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The Effects of Engaging in Rapport-Building Behaviors on Productivity and Discretionary Effort

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ABSTRACT

A commonly held belief among business professionals is that rapport-building activities in the workplace can enhance organizational outcomes and employee satisfaction. However, limited research has evaluated the effects of rapport-building behaviors on productivity and discretionary effort. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to examine the effects of engaging in rapport-building behaviors on productivity and discretionary effort in comparison to a control group in an analogue setting. Participants in the present study consisted of 48 undergraduate students who were assigned to either the rapport-building behaviors group or the control group. Participants completed a check-processing task to evaluate productivity and were asked to complete an optional survey to evaluate discretionary effort. The results indicated that rapport-building behaviors group had higher levels of productivity and engaged in more discretionary effort than the control group.

KEYWORDS

Rapport; discretionary effort; performance; familiarity; relationships

Behavior analysts recognize that building a positive relationship, or “rapport”, is an important skill set for employees and supervisors. For example, Eubanks, O’Driscoll, Hayward, Daniels, and Conner (1990) listed building rapport as a necessary behavioral competency for behaviorally-oriented business consultants, and Taylor, LeBlanc, and Nosik (2018) included rapport in their discussion of providing compassionate and empathetic care in behavior analytic treatment. Conversely, Turner, Fischer, and Luiselli (2016) outlined some negative implications of poor supervisor-employee rapport. The authors asserted that employees who have poor rapport with their supervisors may be unwilling to approach those supervisors with questions or concerns and may seek advice from other less qualified individuals. Thus, failure to engage in rapport building may reduce opportunities for effective training and high-quality feedback. Although there is agreement in the field that building rapport has face value, limited research in behavior analysis has addressed the topic.

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While “rapport” is a construct, it has been described by behavior analysts as a setting event (Magito McLaughlin & Carr, 2005), and *building* rapport could be described as a set of behaviors. Rapport-building behaviors can be grouped into two categories, verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Norling, 2003). Verbal behaviors that build rapport might include asking open-ended questions to learn more about other person’s experiences and wishes and making positive statements that acknowledge the other person’s comments and indicate general interest (Taylor, LeBlanc, & Nosik, 2018). Taylor, LeBlanc, and Nosik suggest that open-ended questions may result in a more collaborative relationship, empathy, and compassion. Examples of nonverbal rapport-building behaviors include eye contact, sitting up and leaning forward toward an individual, nodding, and smiling (Taylor, LeBlanc, & Nosik, 2019). These non-verbal behaviors may also indicate that the person is listening to, and interested in, what is being said.

Behavior analysts in clinical settings have demonstrated that rapport can be developed with clients and lead to positive outcomes (Lugo, King, Lamphere, & McArdle, 2017; Shillingsburg, Bowen, & Shapiro, 2014). For example, in a two-part study by Magito McLaughlin and Carr (2005), researchers systematically examined the effects of “good” and “poor” levels of rapport with clients on the latency of problem behavior, in demand and no demand conditions of a functional analysis, as well as percentage of task completion. Rapport levels were determined through surveys administered to both clients and staff, rating the quality of the relationship. Thus, clients were exposed to four conditions: 1) poor rapport and demands, 2) poor rapport and no demands, 3) good rapport and demands, and, 4) good rapport and no demands. Participants included three individuals who were diagnosed with autism and/or other developmental disabilities and were selected based on a history of problem behavior with specific staff members. Results from study 1 indicated that problem behavior occurred more frequently and for longer durations in the “poor” rapport conditions in comparison to “good” rapport conditions.

The second part of the study evaluated a package intervention for improving rapport and examined the impact on frequency of problem behavior and percentage of correctly completed steps for a task. The package was comprised of 1) noncontingent reinforcement, 2) responsivity training where individuals were coached on how to acknowledge communication attempts, identify possible function, and address identifiable needs or requests, and 3) training on turn-taking during activities identified as mutually preferred for the client and staff. Staff members received training on building rapport with clients during eight coaching sessions that occurred over the course of 10 to 13 weeks. Results from study 2 found a moderate increase in subjective reports on the satisfaction scores for 3 of the 4 poor rapport participants, from an average of 2.75 to 4, on a scale of 1–5. Percentile rank in comparison to other staff

members also increased from 11% to 22%, 44% to 65%, and 15% to 31% across three staff. Additionally, they observed decreases in problem behavior and increases in the percentage of correctly completed steps for a task. These results suggest that engaging in rapport building behaviors may have a positive impact on relationships and outcomes.

