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METHODS OF ESTABLISHING RAPPORT
IN THE COUNSELING SITUATION

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Division in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science

By

Harold L. Downing

KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

Pittsburg, Kansas

June, 1949

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Need for the Study

Many studies and investigations have been made concerning the counselor and the counseling situation with reference to new techniques and advancements. The literature pertaining to this subject reveals itself as being significant and of importance to the counselor, but too often no mention is made of rapport. The absence of this term in much of the literature may give the reader the impression that it is regarded by many authorities as being of little importance.

Most counselors would agree that rapport must exist between the counselor and the counselee before the counseling situation becomes a successful one, but little has been done in explaining or defining rapport and the methods of establishing it.

Shaffer¹ speaks of rapport as being of such paramount importance that the first or even several interviews may be spent solely in its establishment. Hartwell² takes the matter of rapport so seriously in his own work that he says:

¹L. F. Shaffer, The Psychology of Adjustment, p. 457.

²S. W. Hartwell, "The Treatment of Behavior and Personality Problems in Childhood-The Psychiatrist," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, I (January, 1930), 3.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Need for the Study

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Personally, when I am not able to get any positive rapport with a child, or if he is not at least neutral in his emotional attitudes toward me, and if he cannot be changed in this attitude of ordinarily friendly association which may be had during the physical examination, I do not undertake even advice, let alone psychiatric exploration or psychotherapy.

The counselee comes to the counselor with problems that are personal and intimate. For the counseling situation to be successful the counselor must get the counselee to disclose his personal experiences. These experiences will be disclosed only if rapport is well established. Symonds³ says that when rapport is established the inhibitions due to fear, anxiety, or guilt are relaxed, and response is free and less restrained.

After rapport is established and when the counselee feels that the counselor understands and respects him and his attitudes toward his problems and when he feels that he is not being forced into a situation of which he is fearful or resentful, he talks freely, going more and more deeply into the discussion of his problems and attitudes as he finds that the superficial aspects are understood and accepted.⁴ It is not enough merely to stress the importance of the problem, though. Methods of establishing rapport must be studied and present to counselors.

³P. M. Symonds, "Securing Rapport in Interviewing," Teachers College Record, XXXIX (May, 1938), 707.

⁴R. K. Meister and Helen E. Miller, "The Dynamics of Non-Directive Psychotherapy," Journal of Clinical Psychology, II (January, 1946), 61.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the literature in the fields of psychology, sociology, and guidance on rapport and to bring together the materials and suggestions and to present them in the dissertation and suggestions for their use.

The study was undertaken with the objective of enlightening counselors or prospective counselors on the importance of establishing rapport and presenting methods of establishing rapport in the counseling situation.

Definition of Rapport

Rapport is a French word meaning relation, connection, contact, in keeping in harmony,⁵ mettre une personne en rapport avec une autre, "to bring two persons together."⁶ It is used in the English language when referring to this relationship between two persons because no other word is conformable to its meaning.

Symonds⁷ defines rapport as a personal relationship of mutual trust and respect based on a feeling of confidence and security in the other person. Chisholm⁸ speaks of rapport as

⁵Hjalmar Edgren and P. B. Burnet, French and English Dictionary, p. 538.

⁶Hamilton Et Legros, Dictionnaire International Francais-Anglais, p. 738.

⁷Symonds, loc. cit.

⁸L. L. Chisholm, Guiding Youth in the Secondary School, p. 172.

that personal feeling of security, confidence, respect, and trust which the client has toward the counselor. Shaffer⁹ states that rapport implies a condition of confidence, trust and friendship, and the creation of a positive emotional relationship on the part of the counselee toward the counselor. Jones¹⁰ says that rapport consists of feelings of friendliness, security, and mutual confidence.

Counseling Defined

Jones¹¹ defines counseling as

... a personal and dynamic relationship between two individuals, one of whom is older, or more experienced, or wiser than the other, who approach a more or less well-defined problem of the younger, or less experienced, or less wise, with mutual consideration for each other to the end that the problem may be more clearly defined and that the one who has the problem may be helped to a self-determined solution of it.

Rogers¹² defines "effective" counseling as

... a definitely structured, permissive relationship which allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him to take positive steps in the light of his new orientation.

⁹Shaffer, loc. cit.

¹⁰A. J. Jones, Principles of Guidance, p. 274.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²C. R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, p. 18.

