How do we define rapport?
A review of the literature

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**Aim**

- To compare definitions of “rapport” in the medical literature with those in the Linguistic & Psychology (LP) literature
Methods

- English language, peer reviewed articles from 1970 – Nov 2015 containing the word “rapport” in the title & abstract.
- Medline: papers including the term “patient.”
- LLBA in Proquest (linguistic and psychology - LP): relational work, rapport ≥75. Medical papers moved.
- Articles imported into NVivo for coding.
- Papers searched for definitions of rapport.
- Framework analysis used to compare the terms found.
Results

- Papers included:
  - Medical: 47 screened, 24 eligible, 12 had definitions
  - LP: 88 screened, 32 eligible, 25 definitions

- Rapport not always defined.
Definitions

- No two authors used the same definition.
- Nearly 50 different terms used.
- Dictionary definitions rarely used.
- Most frequently occurring:
  - Mutual (22)
  - Coordination (12)
  - Harmony (11)
  - Positivity (10)
  - Attention (10)

- Most frequently cited:
  - Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal (1990)
    coordination, positivity & mutual attention
Coordination, positivity & attention

- **Persons in rapport express:**
  - Mutual attentiveness - a mutual interest in the other person,
  - Positivity – a mutual feeling of friendliness and caring
  - Coordination – the experience of balance and harmony between one another and of being in sync.

Cooperative & obliging v Body language
Conclusion

- Whilst we all seem to know what rapport is, producing a reliable definition appears problematic.
- The terms used describe a positive, collaborative relationship that involves mutuality, trust and understanding.
- Future research might more usefully review the evidence around how to establish and assess rapport building.
Dictionary Definitions

- (Webster's) Accord, affinity, conformity, harmony
- (OED 2005) Closeness, harmony
- (American Heritage) Emotional affinity, mutual trust
- (OED online version May 2017) (not cited in literature search) Close relationship or connection, empathy, harmonious accord, mesmeric action, mutual understanding, sympathy
We describe the nature of rapport in terms of a dynamic structure of three interrelating components: mutual attentiveness, positivity, and coordination.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Coordination</th>
<th>Smooth</th>
<th>Trust</th>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinated Interaction</td>
<td>Smooth Collaboration</td>
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<td>Coordinated Movement</td>
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<td>Mutual Positivity</td>
<td>Secure Atmosphere</td>
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<td>Positivity</td>
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<td>Shared positive feeling</td>
<td>Regularity</td>
<td>Comfortable*</td>
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<td>Harmonious</td>
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<td>Ease</td>
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<td>Responsiveness</td>
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* indicates count below 1.
Coordination, positivity & attention

- Coordination
  - …they convey an image of equilibrium, of regularity and predictability, of coordination …” (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal 1990)
  - coordination: balance, harmony, and synchronization in the actions of the participants.” (Granitz et al 2009)
  - “a feeling of care and friendliness,” “comparable to … enjoy[ment]” (Gremmler & Gwinner 2000)
  - “balance and regularity in the mutual attentiveness” (Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares 2012)

- Positivity
  - … positivity: mutual friendliness and caring. (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal 1990)