Parsons, Bentley, Solari, and Reid (2016) conducted a follow-up study to Magito McLaughlin and Carr (2005) and compared compliance in the presence of familiar and unfamiliar staff. They found that participants were more compliant in the presence of familiar staff compared to unfamiliar staff. Next, they familiarized clients and staff by having staff spend time engaging in clients' preferred activities and incorporating these activities into their daily routine. A familiar staff member also coached the unfamiliar staff member on client preferences during interactions. They observed higher rates of compliance when staff were familiarized in comparison to staff members who were unfamiliar. They also measured *indices of happiness and unhappiness* through a questionnaire for staff to identify behaviors associated with being happy or unhappy as an indicator for quality of life. They observed increased levels of indices of happiness of clients during interactions with familiarized staff in comparison to unfamiliar staff. These results suggest that rapport building activities may produce higher levels of reported rapport, less problem behavior, and higher compliance or on-task behavior by clients. Employers are also interested in on-task behavior and task completion; however, to date, researchers have not investigated the impact of rapport on employee performance. Two areas of particular interest with regards to employee performance are productivity and discretionary effort.

Lloyd (2008) defined discretionary effort as, "voluntary effort directed toward organizational goals above the minimum work required". In other words, discretionary effort is performance that exceeds the pre-established expectations for performance. For example, doing more work than required, doing tasks that are not part of normal job duties for the position, or helping a coworker could all be considered discretionary effort. Although OBM practitioners often describe discretionary effort as important to business (Daniels & Bailey, 2014), there is no experimental research in behavior analysis directly examining it. However, research outside of behavior analysis supports this notion, demonstrating that positive work relationships increase the likelihood that employees will go out of their way for the benefit of the organization (e.g., Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Falender et al., 2004; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). Thus, it may be worth behavior analysts extending the research examining the impact of rapport-building behaviors on adult clients, to other populations, including employees.

The purpose of the current study was to examine the effects of the experimenter engaging in rapport-building behaviors on productivity and discretionary effort in an analogue work setting. The study took place in

a simulated work environment and two groups were compared, one exposed to rapport-building behaviors and one control group. Participants completed a work task used to compare productivity as well as a long, optional survey following the session to evaluate discretionary effort. Completion of the survey was considered discretionary effort because it was not part of the initial study description (i.e., not a pre-established expectation) and was not required to receive credit for participation (i.e., not part of the participant duties for receiving credit).

Method

Participants

Forty-eight undergraduates, ranging in age from 18 to 71 years ($M = 20.7$; $n = 24$ male, $n = 24$ female), participated in the study. Participants were recruited via an online university system ($n = 46$) and in undergraduate classes ($n = 2$) and earned course credit ($n = 47$) or a \$10 Amazon gift card ($n = 1$) for participation in the study. The \$10 gift card was provided to a student who participated after the end of the semester and therefore could not obtain course credit. The experimenter told participants that the purpose of the study was to evaluate performance during a computerized simulated check processing task. Participants were fully debriefed at the conclusion of the study.

Each participant was assigned to one of two groups: rapport-building ($n = 12$ male, $n = 12$ female) or control ($n = 12$ male, $n = 12$ female), in an alternating manner.

Apparatus and setting

Sessions were conducted in the laboratory setting. The room consisted of two work stations equipped with a desktop computer. Only one participant occupied the room at a time. The experimental task and a rapport rating survey were presented through a Windows desktop computer. Participants used both the keyboard and the mouse to respond.

Experimental task and survey

The experimental task was a simulated check processing task as described by Johnson, Dickinson, and Huitema (2008). The task was designed to mimic data entry of a bank teller. Participants were instructed to enter the value of the simulated bank check, which ranged from \$10.00 to \$999.99, into a separate blank in the computer program and then click the “next check”

button to submit the entry. The computer program automatically recorded the number of check values that were typed accurately and inaccurately.

Participants were asked to complete two surveys. Both surveys were presented via Qualtrics, a program developed to electronically design and collect survey responses.

Experimental procedures

Participants completed the entire experiment in one visit lasting approximately one hour. The general procedures for the experiment were the following: a) review of consent, b) conversation session (rapport-building or control conversation), c) task training, d) check processing task session, e) rapport rating survey, and f) optional survey.