CHAPTER II

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NATURE OF RAPPORT

It is rather difficult to state precisely the psychological nature of rapport. One reason for this difficulty is the fact that what the average counselor knows about rapport is derived from his own counseling. As objective as he may be his definition or description of the relationship is going to be somewhat colored by his own personal conception of the counseling situation.

Rapport cannot exist until two people come into contact because rapport is primarily an emotional relationship between two people. But, as Rogers¹³ points out,

... it is not a parent-child relationship with its deep affectional ties, its characteristic dependence on the one hand and the acceptance of an authoritative and responsive role on the other...it is not the relationship of friend to friend...it is not a typical teacher-pupil relationship, with its implications of superior and inferior status, its assumptions that one is to teach and the other to learn, its complete reliance upon intellectual processes.

Neither is it a physician-patient relationship, with its characteristics of expert diagnosis and authoritative advice on the part of the physician, submissive acceptance and dependence on the part of the patient.... It is not the relationship between co-workers,... it is not the relationship of leader and follower,....

Rapport implies a relationship in which the counselor affords the client an accepting experience by demonstrating

¹³Ibid., p. 85.

a "man-to-man" regard for the client.¹⁴ It is the experience of friendship.¹⁵

Rapport is an atmosphere which is conducive to a friendly, unhurried interchange of thought.¹⁶ It is a...combination of a friendly and sympathetic nature with a certain firmness...¹⁷ It consists of...warmth and responsiveness on the part of the counselor...which gradually develops into a deeper emotional relationship.... It expresses itself in a genuine interest in the client and an acceptance of him as a person.¹⁸ In this relationship the client feels that he is accepted, respected, and understood and in which he feels complete assurance.¹⁹

Rapport consists essentially in a pleasurable and warm feeling of harmony or sympathy between persons and a sense of belonging together.²⁰ In this relationship there is a complete lack of any moralistic or judgmental attitude.²¹

¹⁴Meister and Miller, loc. cit.

¹⁵R. L. Dicks, Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling, p. 138.

¹⁶C. C. Dunsmoor and L. M. Miller, Guidance Methods for Teachers, p. 271.

¹⁷C. H. Griffiths, Fundamentals of Vocational Psychology, p. 127.

¹⁸Carl R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, p. 87.

¹⁹J. A. McLintock, Personnel Procedures in the Secondary School, p. 68.

²⁰Irma H. Gross and Elizabeth W. Crandall, Home Management in Theory and Practice, p. 37.

²¹Carl R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, p. 27.

CHAPTER III

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COUNSELOR AND RAPPORT

Strang²² says it is impossible to separate the personality of the counselor from the counseling situation. For this reason the personal characteristics of the counselor are of first importance. The counselor should not be expected to be infallible because first of all he is a human being, but there are certain traits and qualities which one will naturally find in the successful counselor. Beardsley²³ presents the personal qualities of the successful counselor as follows:

He is interested in people. The ideal counselor is interested in people, not simply in the abstract, but he derives his fundamental satisfaction from meeting, knowing, and working with, individuals. One of the characteristics which indicates his interest in people is that he generally observes, remembers, and appreciates people. He is able, because of this fundamental interest, to identify himself with his client to the optimum extent. This degree of identification is the primary motivation of his efforts in behalf of his client. It also facilitates his understanding of the client's personality.

He is also interested in the scientific study of personality, but this does not mean that he regards his client as a guinea pig. His client is first and last a human being, like himself. But the formal study of personality is necessary as a means to his understanding of, and tolerance toward, his client. It also serves, sometimes, as a balance between his identification with the client and his objective grasp of the client's problems.

²²Ruth Strang, Educational Guidance, p. 110.

²³S. W. Beardsley, "The Ideal Vocational Counselor," Occupations, XXVI (May, 1948), 528.

He is well-adjusted. His ego is well under control, and does not obstruct his relationship with his client. He is able to forget himself, so that he can give full and effective attention. He is relatively free of the psychological mechanism of "projection" (and constantly guards against its dangers). He is well adjusted, but not in the sense that he is contented with the status quo. He has a drive toward the welfare and growth of his clients, and toward the improvement of his own understanding and his methods.

He is mature and "well-rounded." He has lived long enough to know something about "life" and he has been sufficiently observing and perceiving to comprehend a reasonably wide range of human problems. He is not an "ivory-tower" theoretician. His applications of "book-learning" are sound, because he integrates his theoretical knowledge with down-to-earth, first hand observations.

