occur in many languages (e.g. the T/V distinction — the distinction between a formal form of 'you' *Vous* and an informal, solidary form of 'you' *Tu*); others occur in certain languages but are virtually absent in others (e.g. honorific forms in Japanese which are virtually absent in European languages).

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, pp. 43-44)





## Contextual assessments and culture: performance of communicative activities

Sometimes people can hold very different concepts of the purpose of a given communicative activity, and the procedures associated with it. The following example illustrates this in relation to a lecture that the first author personally experienced.

*It was near the beginning of the academic year and I was teaching a new group of master's students. I wanted them to draw on their personal experiences to reflect on a particular issue, so during the lecture I set them a small task, asking them to discuss it with their immediate neighbours in the lecture theatre. As I moved around the room, I heard one international student say (in his mother tongue) to the co-nationals near him, 'Why does she want us to talk to each other? What's the purpose?' I could understand what he said and immediately felt a slight face threat – that I had not explained the purpose of the activity well enough. I suddenly realised that we held different understandings of the purpose of a lecture and what may happen within a lecture. I immediately tried to rectify the situation by explaining that for me, one of the purposes of a lecture is to stimulate new and deeper thinking, and that I used discussion to help achieve that.*

In this example, differing viewpoints on the learning process gave rise to different conceptions of the purpose of a lecture and the procedures associated with it. Helen felt a slight sense of face-threat, perhaps sensing she had not been as competent in her performance as a teacher as she would have liked, by failing to explain adequately the reasons for asking them to discuss. While we cannot know the international student's thinking (e.g. whether or not he thought Helen had handled the activity inadequately), the fact that he questioned the purpose of discussion suggests a sense of frustration and illustrates that (im)politeness always lurks behind instances in which common ground is missing due to different socialisation.

(Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021, p. 89)

## Contextual assessments and culture: Rights and obligations

Kim and Spencer-Oatey (2021) analysed postings on Korean online communities about how best to handle interactions with potential future PhD supervisors at UK universities. [...] they found that lack of common ground as to the rights and obligations of the potential supervisor–supervisee role relationship gave rise to considerable uncertainty.

This study has demonstrated that background information on role relations is of great importance for relational management and communication planning in high stakes intercultural interaction. A perceived lack of such information generated uncertainty in less powerful persons (in this case, student applicants) and led to the use of extractive strategies [...] to seek advice and guidance to overcome their perceived lack. (Kim & Spencer-Oatey, 2021, p. 220)

In this study, potential cultural variation in the perceived rights and obligations associated with a given role (in this case, PhD supervisor) and their implications for assessments of role relations, were of central concern.

(Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021)

## Sociopragmatic principles and culture: handling disagreement

Participants may have different expectations as to the level of appropriateness of engaging in disagreement exchanges in a given type of communicative activity, and this may be particularly true in intercultural interaction, where participants may hold different beliefs about procedures. [...]



Günthner (2008) analysed a discussion between two Chinese and two German students who were meeting for an initial chat over 'tea'. The participants became engaged in quite a heated debate on the role of women in Chinese society, and afterwards neither the Germans nor the Chinese were satisfied with how the conversation unfolded. The Chinese felt that the discussion was too argumentative for an initial meeting, while the Germans felt the Chinese students were 'boring' and lacking in strong viewpoints.

What we see from this case study is that the Chinese and German participants held different viewpoints over the acceptability of engaging in argumentative discussion in social contexts when the interlocutors do not know each other well. Importantly, such differences would have remained invisible, should they have not engaged jointly in the particular activity; however, as soon as this engagement started, cultural differences in expectations started to emerge. Comparable examples of differences in expected levels of argumentation in German–American social interactions are provided by House (2000, 2003).

In summary, Günthner's (2008) findings illustrate that even if the participants of an interaction have a shared understanding of the purpose of an activity – e.g. all participants in her study were aware of the fact that they are supposed to engage in a 'culture-talk' – they may have very different understandings and expectations of the dynamics of the given activity. Such differences may trigger conflict, particularly because cultural schemata operate in an 'invisible' way, i.e. they influence expectations subconsciously, and unless a language user is critically aware of that, significant differences may occur in the dynamics of an intercultural interaction, which in turn may trigger frustration.

(Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021, pp. 251-252)

### **Sociopragmatic principles and culture: responding to complaints**

This paper aimed to gain insight into the discourse of hotel responses to negative reviews posted on TripAdvisor, in particular by discussing possible similarities and divergences between responses written in English, Dutch and Italian. [...]

The corpus consists of 300 responses to negative reviews posted on TripAdvisor, written in English (100), Dutch (100) and Italian (100) concerning accommodations located in London, Amsterdam and Rome, respectively. [...]

We identified 8 main moves in the responses: thank, apologize, offer explanations, take responsibility for the service failure, refer to corrective actions, dismiss the complaint, invite for further contact and solicit future visit. Using the conceptual framework of RMT (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), we analyzed the responses from a qualitative point of view, in order to examine the possible relations between the discursive resources exploited by the review writers and the interactional principles of face and sociality rights concerns. Significant divergences were found in the frequencies of the rhetorical moves and their realizations among the three languages under examination. These divergences can be linked to the core principles of RMT (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). More specifically, Italian response writers display a more defensive communication style when addressing criticism by openly dismissing the complaints of their guests, and prioritizing the defense of their staff and hotel. They even openly question the critical comments, by denying service failures, shifting part of the accountability to the guests' themselves or invoking mitigating circumstances. Italian response writers appear more sensitive and irritated by online negative evaluations and this results in more confrontational responses [...]. British and Dutch response writers, on the other hand, react to negative evaluations with more rapport-saving moves. A common concern, though, detected in both British and Dutch responses, was the public nature of the criticism: they often proposed in their answers to continue the discussion through more private channels of communication, rather than in the public arena of TripAdvisor. ... Future studies could test the perception, appreciation and efficacy



of these responses, presenting the different types of responses to TripAdvisor users of different language groups.

(Cenni & Goethals, 2020, pp. 3,9)

### Pragmalinguistic conventions and culture: phrases for greetings

One afternoon after work, a British teacher of EFL, who had recently started teaching at a college in Hong Kong, decided to visit some friends who lived in a different part of the city. She went to the appropriate bus stop, and as she walked up, a group of her students who were waiting there asked 'Where are you going?' Immediately she felt irritated, and thought to herself, 'What business is it of theirs where I'm going? Why should I tell them about my personal life?' However, she tried to hide her irritation, and simply answered, 'I'm going to visit some friends.' Several months later this British teacher discovered that 'Where are you going?' is simply a greeting in Chinese. There is no expectation that it should be answered explicitly: a vague response such as, 'Over there' or 'Into town' is perfectly adequate. Moreover, according to Chinese conventions, the students were being friendly and polite in giving such a greeting, not intrusive and disrespectful as the British teacher interpreted them to be.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p. 1)

### Pragmalinguistic conventions and culture: thanking and apologising

Among Japanese students of English, German, or other European languages, it is a common mistake to make apologies where no such acts are expected or anticipated in the respective speech community. While this may be a result of the general behavioral insecurity due to the language barrier, other causes come to light on closer inspection.

Notice that, correspondingly, a Western student who has been taught Japanese experiences the extensive usage of apology expressions as a striking feature of everyday communication when he first comes to Japan. Even if he has learned the most common expressions of apology, he finds out very soon that he lacks the necessary knowledge of speech situations which would allow him to predict and use them in an appropriate way. Apology expressions seem to be used much more frequently than in Western cultures, and, in many cases, the Western student will be unable to see any reason at all for apologizing.

For instance, a formula such as *sumimasen* or its variants *sumimasen domo*, *domo sumimasen deshita*, etc., can be used as general conversation opener; attention getter; leave taking formula; *ex ante* or *ex post* apology; and, notably, gratitude formula. In Japanese text books *arigato* ('thanks') is usually described as the most general and commonly used gratitude expression. The Japanese, however, seem to use *sumimasen* more often than *arigato* where Europeans would say "thank you." Upon receiving a gift, we would not normally say *excuse me* or *I'm sorry*. In such a situation *sumimasen* is, by contrast, quite appropriate. We can translate it, according to context, either as "thank you" or as "I'm sorry."