Conversation

In order to keep each session consistent, the experimenter used a script to guide the conversation. The experimenter told the participants that he was going to ask them a series of questions to get to know them better. During the conversation, the experimenter sat in a chair in front of the participant. The experimenter then followed the rapport-building script or the control group script. The same experimenter completed all sessions in order to avoid experimenter differences.

Rapport-building behaviors. Participants in the rapport-building behaviors group were asked 15 open-ended questions in order for the experimenter to familiarize himself with the participant (see Appendix A for all questions asked). The questions were developed by the first three authors on the paper, with the goal of identifying questions that: 1) any student could answer, 2) would likely evoke positive responses, and 3) covered a variety of aspects of their life (e.g., work, school, social life, as well as past, present, and future). We also referred to an experiment that used questions to increase “interpersonal closeness” (Aron, Melinat, Aron, Vallone, & Bator, 1997), and used variations of four of the questions listed by the authors, denoted by asterisks in Appendix A. After the experimenter asked each question, he allowed the participant to answer without interruption. Once the participant finished answering the question, the experimenter replied with either a positive statement (e.g., “that is really interesting I would love to live in a city by the beach!”) or with an agreement statement (e.g., “I can imagine how tough that must be”). Lastly, throughout the conversation the experimenter engaged in nonverbal cues such as smiling, making eye contact, and leaning in toward the participant. The rapport-building conversation session lasted on average 9 min (range, 5 min – 19 min).

Control

The experimenter asked participants in the control group 15 closed-ended questions (e.g., “Do you own any pets?”, “what is your favorite sport?”; see Appendix A for all questions asked). After the participant answered each question, the experimenter did not provide any positive or agreement statements. The experimenter either did not reply and immediately asked the next question, or he replied by saying “ok”. Additionally, throughout the conversation the experimenter limited eye contact and smiling to three instances. The control conversation session lasted on average 2 min (range, 2 min – 4 min).

Task training

The experimenter provided a brief training on how to complete the check processing task. Training followed a behavior skills training approach in which the experimenter provided instructions, modeled a correct entry, provided the participant with an opportunity to practice, and provided feedback after practice.

Check processing task session

The experimenter asked the participants to complete as many checks as they could for 40-min. The experimenter explained that he would be outside of the room and that he would be back in 40-minutes. The experimenter then left the room and returned after 40-min had elapsed. During this time, the participant was left alone in the room.

Rapport rating scale

Following the check processing task session, the experimenter asked participants to complete an anonymous survey (see Table 2 for survey questions) about their rapport with the experimenter. The questions were presented in a 6-item Likert scale. The experimenter opened the Qualtrics link to the rapport rating scale for the participant and waited outside the room while the participant completed it.

Optional survey

Following the rapport rating scale, the experimenter told the participants that they were finished with the study but would be emailed an optional survey to complete. Immediately after the participant left the laboratory, the experimenter e-mailed the Qualtrics link for the survey to the participant. The survey consisted of 20 multiple choice and open-ended question such as, “What is your favorite book?” and “How would you describe it to a friend if you were trying to convince him/her to read it?”. The optional survey was designed as a way to measure discretionary effort; therefore, it was created to be effortful to complete.

Response measures and data collection

Productivity

The primary measure of the productivity variable was the number of correctly completed checks. As a secondary measure we tracked the number of erroneously completed checks.

Discretionary effort

The dependent variable of discretionary effort was operationalized in four different ways: (1) accessing the optional online survey, (2) number of questions answered on the optional survey, (3) duration of time spent on the optional survey (in seconds), and (4) answer length (total word count) on the optional survey. The number of questions answered, and the duration of time spent on the survey was automatically collected by Qualtrics for each completed survey. The word count per survey was calculated by counting each word typed on the survey. Participants who did not complete the survey were assigned a value of zero on these variables.

Survey completion. Percentage of participants who completed the survey was calculated by dividing the number of participants in each group that completed the survey by the total number of participants in the group and multiplying that number by 100 to yield a percentage.

Questions answered. The percentage of questions answered, and the duration of time spent on the survey was automatically collected by Qualtrics for each completed survey. Participants who did not complete the survey were assigned 0% questions answered and 0 s spent on the survey. To obtain the groups percentage of questions answered, the sum of the percentages of questions answered was divided by the number of participants in the group and multiplied by 100 to obtain a percentage. To obtain the group's average of time spent on the surveys, the sum of duration spent in each survey was divided by the number of participants in each group.

