

## NOW IT'S PERSONAL: ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF RAPPORT BETWEEN BUSINESS FACULTY AND THEIR STUDENTS

Neil A. Granitz and Katrin R. Harich, Department of Marketing, California State University, Fullerton,  
P.O. Box 6848, Fullerton, CA 92834-6848; (714) 278-3934, (714) 278-4674

Stephen K. Koernig, Department of Marketing, DePaul University,  
1 East Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60604-2287; (312) 362-5282

### ABSTRACT

Rapport is when two people click with each other, possess a personal connection or experience good interaction due to chemistry (Tickle Degnan and Rosenthal 1990). Business educators have begun to study rapport, but past research has principally focused on students' perceptions of rapport; faculty's perceptions of rapport have never been studied nor contrasted with those of students. Understanding this is critical as rapport between faculty and students can enhance students' motivation to learn, as well as their willingness and confidence to use faculty as a resource for learning (Huff, Cooper, and Jones 2002).

Across different contexts and different disciplines (marketing, psychology, and education), several antecedents and outcomes of rapport have been identified. Key antecedents include trust, approachability, caring, positivity, empathy, openness, and homophily (Davies and Prince 2005; Faranda and Clarke 2004; Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954). Key outcomes of rapport comprise satisfaction, loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, motivation and trust (Gremier and Gwinner 2000; Perkins et al. 1995; Price and Arnould 1999).

This study employed qualitative research to identify the specific antecedents and outcomes of rapport between faculty and students, as perceived by faculty. Forty faculty members in the Colleges of Business at several large public and private universities were sampled. The findings were analyzed according to methods described by Erickson (1986) and were triangulated across researchers (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

For the antecedents, 65% of faculty cited Approach factors; these include *being willing to work with students* (30%), *communicating openly* (27.5%), and *mutual disclosure* about personal and professional life (12.5%). Personality factors were mentioned by 60% of faculty and comprise *respect* (32.5%), *caring* (32.5%), and *positivity* (30%). Finally, 12.5% of faculty stated that *homophily* was an antecedent of rapport.

In discussing the perceived outcomes of rapport, faculty identified benefits to the students (72.5%), to the faculty (40%), to both students and faculty (12.5%), and benefits outside of the classroom (12.5%). Faculty mentioned the key benefits for students as including *enhanced learning* (37.5%), *greater effort and motivation* (32.5%), and *greater attention and involvement* (30%). Faculty benefits comprised *more fun* (15%), *greater satisfaction* (15%), and *increased appreciation by the department* (12.5%). Faculty-student mutual benefits included *enhanced communication* (7.5%) and *trust* (7.5%). Finally, benefits outside of the classroom were *lasting relationships* (20%), *increased faculty attention* (i.e., referrals, career advice) (15%) and *graduates value education* (7.5%).

In general, the antecedents obtained were similar to those identified in the multidisciplinary literature. However, this study, with its faculty viewpoint, brings findings such as *trust* and *mutual disclosure* into a business education context. Faculty most frequently listed Approach and Personality factors. While Approach can be taught, personality may be more difficult to change. Additionally, given the low frequency for mentions of *homophily* and its importance as identified in previous research, it would be prudent for faculty to focus on this.

Many of the perceived outcomes identified in this research mirror those found in past research. New outcomes were also uncovered and include *fun*, *increased faculty attention*, and *lasting relationships*.

Future research can focus on developing a model and testing whether the perceived antecedents and outcomes are valid across a larger and more diverse sample. If the perceived antecedents and outcomes are supported, the benefits create a strong case for faculty to increase their rapport with students.

**References Available on Request**