(Coulmas, 1981, p. 82)

### Cultural differences in fundamental values: power distance and its impact at work

Song interviewed expatriates of different nationalities working in Korea, asking them about their experiences of fitting in. Nearly all of them commented on the challenges they faced with respect to power relations (see the comments below). For example, Chris, a British employee in a Korean



finance company, perceived greater hierarchical relations than he was used to in the seating arrangements and in the styles of speech (including use of honorifics). He evaluated them as 'ridiculous' and expressed his reluctance to conform. Similarly, Aoi, a Japanese employee working in a Korean office of Japanese finance company, found the use of Korean honorifics confusing and inappropriate, and when she used a form that was not as her interlocutor expected, there were negative relational consequences.

- a. *There are a lot of symbols in Korea. The more senior you are, the more... your office size is big. The way of sitting in your office: Chajang [Senior manager title] sits there, Bubujang [Deputy director title] sits next here. It's all about symbol. Showing people's authority and position all the time. (...) Originally, I just sat anywhere. I realized that is not the Korean way, and now I sit at the end of table. Even we do cheers, you have rules. There are so many rules. Ridiculous!* (Chris, British, Korean finance company in Korea)
- b. *They [Korean superiors] all use Banmal [speaking-down]. It really really annoys me. For me, what I REALLY struggle with is that I feel sick with Banmal to me. You're older than me or you're senior than me. I wanna to talk to you Banmal, too. I wanna show you the same respect as you're showing me. Why should you use Banmal? I have to use honorifics. I think it's not fair. I don't like it. That's the reason why I am reluctant to use Korean."* (Chris, British, Korean finance company in Korea)
- c. *I felt SO... confused... Why do I have to call her [Korean colleague in the same team] Oenni [elder sister] in the workplace. It was not suitable, I thought.* (Aoi, Japanese, Japanese finance company in Korea)
- d. *Terms of address are more difficult here. In Japanese, "Sato-San", San is an honorific, I thought, in Korean, Ssi is also an honorific. One day, I called a female colleague, who is older than me, "Kim-Ssi". She got mad. That was difficult. I couldn't understand what was bad about it. She said... it is not respectful.* (Aoi, Japanese, Japanese finance company in Korea)

(Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021, pp. 103-104)

## Cultural differences in attitudes to time and its impact at work

Another attitudinal area where researchers have found noticeable cultural differences is that of time, including aspects such as multitasking, punctuality and forward planning. Hall (1976) proposed the etic construct of monochronic–polychronic time (M-time–P-time) orientation to help make sense of the various cultural patternings associated with time management. In terms of intercultural (im)politeness, it particularly affects participants' expectations of each other's time management (e.g. what counts as arriving late) and their evaluations when those expectations are broken. The interview data below, which was reported by a person who was highly experienced internationally, illustrates the practical challenges that can occur, even for people with high levels of intercultural competence.

Country director: *In another situation also in Botswana, the day after I arrived as a new country director I had to make a speech at this event. And I was given the time for the start of this event, and turned up there and there was absolutely nobody there, so I thought I had got the wrong location, until I realised that in Botswana everything starts at least two hours after the starting time, and again this is something that everybody in the office just knew. But when you get guests coming out from the UK or you have performers from the UK they don't know, so we had to kind of negotiate how we would deal with a particular situation in the future. But again it's about us sitting down, identifying what the problem is and then trying to find a solution that meets the cultural expectations from the different groups.*

Interviewer: *And how did you resolve that?*



Country director: *In that particular case what we did was we agreed that the staff at least would be at the venue at the time it said it would, and we very often told the Batswana that it would start on time in the invitation. Some of the Batswana were very much against that, they said that is a very cold attitude and that was their response. But on the other hand we had to establish some parameters for how we would operate, and so that's an example where we didn't entirely solve the situation. Because until I left Botswana, people would still turn up a couple of hours late to [name of organisation] events, but you know that's the situation you are working in.*

(Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021, pp. 65-66)

## Cultural differences in rapport management linguistic repertoires

Honorific systems elaborated in some non-Western languages also fall into the area of linguistic politeness, since they can be understood as the grammaticalization of politeness. The analyses and descriptions of honorific systems give us a wealth of examples of how specific linguistic forms are chosen according to the social rules of politeness. [...] The linguistic politeness realized by the choices of linguistic forms as honorifics, pronouns, and address terms demonstrates the speaker's 'sense of place' in the interactional setting in order that appropriate smooth communication be achieved.

(Ide, 1988, p. 372)

## Section 9. Rapport and related Terms/Concepts

### Politeness

#### Definitions of politeness

[The role of the politeness principle is] to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place.