He is socially adaptable. He meets people easily, with confidence and finesse. This is important to his ability to put the client at ease and to inspire confidence. He is able to establish quickly, and to maintain, "rapport" with many types of people. This means that, among other qualities, he has the optimum degree of sensitivity, but not so much that he has difficulty in exerting directive influence, when necessary, upon his client. His sense of humor (as distinguished from "wit") and his ability to make light conversation are essential to his adaptability.

He is studious. He is habitually a learner, because his field is so broad. His mind is curious and acquisitive. Like all real students, he is open-minded. He is an independent and imaginative thinker, a quality which is essential to his capacity to apply his theoretical knowledge appropriately to the practical problems he meets. This means that, as a student, he is observant and analytical.

Personality of the Counselor

The quality of the counseling situation is determined in no small measure by the personality of the counselor. It may be truthfully said that the personality of the counselor either makes or breaks the relationship known as rapport. He may have been excellently trained for his profession, but because he possesses traits of personality which call forth unfavorable reactions, his counseling never succeeds. He may be making use of the latest counseling techniques, but because he cannot establish rapport with his clients the counseling situation remains nothing more than a cold conversation between two people.

Insight

As is too often the case, the counselor may be totally unaware of his unfavorable traits. Therefore, it is of most importance that he have keen insight into his own personality. This implies an understanding of his own conduct, his own motivations and his habits. Objective self-analysis, if that is possible, may bring insight to the counselor if he wants to know his unsolved problems.

Shaffer²⁴ says that insight is the opposite of self-deceit and rationalization. A person who understands the nature of his own behavior can be honest with himself and can frankly admit his errors and failures. He can accept

²⁴Shaffer, op. cit., p. 537.

and assimilate his shortcomings.

"Too Striking" Personality

In considering the qualities of the counselor, both favorable and unfavorable, which may or may not hinder the establishment of rapport, one is likely to notice only the more obvious traits. Smith and Roos²⁵ regard the counselor's personality as being of paramount importance, but warn us against the "too striking" personality. They say:

A too striking personality is too unlike that of the individuals who are bringing their problems to invite and secure their confidence. The personality of a guide should be strong but not striking. The counselee must see in the guide something of himself if he is to share a sense of oneness with him. And until some degree of rapport is established between the guide and the counselee there is likely to be very little guidance.

Being "Too Friendly"

It was clearly shown that the "too striking" personality may prove detrimental in the counseling situation. The "too striking" personality may be considered as being synonymous with being "too friendly." If that is true, then some mention should be made of it. In most cases counseling is successful because the counselor, being objective and not being emotionally involved, can recognize the feelings of the counselee. If the counselor should become too friendly he loses

²⁵C. M. Smith and Mary M. Roos, A Guide to Guidance, p. 363.

sight of the problem and ends up by sympathizing with the counselee. Symonds,²⁶ in studying the methods of securing rapport, says:

...one should not become too friendly. There are some things one does not talk about with members of one's family or with one's closest friends but only with those whom one trusts because of their professional position and because the relationship is to some extent impersonal. A member of one's own family or an intimate friend can require things of you and you have an obligation to live up to their expectations. A counselor takes you as you are.

Objectivity

A counselor may fill a felt need for the counselee, temporarily, by sympathizing with him, but blinding sentiment on the part of the counselor only increases the difficulty in that the counselee is excused of anything he may have done. The counselee must feel accepted, but should feel accepted objectively. Sentiment is like "the blind leading the blind." But objectivity

...does not mean coldness or lack of sympathy and understanding, but it does mean that one does not become involved with his own emotions in the counseling situation...does not mean that the counselor has no standards of values and no criteria as to goals of growth, but that he understands that the given conduct under examination is the best the individual has been able to develop to satisfy his intrinsic needs and desires and that he recognizes that when any more adequate medium of satisfaction is discovered, the less mature of the less satisfactory will be given up.²⁷

²⁶Symonds, op. cit., p. 709.

²⁷H. S. Elliott and G. L. Elliott, Solving Personal Problems, p. 200.

Objectivity on the part of the counselor implies a relationship where the counselee feels accepted and where he senses an atmosphere of permissiveness. This is the foundation of rapport. Consequently, the counselor, to be effective, must have this quality.