Word count. Participants who did not complete the survey were assigned a zero value for the number of words typed. To obtain the group's average the total sum of each word typed per survey was divided by the total number of completed surveys.

Treatment integrity

An independent observer collected treatment integrity data for 27% of all sessions (25% for rapport-building group and 29% for control group). In these sessions, participants were told that the independent observer was being trained on how to run future sessions and would therefore observe

the experimenter. Observers recorded the following experimenter behaviors: (a) asked question as written, (b) did not ask follow-up questions, (c) smiled, (d) made eye contact and (e) delivered positive or agreement statements.

Percentage of correct steps implemented correctly in each session was calculated by dividing the total number of steps implemented correctly by the total number of steps and multiplying it by 100 to yield a percentage score. Treatment integrity averaged 96.6% for the rapport-building group (range, 91% – 100%) and 98.2% for the control group (range, 96%-100%).

Results

Because of the relatively small sample size and non-normal distribution of the variables (with the exception of number of checks processed), we used a non-parametric statistic, the Mann-Whitney U , to compare the groups. Group means and effect sizes for all study variables are reported in Table 1. We also reported Cohen's d as a measure of effect size (Cohen, 1977).

Productivity

Figure 1 displays the number of correct checks completed per group. Non-parametric statistics did not detect differences between group on checks processed correctly (Sum of Ranks_{rapport} = 656, Sum of Ranks_{control} = 520, $U = 220$, $p = .08$) or errors (Sum of Ranks_{rapport} = 628.5, Sum of Ranks_{control} = 547.5, $U = 247.5$, $p = .20$). However, because the data for checks processed correctly were normally distributed (unlike the other variables) and otherwise met the assumptions for a parametric test, we also ran the more powerful, independent-samples t -test to

Table 1. Means and effect sizes across groups.

Measure	Group		Cohen's d
	Rapport ($n = 24$)	Control ($n = 24$)	
Checks processed	566.04	497.42	.50
% participation	58%	34%	. –
# questions answered	9.33	4.74	0.54
Words written	109.04	34.88	0.47
Time spent	496.3 s	152.1 s	0.40

Table 2. Results of the rapport rating survey are displayed including group means and p -value.

Question	Group		p
	Rapport ($n = 24$)	Control ($n = 24$)	
On a scale of 1– 6, how would you rate your rapport with the experimenter?	5.5 (3– 6)	5.41 (4– 6)	.553
Overall, I enjoyed participating in this study.	5.54 (2– 6)	3.91 (1– 6)	.103

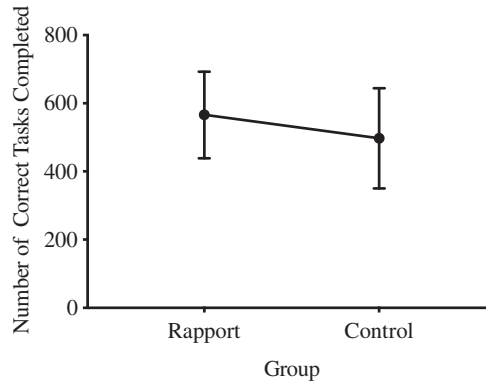


Figure 1. The graph depicts the average productivity for each group as well as the range.

compare the groups on this variable. The independent samples *t*-test detected a significant difference between the groups, such that participants in the rapport-building group completed significantly more checks ($M_{rapport} = 566.04$, $SD = 127.2$) than participants in the control group ($M_{control} = 497.42$, $SD = 147.9$), $t(46) = 1.73$, $p = .045$. The effect size measure ($d = 0.50$) revealed a difference of one-half standard deviation between the groups, suggesting a medium-sized effect (Cohen, 1977).

Discretionary effort

Whereas 58% of the rapport group chose to work on the optional survey, only 34% of the control group chose to do so, Chi-sq (1) = 2.96, $p < .05$. Additionally, compared to the control group, participants in the rapport-building group answered a higher percentage of the survey [Sum of Ranks_{rapport} = 677, Sum of Ranks_{control} = 499, Mann-Whitney $U = 199.0$, $p = .02$], spent marginally more time completing the survey [Sum of Ranks_{rapport} = 659, Sum of Ranks_{control} = 517, Mann-Whitney $U = 217.0$, $p = .05$], and wrote more words [Sum of Ranks_{rapport} = 663, Sum of Ranks_{control} = 513, Mann-Whitney $U = 213.0$, $p = .04$]. Cohen's *d* values again suggested a medium-sized effect.