(Leech, 1983, p. 82)

Politeness, like formal diplomatic protocol ... presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it, and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties.

(Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 1)

Politeness can be defined as a means of mimimising the risk of confrontation in discourse.

(Lakoff, 1989, p. 102)

I define linguistic politeness as the language usage associated with smooth communication ...

(Ide, 1989, p. 225)

Politeness is a key means by which humans work out and maintain interpersonal relationships. Many of us have been educated how to behave politely since childhood [...] However, politeness is not limited to conventional acts of linguistic etiquette like formal apologies, so-called 'polite' language and address terms, although it includes all of those acts. Rather, it covers something broader, encompassing all types of interpersonal behaviour through which we take into account the feelings



of others as to how they think they should be treated in working out and maintaining our sense of personhood as well as our interpersonal relationships with others.

(Kádár & Haugh, 2013, p. 1)

### Politeness and rapport

One of the main areas of linguistic theory that is relevant to 'relational communication' is politeness theory, and that is why the term 'politeness' has been included in the sub-title. However, I have avoided using the term 'politeness' as much as possible in this book, except when discussing well known theories of politeness, because the term is so confusing. 'Politeness' is often interpreted in everyday life as referring to the use of relatively formal and deferential language, such as formal terms of address like *Sir* or *Madam*, request patterns such as *would you be so kind as to ...*, and formal expressions of gratitude and apology. From such a perspective, sentences such as '*Would you mind passing the salt*' would be classified as 'more polite' than '*Pass the salt, will you.*' However, there are many occasions when it is more appropriate to use '*Pass the salt, will you*' than '*Would you mind passing the salt*' (at home, to a family member, for example). And as Fraser and Nolan (1981: 96) point out, politeness is actually a contextual judgement: 'no sentence is inherently polite or impolite. We often take certain expressions to be impolite, but it is not the expressions themselves but the conditions under which they are used that determine the judgement of politeness.' In other words, sentences or linguistic constructions are not *ipso facto* polite or rude; rather, politeness is a social judgement, and speakers are judged to be polite or rude, depending on what they say in what context. Politeness, in this sense, is a question of appropriateness.

A further limitation of the term 'politeness' is that it emphasizes the harmonious aspect of social relations, and in fact politeness theory has traditionally focused on this aspect. However, people sometimes attack rather than support their interlocutors and [...] 'politeness' theory needs to incorporate this component. [...] This book concentrates on the management of interpersonal relations: the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations. I suggest the term *rapport management* to refer to this area.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p. 2)

### Relational Practice/Relational Work

The four types of relational practice [at work] are listed below:

- Preserving: Preserving the project through task accomplishment;
- Mutual empowering: Empowering others to enhance project effectiveness;
- Self-achieving: Empowering self to achieve projects goals; and
- Creating team: Creating and sustaining group life in the service of project goals.

(Fletcher, 1999, p. 48)

As its name suggests, doing Relational Practice (RP) at work involves attending to workplace relationships, including both people's need to feel valued – their "positive face needs," in Brown & Levinson's (1987) terms – and their "negative face needs," the requirement that their autonomy be respected. RP may entail being friendly or supportive, as well as being polite and considerate. [...]

First, there is RP that is oriented to constructing and nurturing good workplace relationships, to establishing and maintaining solidarity between team members, and to networking and creating new work relationships. In Fletcher's terms, these are obvious ways of "creating team." Second, there is RP that is, to a greater or lesser extent, concerned with damage control: RP oriented to constructing and maintaining workers' dignity, to saving face and reducing the likelihood of offense being taken, to mitigating potentially threatening behavior, and to minimizing conflict and negotiating consensus.

(Holmes & Marra, 2004, pp. 378, 381)



Relational work refers to the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others. [...] Relational work comprises the entire continuum of verbal behavior from direct, impolite, rude or aggressive interaction through to polite interaction, encompassing both appropriate and inappropriate forms of social behavior [...]. Impolite behavior is thus just as significant in defining relationships as appropriate/polite or polite behavior.

(Locher & Watts, 2005, pp. 10-11)

If you would like help in understanding and/or addressing any rapport issues in your workplace just get in touch: [info@globalpeopleconsulting.com](mailto:info@globalpeopleconsulting.com)

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