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# Toward a More Comprehensive Operational Definition of Student and Faculty Member Informal Contact

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*Eastern Illinois University*

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TOWARD A MORE COMPREHENSIVE OPERATIONAL  
DEFINITION OF STUDENT AND FACULTY  
MEMBER INFORMAL CONTACT  
(TITLE)

BY

Paul D. Ewald

B. A. in Psychology, Creighton University, 1977

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in Education  
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1981  
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science in Education at the  
Graduate School of Eastern Illinois University

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Graduate students identified as high interactors and faculty members teaching graduate level courses participated in a questionnaire and interview study designed to expand on the existing operational definitions of student-faculty informal contact as a research variable. Statistically significant differences were found between student and faculty subjects on items concerning who defined the relationships, accessibility, and advisement. Student and faculty subjects were in agreement on a range of items concerning initiation of contact, degree of impact, context of interaction, and amount of informality. A discussion of the matter of selection, generalizability of the findings, and institutional factors is presented. Finally, recommendations are made concerning the practical implications of this area of study.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	iii
Chapter	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. Statement of the Problem.....	1
II. Purpose of the Study.....	2
III. Review of the Literature.....	4
2 METHOD.....	12
I. Subjects.....	12
II. Materials.....	13
III. Procedure.....	14
3 RESULTS.....	16
I. Questionnaire.....	16
II. Interview.....	20
4 DISCUSSION.....	24
REFERENCES.....	30
APPENDIXES	
Appendix A.....	32
Appendix B.....	33
Appendix C.....	38

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	NUMBER OF STUDENTS THAT HAVE INTERACTED WITH FACULTY, AND FACULTY THAT HAVE INTERACTED WITH STUDENTS FOR FIFTEEN DIFFERENT PURPOSES.....	17
2	MEAN SCORES OF STUDENTS AND FACULTY MEMBERS ON ATTITUDINAL MEASURES.....	18
3	PERCENTAGES OF STUDENT AND FACULTY OPINIONS ON FORMALITY VS. INFORMALITY FOR SIX DIFFERENT AREAS OF INTERACTION.....	19
4	PERCENTAGES OF STUDENT AND FACULTY OPINIONS ON EACH OTHERS ACCESSIBILITY FOR SIX DIFFERENT PURPOSES.....	21
5	PERCENTAGES OF STUDENT AND FACULTY OPINIONS ON WHO INITIATES INTERACTIONS OF SIX DIFFERENT TYPES.....	22



## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. Statement of the Problem

The interchange between college students and the faculty members that instruct them in their coursework is considered by some to be the focal point of higher education. The most readily identifiable points of contact are the learning environments in which these interchanges take place. In traditional institutions these are the classroom, the laboratory and the lecture hall. In these environments the relationship is that of student to faculty or pupil to teacher. The roles are clearly defined and directed toward the purpose of education and learning.

In the field of education much attention is given to the changing role that education plays in a changing society. Curricula are designed and re-designed in order to meet the changing needs of the student. In recent years educators have paid ever closer attention to the factors that contribute most to college students' success. A considerable body of research has accumulated in the past twenty years that suggests that it is the nature of the relationship between student and faculty member that may have a considerable influence on the student that extends beyond the classroom, the laboratory or the lecture hall.

In one of the earliest studies that investigated the impact of college on students, Jacob (1959) studied institutions that had a high level of impact on students' values. Among the characteristics of these institutions was a high frequency of informal contact between students and faculty members.

In another early study of twenty institutions, Eddy (1959) focused on college influence on student character. His conclusions were similar to those of Jacob concerning informal contact between student and faculty as influential in the students development.

In a thorough review of the literature to date, Pascarella (1980) identified several problems in the existing research and made recommendations for future study. Among the problems Pascarella identified is that the research in this area lacks a comprehensive operational definition of the variable student-faculty member informal contact. Awareness of this concern is what prompted the design of the present study.

## II. Purpose of the Study

A substantial body of research indicates that there is a relationship between student-faculty member informal contact and various educational outcomes of students. The educational outcomes described are so diverse as to include cognitive development, attrition or persistence in college, career aspirations, academic achievement, social development and general satisfaction with college. While the dependent

Variables are diverse and comprehensive, researchers consistently specify their scope through the use of measuring instruments and precise reportage. The independent variable is seldom treated with the same systematic approach.

Student-faculty member informal contact has been identified and defined by researchers on such dimensions as frequency of exposure, context of interaction, degree of self perceived impact and diversity. While the importance of each of these dimensions has been stressed by the researcher that employs them, seldom have they ever been drawn together as descriptive features of student-faculty member informal contact.

As Pascarella (1980) points out in his recent review of the literature, a comprehensive operational definition of student-faculty informal contact is necessary in order to capture the complex pattern of associations that make up this unique aspect of the relationship.