Rapport ratings

Cronbach's alpha for the 5-item rapport rating scale was .71, suggesting that it is appropriate to aggregate the item responses into one scale score (average response across items). However, the groups did not differ significantly on rapport scores (Sum of Ranks_{rapport} = 605, Sum of Ranks_{control} = 571, Mann-Whitney $U = 271.00$, $p = .36$).

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the positive effects of engaging in rapport-building behaviors may extend beyond clinical behavior analysis and into organizational settings. Results indicated that participants in the rapport-building group completed significantly more of the productivity task (14% more) than participants in the control group. Compared to those in the control group, participants in the rapport-building group also scored higher on four measures of discretionary effort related to the optional survey task: participation, number of questions answered, time devoted, and words written. This was the first known study in behavior analysis to directly evaluate whether engaging rapport-building behaviors would increase productivity and discretionary effort. The positive finding suggests that discretionary effort is mutable and worthy of further study. Overall, the results of this study suggest that a relatively small amount of time spent engaging in rapport-building behaviors had a positive impact on performance and discretionary effort, and that rapport building may be a useful intervention tool in organizations. Engaging in rapport-building behaviors as part of an intervention strategy could have immense utility in organizations. Practitioners could use it to improve performance, buy-in, intervention compliance, and job satisfaction.

Although the behavioral mechanism responsible for the differences observed between groups was not directly studied, we can speculate. Magito McLaughlin and Carr (2005) suggested that rapport may serve as a setting event, elaborating that a good relationship may “attenuate the aversiveness of task demands” (pg. 69) while poor rapport may exacerbate it. Building rapport through verbal and non-verbal interactions could be more precisely described as a function-altering process (Schlinger & Blakely, 1987). In other words, building rapport may alter the function of a variety of stimuli associated with the experimenter and task. For example, instructions (as a stimulus class) delivered by the experimenter who engaged in rapport-building behaviors, may have acquired the properties of an establishing operation for positive reinforcement by increasing the value of the experimenter’s approval and thus making compliance more likely. This effect could offset the establishing effect for negative reinforcement that is inherent in most forms of tasks. It is unlikely that instructions acquired a discriminative function, signaling the availability of social reinforcement, because the experimenter never provided any feedback on the task. However, one could imagine that could occur in a natural work environment in which the supervisor provided intermittent praise for task completion. Stimuli associated with the task and survey may have also become conditioned positive reinforcers. Future research could more directly evaluate the function-altering effect by measuring the reinforcing value of the task stimuli and instructional compliance before, during, and after rapport building occurs.

It should be noted that the rapport rating scale given at the end of each session did not reveal a statistically significant difference between groups. It is therefore possible that the rapport-building behaviors did not increase participants' perceptions of rapport, but rather, some other mechanism was responsible for the differences obtained. The scores in both groups were positive, which may have been due to the fact that both groups had interactions with the experimenter, the short duration of the study with an unfamiliar researcher, earning extra credit for participating, or because the students filled out the survey while the researcher was just outside of the room. It is possible that these factors resulted in high scores on the rapport measure across both groups. It is also possible that some other element of the study was responsible for the observed differences in productivity and discretionary effort. For example, responding to questions about positive experiences in the rapport group could have built momentum for task completion, independent of the researcher being present to ask those questions. Despite not finding a statistically significant difference in rapport rating survey, the results imply that some aspect of the procedure had an impact on performance and discretionary effort. Future researchers may consider using a pre-post measure of rapport, providing a choice opportunity so that participants can select a preferred researcher, or some other measure that may be more sensitive to differences in perceived rapport.

This study illuminated the fact that OBM researchers have not clearly defined discretionary effort. We described the check processing task as a measure of productivity, but one could argue that it was also a measure of discretionary effort, since completing a specific amount of checks was not required, so all participants exceeded expectations. Furthermore, we called the optional survey a measure of discretionary effort because it was not part of the pre-established task description when participants agreed to participate, and it was not required in order for participants to receive credit. However, it was still prompted by the experimenter and one could argue that discretionary effort should be unprompted. Once a task is prompted, it has become an expected task (although no programmed consequences were available for completing this task). OBM researchers and practitioners should consider more precisely defining discretionary effort, so that it can be studied.