Acceptance

The feelings of acceptance and permissiveness differ from the feelings of sentiment and identified sympathy in that it is an objective attitude. This attitude

...has been variously described as "controlled identification," as "constructive composure," and as "an emotionally detached attitude".... There is included in the concept a capacity for sympathy which will not be overdone, a genuinely receptive and interested attitude, a deep understanding which will find it impossible to pass moral judgments or be shocked and horrified. A person with this attitude differs on the one hand from the cold and impersonal detachment of the individual with Jovian tendencies, and differs quite as sharply from the deeply sympathetic and sentimental individual who becomes so wrapped up in the problems so as to be quite incapable of helping. It is a degree of sympathetic "identification" with the child sufficient to bring about an understanding of the feelings and problems....²⁸

Language

The ability to use language well is a prerequisite to effective counseling. But this should be differentiated

²⁸C. R. Rogers, The Clinical Treatment of the Problem Child, p. 281.

from being verbalistic. There are moments in the counseling situation where the counselor may have to clarify some particular thing for the counselee. It is the manner in which this is done that is of importance. It is the ability to state questions and the ability to answer questions in language that is clear to the counselee that is a mark of the successful counselor. It is the wise counselor who endeavors to use terminology that is on the same level or plane as the counselee.

Poise

A personal quality that is very effective in placing the counselee at ease and in establishing rapport is the counselor's poise. The poised counselor is one who shows no strain or fatigue in the counseling situation. But Rogers²⁹ warns us that to remain poised in the counseling situation is no easy task. He says that to remain constantly alert to the client's feelings, to use words not as bludgeons but as surgical tools to release growth, puts a heavy strain upon the counselor.

Confidence

The counselor will succeed in establishing rapport if he is an individual in whom his clients feel they can confide. It is this quality of confidence which causes the counselee to discuss his problems because he is assured that he can

²⁹C. R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, p. 246.

confide in the counselor. It is of importance, then, that the counselor be able to construct a confidential atmosphere, an atmosphere where the counselee is assured that anything said in the counselor's office will not "leak out."

CHAPTER IV

METHODS OF ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

The Counselor's Office

The counselor should have a private office made attractive and pleasant by means of drapes, pictures, or other decorative means.³⁰ The design and color of the drapes may not seem of too much significance, but it is well known that some colors act as excitants and others act as depressants even though one may not be consciously aware of it. Consequently, consideration must be given to the selection of drapes for the counselor's office.

Pictures which have abstract qualities may divert the counselee's attention away from the counseling process. The pictures in the counselor's office should be attractive, but simple. There is a tendency for one to study the abstract and merely to glance at the simple.

A comfortable chair should be provided for the counselee. A hard, uncomfortable chair for the counselee while the counselor sits behind a mahogany desk in a comfortable chair is likely to encourage coldness. If the counselor is going to impress the counselee as being accepted he must place himself on the same level as the one he counsels. Therefore, the counselee must be provided with the same comfort as the counselor.

³⁰E. G. Williamson, Introduction to High School Counseling, p. 200.

Anyone who has ever gone to be interviewed or counseled is aware of how dry the mouth may become. It is a good move on the part of the counselor, therefore, if he places a pitcher of water and several clean glasses on his desk. The important factor of this is that the counselee feels considered. This in itself may be a determining factor if rapport is established or not.

It is detrimental for the counselee to stop his free flow of talking to allow the counselor to answer his telephone. This not only tends to break down rapport, but gives the counselee the impression that the counselor is not considerate. The wise counselor has an extension phone in the outer office.

Preparation for the First Interview

It is not always possible for the counselor to know something in advance about the characteristics of the counselee. But if he makes an appointment in advance with the counselor or with the counselor's secretary this provides an opportunity for the counselor to find some of his personal characteristics. Shaffer³¹ says the value of this is that the counselor may begin by asking him about matters in which he is interested or proficient, rather than to bring up at once painful topics relating to the adjustment problem.

³¹Shaffer, op. cit., p. 475.

Symonds³² says that the interviewer ought to plan to hold the first interview on irrelevant matters and to make it a time for getting acquainted and exploring areas of common interest. One should perhaps always plan to have at least two interviews and usually many more in studying any case. The very act of going away and coming back does something toward establishing rapport if the counselor has shown himself to be sympathetic at the first contact.

First Counseling Session

After the appointment has been made and the client approaches the counselor's office for the first session he is more than likely to be in doubt as to the role he is expected to play in the counseling situation. He may have a feeling of fear and insecurity. When he finally knocks on the door of the counselor's office much depends upon the manner of greeting. The counselor should always open the door for his client. He should never remain seated and say "Come in." This leaves an impression of being busy or being lazy. The greeting, for best results, should not be too direct. "How are you feeling?" when the client feels miserable or "Good morning!" when the client feels that it is a poor morning is definitely out of place in the counseling situation. A simple, "Hello, Mr. _____. Come in, won't you?" while he shows his client to his chair is best.