While the existing studies provide a framework in which to identify the independent variable, there may be considerable disparity concerning the specific characteristics, both stated and implied.

The current usage of student-faculty member informal contact raises a number of questions. What constitutes the informality of these forms of contact? Is there agreement between student and faculty member that these contacts are of an informal nature? Are the motives of the student or the job description of the faculty member determinants of

formality or informality? Is it to be assumed that all classroom contact is formal and all non-classroom contact informal? Is the variable student-faculty member informal contact too broad and general a term to be of use to the researcher and if so should it be broken down into more specific and measurable variables? These questions and others generally go unanswered and are left largely to speculation. It would be presumptuous of the author to attempt to answer all of these questions adequately, however it is clear that more information is needed.

In light of the definitional problems associated with this area of study, the purpose of this project is to contribute to a greater understanding of the nature of student-faculty member relationships and more specifically that aspect of the relationship that can be considered informal contact.

The review of the literature that follows traces the major studies conducted in this area and places special emphasis on the definitions and methods employed by the researchers in order to obtain measures of student-faculty member informal contact.

### III. Review of the Literature

The design employed by Chickering (1969) indicates that students' sense of purpose, measured by career choice, is fostered by diverse and frequent contacts with faculty. The emphasis in Chickering's research is on frequent occurrence in

a variety of diverse situations and indicates that these relationships are of greater value to the student when they are well rounded with a broad degree of exposure. Chickering (1971) states that there are four components in a student's relationship with faculty members that foster the student's sense of purpose and identity: accessibility, authenticity, knowledge, and an ability to talk with a student. Although Chickering emphasizes frequency of contact as being associated positively with general kinds of development, he further states that when frequency is combined with warmth and informality the contact has greater potency.

In later studies, Chickering (1972), and Chickering and Newcombe (1973) found that the number of different faculty and actual number of conversations with faculty were positively associated with raw score changes in the autonomy and cognitive complexity scales of the Omnibus Personality Inventory. Again the emphasis was on frequency and diversity.

Wilson, Gaff, Dienst, Wood and Bavry (1975) measured faculty-student interaction beyond the classroom by a summation score of the frequency with which faculty members and students reported having discussions of six different kinds. The six discussion areas were intellectual or course related issues, educational plans or advice, informal conversations or socializing, career plans or advice, campus issues or sociopolitical discourse, and personal problems or counseling. Wilson et al. applied the term informal only to the type of discussion termed "socializing". They term the general

heading of these forms of contact, "interaction beyond the classroom." They considered these forms of contact to be typical of student-faculty relationships.

Wilson et al. surveyed students for frequency over a one month span and faculty over a two week span, counting only discussions of ten minutes or more. Based on the results of these questionnaires students and faculty were classified as high interactors, medium interactors, and low interactors and compared on a variety of dependent measures. These forms of contact with faculty members were found to be significantly and positively associated with various indicators of student satisfaction with their academic and nonacademic experiences of college.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1976) conducted a study for the purpose of elaborating on the work of Wilson et al. In keeping with the general design used by Wilson and his associates, Pascarella and Terenzini implemented the high, moderate, and low interactor stratification. Respondents were stratified at the thirty-third and sixty-seventh percentile in response to a questionnaire item that asked students to estimate, "the number of times during the semester they had met informally, outside of class, with faculty members for ten minutes or more." In this study respondents were left to interpret what informal meetings meant to them in the context of their own experience. The results of this study showed that there is a positive relationship between the amount of informal interaction

students have with faculty members and their perceptions of their academic and nonacademic experiences of college.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1977) further elaborated in their original study in an effort to test the theoretical model of student attrition developed by Tinto (1975). The study was longitudinal with data collections before, during, and after freshman year in college. Tinto's 1975 theory holds that the "students nonclassroom interaction with faculty increases social integration and therefore institutional commitment." To test this contention Pascarella and Terenzini measured the amount and kinds of student-faculty informal interaction at approximately 2/3 of the way through their freshman year. The following Fall another data collection was conducted. At that time 55 of the 344 freshman respondents had voluntarily withdrawn from the University. While controlling for entering characteristics, the data from those that withdrew and those that persisted were analyzed to determine discriminating factors in the variable of student-faculty informal interaction. In this study the author used a further application of the Wilson et al. design. In addition to the stratification technique, measures of the six discussion types were assessed. The findings of the study suggest that the six discussion types, all of which Pascarella and Terenzini termed informal student-faculty interaction, were significant in that high levels of interaction was predictive of college persistence. An additional finding was that the six types were not all

of equal importance. Interactions that focused on intellectual or course related matters contributed most highly to college persistence. The only other interaction variable to make a significant contribution to group discrimination between those that withdrew and those not persisted was discussions related to the career concerns of the student.