One limitation of this study was the use of an artificial work setting, which limits the generality of these results to actual workplace settings. There are many other contingencies in the workplace that are not present in a simulated work setting. For example, performance evaluation and management systems, deadlines, coworker and customer interactions, and life events can impact work performance. Furthermore, supervisor and employee interactions are likely not always positive, and rapport is presumably built (and damaged) across many interactions over time. The lack of difference in the rapport ratings indicate that participants may have required more time and

exposure to the experimenter for differentiated ratings of rapport to emerge. And finally, sessions only lasted 40 minutes, which is a small percentage of the actual workday. It is possible that performance effects would become negligible or amplified if session duration was increased. Analogue settings provide the opportunity for researchers to study important topics in a controlled environment before moving to less controlled environments. Therefore, future research should examine rapport building over time and seek to test the impact of rapport in actual work settings. Researchers could evaluate rapport as a standalone intervention and also as an aid for the acceptance and maintenance of other interventions.

Other limitations of the study are related to the study design. For example, the responses on the optional survey were anonymous, and therefore we were unable to compare the individual optional survey results to other dependent variables to evaluate if any correlations existed. Next, a control group that was not exposed to *any* interactions with the experimenter except training was not included. It is possible the non-rapport building sessions, which still included questions, resulted in some rapport being established. Relatedly, the treatment group spent, on average, 9 min with the experimenter while the control group only spent 2 min, on average, with the experimenter. Parsons et al. (2016) found that familiarity with the staff improved compliance and reduced problem behavior, although their familiarizing process involved more than simply spending time together. Still, the differences observed may have resulted from spending additional time with the experimenter and the question asking may have been unnecessary. Future research should control for the length of time spent with the experimenter in each group. Another limitation was that the structured, open-ended questions were rigid and did not facilitate a natural conversation. There were multiple occasions when the experimenter moved on to the next question instead of asking a follow up question, which could have limited the amount of rapport built. Future research could use a more flexible and naturalistic framework for building rapport that allows for asking follow-up questions. Further, researchers could examine if the types of questions, for examples those that evoke discussion of enjoyable versus unpleasant topics, matter in rapport building. Finally, we observed that male participants appeared to respond more favorably to the rapport-building behaviors (with the male experimenter), but we did not have enough participants to evaluate this difference statistically. Future research could explore this further and attempt to understand how learning histories affect rapport building.

Rapport-building activities can be a valuable tool for behavior analysts, applicable to many populations. Researchers have demonstrated it can be used to improve client interactions, and the current study suggests it may also improve employee productivity and discretionary effort. Other possible

applications include improving buy-in and treatment compliance for a variety of behavior analytic interventions. For example, managers and employees may be more likely to conduct observations or engage in feedback conversations after engaging in rapport-building behaviors. Due to the social importance and potential for strengthening interventions and improving implementation, rapport-building behaviors warrant further study and consideration in behavior analysis and OBM.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix A

Conversation Questions	
Rapport-Building Questions	Control Questions
What has been your favorite and least favorite class here at [university name] and why?	How many classes are you taking?
What would you like to do post-graduation and why?	What is your major?
What would be your ideal job, if money was not a factor, and why?	Are you employed?
What is your current job and what is your favorite aspect of that job and why? OR what was your last job and what was your favorite aspect of that job?	What is your favorite holiday?
*What is your most cherished memory and why?	What is your favorite super hero?
*If you could wake up tomorrow having any one new quality or ability, what would it be, and why?	How many states have you been to in the US?
Do you have any interesting travel plans or have you traveled anywhere interesting lately?	How many hours each week do you spend on your computer?
What are some of your favorite hobbies and why?	Who is a notable figure that you look up to?
What originally got you interested in these hobbies?	What is your ideal city to live in?
*Given the choice of anyone in the world past or present, whom would you want as a dinner guest, and why?	What type of music do you listen to?
What is your ideal place/city to live in and why?	How many hours a week do you spend watching TV?
What is your favorite album/artist/band and why?	How many times a week do you eat out?
What is your favorite movie of all time and why?	Do you own any pets?
What is your favorite type of food/local restaurant and why?	What is your favorite sport?
*If your house was burning down in a fire and you could only save three things, what would you save and why?	What is your favorite movie?