³²Symonds, op. cit., p. 709.

After they are both seated the client will probably start the conversation by stating why he came, but on the other hand he may think that the counselor is going to ask questions, so the counselor should be prepared to open the interview with some appropriate comment. "What is your problem?" is too direct. The wise counselor will probably say, "Now what is it that you would like to talk about?" This shows interest in the client and will start the counseling process off in the right direction. As was pointed out earlier if the client is reluctant to state his problem it is probably because rapport does not, as yet, exist. It is then that the counselor should casually and tactfully mention some of the client's interests. This should naturally form an interesting and warm atmosphere. And after he finds that the counselor is interested in him, he will confide in him and this is the foundation of rapport.

Discussing Neutral Topics

The value of discussing neutral topics at first is that the client may be self-conscious and insecure and being insecure he wishes to say the right thing. Curran³³ says that this attitude is a carry-over from his social relationship--being dependent and fearful of rejection, he always tries to

³³C. A. Curran, "Structuring the Counseling Relationship: A Case Report," The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXXIX (April, 1944), 189.

say the thing he thinks other people expect him to say. It is at this point that the counselor must demonstrate acceptance of anything the client may say. For, as Rogers³⁴ points out,

... it is by the counselor's acceptance of his statements, by the complete lack of any moralistic or judgmental attitude, by the understanding attitude which pervades the counseling interview, that the client comes to recognize that all feelings and attitudes may be expressed. No attitude is too aggressive, no feeling too guilty or shameful, to bring into the relationship. Hatred for a father, feelings of conflict over sexual urges, remorse over past acts, dislike for coming for help, antagonism and resentment toward the therapist, all may be expressed. In this respect the therapeutic relationship differs markedly from the other relationships of ordinary life. It offers a place where the client may bring into the situation, as rapidly as his inhibitions will allow him, all the forbidden impulses and unspoken attitudes which complicate his life.

Counselor Does a Minimum of Talking

Regardless of the technique of counseling that is being employed in the counseling situation best results are always achieved when the counselor does a minimum of talking. The counselor can do nothing more productive of therapy in the first interview than to sit quietly and listen with sympathy and interest during these long releases.³⁵ Curran³⁶ says

³⁴C. R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, p. 88.

³⁵Curran, op. cit., p. 196.

³⁶Elliott and Elliott, op. cit., p. 229.

that the purpose of such a thorough, uninterrupted hearing is two-fold: First, it gives the counselee confidence that the counselor is willing to deal with his problem and that he understands it; and second, it gives the counselor a chance to determine both the degree of the counselee's independence and ability to deal with his problems for himself, and the degree of complexity of the problem at its present stage.

It is this feeling of confidence and understanding which establishes rapport between the counselor and the counselee. And it is only after rapport is established that the counselee will reveal his experiences.

Confidence

When this relationship of dependence and of confidence has developed, the bars are down. The counselee trusts the counselor and therefore he does not have to act a part. He expresses whatever emotions he has of love or hate, fear or anger, of dependence or inadequacy.³⁷

"Mirroring" the Counselee's Mood

It is important at this stage of the counseling process for the counselor to "mirror" the counselee's mood. The counselee may laugh at some particular incident which the

³⁷ Ibid., p. 198.

counselor considers as not being funny, but if rapport is to be maintained, he should and must laugh right along with the counselee. Laughing together at something helps create the feeling of oneness, but the counselor must never give the counselee the impression that he is laughing at him. This will break rapport and cause a feeling of distance quicker than anything.

Counselee's Problem is Important

It is quite likely that the counselee has talked to his parents or to his intimate friends concerning his problem or problems before coming to the counselor. As is too often the case they, trying to be kind, probably responded by saying, "Oh, that's nothing to worry about," "the same thing happened to me," or "everything will be alright." Statements such as these tend only to minimize the counselee's problems. The counselor will rapidly establish rapport and conduct successful counseling if he proves to the counselee that any problem he may have is very important and that he definitely desires to help in the solving of them.