The question raised by the findings of this study, concerning the definition of the independent variable, is whether or not discussions that students have with faculty concerning course related matters, intellectual interests and students career concerns constitutes a high rate of informal student-faculty member interaction.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1978) added an additional measure to the follow-up instrument in the last data collection of their previous study. This item asked students to rank order faculty along with other sources of college impact, such as peer interactions and extra-curricular activities, with respect to the amount of influence they had on their personal and intellectual development. These two rankings taken together with the six discussion types of informal interaction were used to determine the strength of the informal relationships between students and faculty. The additional rankings lent support to their earlier findings that interactions focused on course related or intellectual matters contributed most to students intellectual development, and interactions



focused on career concerns contributed most to students personal development.

Other studies by Pascarella and Terenzini (1979A), (1979B) were simply reanalyses of data from their earlier studies for the purpose of lending support to the attrition model of Tinto's based on social and academic integration. There were no further changes or additions to the operational definition of the independent variable.

Astin (1977) conducted longitudinal studies that assessed the impact of college on students over a broad range of variables. His data gathering techniques allowed for the collection of information concerning the intensity of the students' involvement with the college environment. Two of the eight areas of involvement he identified concerned student and faculty member relations. Astin termed these, "involvement with faculty," and "familiarity with professors in major field." The data from, "involvement with faculty," revealed a clear cut pattern of student involvement with faculty. The most highly identified items included social conversations, discussion of personal matters, discussion of topics in the students major field and other intellectual interests, asking instructors for advice, students perceptions of faculty interest in their academic problems, and arguing openly with faculty in lectures. "Familiarity with professors in major field," required yes and no responses from faculty members knowing the student by name, to students having been invited as

guests in the faculty members home.

Among Astin's most significant findings in this area was that student and faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to the students general satisfaction with the college environment than any other involvement characteristic.

Two recent studies identify student-faculty member informal contact with only slight variations on the studies and definitions already cited. Lacey (1978) reanalyzed a partial sample from an earlier study by Newcombe (1970). Lacey measured students' contact with faculty as the frequency of interaction with one or more of their course faculty, other faculty members, and resident advisors. In this assessment seven categories were identified as public affairs, course work, interests on campus, special interests, hobbies, literary or academic topics, personal matters, and basic values.

In a study designed to investigate the impact of college on changes in student values, Wiedman (1979) measured two dimensions of social relationships between students and faculty members. These were frequency, and intensity of sentiments exchanged. The measuring instrument was a set of four Guttman type items: often discuss topics in his field; often discuss other topics of intellectual interest; sometimes engage in social conversations; and ever talk about personal matters. The order and progression of these items as a Guttman type scale are suspect based on the

findings of other researchers in this area.

Based on this review of the literature, which points out the imprecise variations and interpretations of "student-faculty member informal contact" as a research variable, this study is of a descriptive nature. The intent of the study is to further explore this variable and to provide more precise information regarding its descriptive characteristics. A synthesis approach, in which the prominent characteristic and definitions present in the literature are combined, has been designed for that purpose.

## Chapter 2

### METHOD

#### I. Subjects

The subjects that participated in the study were ten graduate students and ten faculty members that taught graduate level courses at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois.

Student subjects were selected on the basis of self reported quantity and quality of their informal interactions with faculty members as detailed in Procedure. This information was obtained through a mailed questionnaire which appears in Appendix A. The ages of the student subjects ranged from 23 to 34 with a mean age of 26.4. Among the student subjects, three were male and seven were female. Among the subjects, nine reported having also done their undergraduate work at Eastern Illinois University, and one reported having done his undergraduate work at another institution. The subjects were from seven different departments in the University.

Faculty member subjects were selected randomly from a list of all faculty members teaching graduate level courses during the summer session of 1981. Of the ten faculty members selected, seven were male and three were female. The age range for faculty subjects was 34 to 52, with a mean

age of 42.5. This group of subjects represented nine different departments in the University.

## II. Materials

The questionnaire mailed to graduate students asked sex, undergraduate completion and frequency and quality of non-classroom contact with faculty members.

The ten student subjects and ten faculty member subjects selected to participate in the remaining portion of the study completed a 62 item questionnaire designed by the author. This second questionnaire was divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section listed 15 kinds of interaction in which students and faculty engage. Based on the subjects' experiences with student-faculty interaction, they responded yes or no, to having participated in that type of interaction.

The second sub-section contained ten statements concerning attitudes toward different aspects of student-faculty relationships. Subjects rated each statement on a Likert type frequency scale.

The third sub-section utilized the six discussion types originated by Wilson et al. (1975). Subjects responded to each discussion type regarding its formality or informality; whether students or faculty were accessible for that purpose; and who initiated interactions of each type. On an additional measure in the third sub-section, subjects indicated their frame of reference while answering. The second questionnaire appears in Appendix B.