Nonverbal Communication

The writer has tended to emphasize the importance of speech in the counseling situation, but it should be mentioned that

... the procedures used in aiding the patient to communicate are both verbal and nonverbal. The nonverbal procedures available to the counselor include facial expressions, nodding, glances, gestures, postural changes, vocal inflections, and intonation. These nonverbal aspects... are constantly affecting the patient. They carry a meaning that may reinforce, neutralize, and even outweigh the spoken word. Skill is needed to harmonize the nonverbal with the verbal procedures.³⁸

In other words, even though the counselor proves to be a "good listener," he must practice the art of nonverbal gestures. The counselor, even though he has said practically nothing following a statement of the counselee's, may express amazement, doubt, or shame at something said. A facial expression or a gesture may give the impression of either acceptance or nonacceptance. This is not the same as saying that the counselor should have a "dead pan" expression, but it does mean that he should be nonjudgmental in his attitude in the counseling situation.

Nonjudgmental Attitude

The intelligent counselor is nonjudgmental in his attitude because he has learned, in his psychological training, that every act is motivated and that it is the motivation behind the act that should be considered and not the act.

³⁸J. E. Finesinger, "Psychiatric Interviewing," The American Journal of Psychiatry, CV (September, 1948), 192.

Most professional counselors would agree that the non-judgmental attitude is important in the counseling situation in that it helps create acceptance and acceptance naturally leads to the establishment of rapport. But on the other hand, as Sutich³⁹ points out,

... the nonjudgmental attitude is sometimes interpreted as anti-moral, or as representing a position not based on the usual moral code. This misinterpretation arises where a clear distinction is not made between the rights and responsibilities of the psychologist in the analytical relationship, as compared with his rights and responsibilities in certain other relationships in which he might be dealing with the same kinds of conduct.

Expressing Sympathy

The danger of expressing sympathy has been shown, but in case the counselor has expressed sympathy in the early stages of the counseling situation to help establish rapport, he should recognize, as Symonds⁴⁰ points out, that after rapport has been established such sympathy may be an actual crutch. The counselee may bask in the warmth of the sympathy which he receives and never achieve independence in feeling or action.

The counselor may employ various methods to establish rapport, but he should be particularly careful not to use a

³⁹Anthony Sutich, "Toward a Professional Code for Psychological Consultants," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXXIX (July, 1944), 334.

⁴⁰Symonds, op. cit., p. 717.

method that will encourage rapport in the office, but fails to maintain rapport after the counselee has left the office. Successful establishment of rapport implies a relationship in which even after the counselee has left the office he still has confidence and trust in the counselor, but is not dependent upon him.

Note Taking

As important as starting the counseling process is the closing of it. Darley⁴¹ gives an analogy which is quite fitting: Think of standing at the door trying to figure out how to end the departing guest's farewell and thanks for a pleasant evening. Think of being cornered by a talkative and enthusiastic salesman. These examples give some idea of how the counselee feels and how the counselor might feel when the interview drags out far beyond a reasonable length of time.

The counselor should plan to close the interview just as he planned to open it. A blunder at this point may break rapport completely. The counselor, by rising from his desk, can frankly say, "Well, you've mentioned a lot that we can work on. Now let's fix a date for the next time."

Setting a Definite Time for the Next Counseling Session

The counselor should set a definite time for the next

⁴¹J. G. Darley, Testing and Counseling in the High School Guidance Program, p. 180.

counseling session. This important point is sometimes forgotten. Curran⁴² says that setting a definite time for the next interview establishes the fact that the counselor wants to see the client again. Otherwise, the client in his embarrassment and confusion is apt not to ask for a definite time himself but to end the interview with, "Well, I'll drop around and see you sometime when I'm feeling low again."

CHAPTER V

FACTORS WHICH MAY PREVENT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RAPPORT

In this chapter the writer will discuss those factors which may either prevent the establishment of rapport in the counseling situation or sever the establishment after it has been established. These factors are limited to the counseling situation.

Thoughtlessness

Many who counsel destroy much of their efforts or reduce their efficiency greatly by repeatedly glancing at their watch, turning around to clear up some unfinished business, or having their desk in a condition which indicates that they are rushed with work and are merely taking valuable time away from important things for the conference.⁴² The counselor will break the establishment of rapport with his client if he appears to be uncomfortable by fingering his correspondence or nervously twisting a pencil as though anxious to bring the interview to a close. He will lose any feeling of rapport or acceptance if he gives the impression of being pressed for time.⁴³

⁴²Chisholm, op. cit., p. 177.

⁴³Symonds, op. cit., p. 712.

Arbitrary Procedure

In the initial stages of the counseling process arbitrary procedure are very dangerous. Arbitrary procedure implies a condition in which the counselor makes decisions before he has the facts or experiences of his client. This will weaken rapport in that it implies that the counselor is not looking at the problem or problems as the counselee sees it. There can be no understanding of the client's problems or his feelings unless he identifies himself with the client and this cannot be possible if he thinks that he knows all of the answers at the start of the counseling process.

Rigidity in Method

A factor which quite often stilts the counseling relationship and encourages coldness or lack of rapport is rigidity in method. This happens when the counselor relies solely in one technique of counseling. Pertaining to the counseling technique Fenton⁴⁴ says that the viewpoint of eclecticism rather than the emphasis upon any particular systematic exposition is desired.

Dependence

Becoming too friendly or too sympathetic, as was shown, may encourage a warm relationship in the early part of the

⁴⁴Norman Fenton, "The Personal Interview," Occupations, XII (March, 1934), 76.

counseling situation, but as was also shown, this may lead to dependence of the counselee upon the counselor. Therefore, these feelings, even though they may encourage rapport, are detrimental to the counseling process.

Flattery

Flattery can break rapport as quickly as it can establish rapport. If the counselor moves with extreme caution and indirectly says something complimentary about the client rapport may be established, but if the counselor impresses the client as obviously trying to flatter him rapport is immediately lost and the counseling situation comes to a dead standstill.

Counselor with "Religious Attitude"

Throughout this study the term "acceptance" has been used in regard to establishing rapport. The question which naturally arises when discussing this term in the counseling situation is how the religious individual would adapt himself to accepting an individual if he considers some acts as being sinful. May⁴⁵ states that the religious person,

... to the extent that he feels inferiority and a consequent exaggerated ambition, cannot help morally judging other people. For since

⁴⁵Rollo May, The Art of Counseling, p. 175.

his ego-striving is in the moral realm, the depreciating of others morally will mean the elevating of himself. No matter how often he rebukes himself with Jesus' commandment, "Judge not," and no matter how viciously he suppresses these judgments, even deriving a certain pleasure from his refusal to "gossip," he will continue to condemn unconsciously.

For the client to express his emotions and yet feel accepted the counselor must be an individual who regards nothing as being "sinful." His client may be badly maladjusted, but he never considers his client as being immoral or "sinful." He realizes "that it does little good, and often much harm, to tell another what is the matter. To do so is to take the risk of the counselee's having to protect himself against the counselor's judgment as he has formerly protected himself against the real or assumed judgment of his fellows."⁴⁶

Too Much of a Hurry

The importance of using the first interview as a means of getting acquainted has been shown. Discussing neutral topics encourages rapport, but too often the counselor does not use the first interview as a means of getting acquainted. Instead, he gets in too much of a hurry to begin the counseling process. This happens when the counselor views the hour as his rather than the counselee's. Rogers⁴⁷ says that the

⁴⁶ Elliott and Elliott, op. cit., p. 206.

⁴⁷ F. G. Davis, Pupil Personal Service, p. 366.

client is free to keep an appointment or to break it, to come on time or to come late, to use the hour in idle talk in order to avoid his real problems, or to use it constructively.

The client may approach the first interview desiring or even demanding that the counselor solve his problems for him. The establishment of rapport depends to a great degree upon the careful handling of this situation. Davis,⁴⁸ in referring to this situation, says that the interviews should never be hurried. And Williamson⁴⁹ adds that even though many clients desire to solve problems in one interview, the counselor must move slowly.

Terminology

There are many terms used in psychology and psychological counseling that cannot be replaced by simpler words or they will lose their meaning; but that does not give the counselor the privilege to use them while counseling. Rapport can be lost if the counselor endeavors to use terminology that is above the counselee's understanding. A distance between the two immediately appears if the counselee does not know what the counselor is talking about. The use of difficult terminology on the part of the counselor also gives the impression that he knows all of the answers.

⁴⁸F. G. Davis, Pupil Personal Service, p. 366.

⁴⁹Williamson, op. cit., p. 203.

Reflecting Feeling

If the counselor reflects amazement, surprise, or a feeling of resentment at anything the client says, he is quite likely to stop such statements and thereby turn a conference which was moving in the direction of grappling with fundamental problems into inefficient routine or insignificant conversation.⁵⁰

Interrupting the Flow of Release

Interrupting the flow of release has practically the same results in the counseling situation as the reflection of amazement or surprise. When the client pauses for breath, or to regain composure, the counselor will break this relationship if he tries to fill in the silent spot. The client must be held to his problem and this can be done by clarifying what has been said, but for the counselor to respond to the silence by asking questions or making statements may direct the client's problem or problems into other channels. This tends to impress the client with the feeling that the counselor does not see or understand his problem, thus breaking rapport. This is often the result of responding to content instead of feeling. "This type of response in no way demonstrates acceptance of the client."⁵¹

⁵⁰Chisholm, op. cit., p. 175.

⁵¹Meister and Miller, op. cit., p. 65.

Domination

Strang⁵² states that some persons cannot be successful counselors because they have too strong a need within themselves to dominate others, while a smaller number are so lacking in self-confidence that they arouse a feeling of insecurity in their clients.

Counselor-Centered

Rapport is lost if the counselor tells of his own personal experiences. The counselor who says, "Yes, I know just how you feel. The same thing happened to me once," is minimizing the client's problems and makes the client-centered situation a counselor-centered one.

Client-Centered

The client-centered situation is one in which the client may express whatever emotions he has, but

... if the counselor responds to these emotional manifestations directly, as in ordinary life, an unsound relationship is set up. If the counselor responds to his aggressive thrusts in kind, a fight is begun; if he tries to argue or persuade him out of his pessimistic mood or his disbeliefs, an argument is in progress; if he responds to love protestations in kind, a love affair is developed. Many counselors fail because they respond to the counselee as they would to their fellows in the ordinary affairs of life. It is only as the counselor

⁵²Strang, op. cit., p. 109.

sympathetically receives the manifestations made to him, but does not respond to them personally, that positive results will take place.⁵³

Setting a Definite Time for the Next Interview

As the counseling situation draws to a close the counselor sets a definite time for the next interview, an obvious point, but, one that is sometimes forgotten. The importance of setting the time for the next interview is the fact that it establishes the fact that the counselor wants to see the client again.

⁵³Elliott and Elliott, op. cit., p. 198.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Even though the term "rapport" has been absent from many of the studies and investigations concerning counseling, it should still be regarded as being of much importance.

Most counselors would agree that rapport must exist between the counselor and the counselee before effective counseling can take place, but little has been done in explaining or defining rapport and the methods of establishing it.

Rapport is not a parent-child relationship, a friend to friend relationship, a teacher-pupil relationship, a physician-patient relationship or the relationship of leader and follower. It is rather a relationship in which the counselor affords the client an accepting experience by demonstrating a "man-to-man" regard for the client. In this relationship the client feels accepted because there is a complete lack of any moralistic or judgmental attitude.

Because the personality of the counselor cannot be separated from the counseling situation, the personal characteristics of the successful counselor were considered. Among those characteristics given were: He is interested in people, he is interested in the scientific study of personality, he is well-adjusted, he is mature and well rounded, he is socially

adaptable, he is studious, he has personal insight, his personality is not "too striking," he is not too friendly, he is objective, he demonstrates an atmosphere of acceptance, he has the ability to use the language well, he is poised, and he exhibits a feeling of confidence.

The writer has attempted to set forth various methods of establishing rapport, but he does not wish to imply that the best of methods are in any manner complete. It is merely a foundation on which the counselor may build. Among the methods included were: The fixtures in the counselor's office, preparation for the first interview, the first counseling session, discussing neutral topics, counselor does a minimum of talking, confidence, "mirroring" the counselee's mood, considering the counselee's problem as being important, nonverbal communication, nonjudgmental attitude, expressing sympathy, tact in note taking, and setting a definite time for the next counseling session.

Some of the factors which may prevent the establishment of rapport are: thoughtlessness, arbitrary procedures, rigidity in method, dependence, flattery, "religious" attitude, too much of a hurry to start counseling process, terminology, reflecting feelings, interrupting the flow of release, domination, counselor-centered situation, and failing to set a definite time for the next interview.

Since the counseling situation is always a fluid one, the counselor cannot employ these methods mechanically. Rogers⁵⁴ says that we find more the skills of an art than the technique of a science. Therefore, the various methods should be applied in a flexible manner. Robinson,⁵⁵ in speaking of flexibility, says the counselor must adjust his procedures to meet the changing needs and dynamics of the counseling situation.

Many methods of establishing rapport were presented in this investigation, but, as Thorne⁵⁶ says, any methods which makes it easier for the client to express himself freely and without danger of arousing critical or condemnatory attitudes marks a great therapeutic advance.

⁵⁴C. R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, p. 279.

⁵⁵Francis P. Robinson, "Are 'Nondirective' Techniques Sometimes Too Directive?" Journal of Clinical Psychology, II (October, 1946), 368.

⁵⁶F. C. Thorne, "A Critique of Nondirective Methods of Psychotherapy," The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXXIX (October, 1944), 463.

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