Following the completion of the questionnaire, subjects were interviewed. All subjects were read brief instructions and asked a series of ten questions. The questions were designed to elicit general information and details on student-faculty relationships as well as to clarify variable components as identified by Pascarella (1980). These instructions and interview questions appear in Appendix C.

### III. Procedure

A computer printout of 852 students enrolled in graduate level courses was obtained through the University Computer Service. Only students with local address listings were considered for the mailing questionnaire. The sample was thus biased in this respect. This list consisted of 380 students. From this list, 285 students were randomly selected in order to conserve mailing and duplication costs. The number 285 was determined to be a representative sample size based on estimated population and sample sizes published by the National Educational Association. From a single mailing without follow-up, 104 questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 36.49%.

Based on respondents reports of quantity and quality of their non-classroom contact with faculty, they were stratified into one of three groupings. High interactors consisted of 35 respondents, medium interactors consisted of 32 respondents, and 37 respondents made up the low interactor group. Due to the descriptive objectives of the

study, high interactors were identified as the target population and a random sample of ten were drawn from this group to participate in the remainder of the study.

Prior to the administration of the second questionnaire and the interview, four trial runs were conducted with two students and two faculty members. Following each trial, respondents were asked questions concerning the interview schedule, the content, and the scope of the questionnaire and interview. Based on recommendations from these trials, minor alterations were made.

The ten student subjects and the ten faculty subjects were contacted by telephone and arrangements were made for completion of the questionnaire and interview.

The questionnaire and interview were arranged at the subjects' convenience and as such took place in classrooms, offices and homes. All interviews were recorded on a standard cassette tape recorder to be reviewed and coded at a later time.

## Chapter 3

### RESULTS

#### I. Questionnaire

The results of sub-section one of the questionnaire are summarized in Table 1, (Diversity of Contact).

Table 2 summarizes student and faculty responses to the ten attitudinal measures in sub-section two. A significant difference was found between student and faculty opinions on who sets the limits and boundaries that define student-faculty relationships,  $t(18) = 3.48, p < .01$ . Faculty members responded that they frequently defined their relationships with students while students responded that faculty infrequently defined the relationship. On other items in this measure, student and faculty opinions did not differ significantly.

Responses regarding the formality or informality of the six discussion types are summarized in Table 3. Students and faculty regarded all six discussion types to be more often informal than formal, with the exception of advising. Faculty reported advising to be both formal and informal with approximately the same frequency.

Student and faculty responses differed significantly on four of the six measures of accessibility. Students considered faculty to be highly accessible for personal



Table 1

NUMBER OF STUDENTS THAT HAVE INTERACTED WITH  
FACULTY, AND FACULTY THAT HAVE INTERACTED  
WITH STUDENTS FOR FIFTEEN DIFFERENT PURPOSES

Purpose (Abbreviated)	STUDENTS		FACULTY	
	have	have not	have	have not
1. Been invited to dinner	10		9	1
2. Invited to dinner	5	5	10	
3. Attended movies, plays etc. with	7	3	10	
4. Attended conventions workshops etc. with	7	3	10	
5. Sought advice/been sought for advice on career issues	9	1	10	
6. Discussed personal problems with	9	1	10	
7. Discussed campus issues with	10		10	
8. Become acquainted with family	10		10	
9. Corresponded when school was not in session	9	1	10	
10. Intellectual discussions	9	1	10	
11. Discussed art, music etc.	7	3	9	1
12. Discussed politics	8	2	9	1
13. Attended non-required workshop	6	4	10	
14. Approached/been ap- proached during time of crises	6	4	10	
15. Attended parties	10		10	

NOTE

N = 10

N = 10

Table 2

MEAN SCORES OF STUDENTS AND FACULTY  
MEMBERS ON ATTITUDINAL MEASURES

Abbreviated Description	Students(S)	1. Almost Always 2. Frequently 3. Approximately equal in occurrence & nonoccurrence 4. Infrequently 5. Almost never					Faculty(F)
Students and faculty play respective roles	4.1			S	F		3.9
Faculty member defines the relationship	4.4		F		S	**	2.1
In major department relationships are formal	3.3			FS			3.1
Relationships are reciprocal and mutually satisfying	1.9	FS					1.3
Faculty designate their time off limits to students	4.0				SF		4.3
Faculty express genuine interest in students	1.8	FS					1.4
Outside of major department rela- tionships are formal	3.4			SF			3.8
Perceive students in subordinate position	3.5			FS			3.2
Faculty receptive to students, allocate time	1.8	FS					1.7
Students interact to receive higher grades	4.2				SF		4.3

\*\* t-value significant at the .01 level.

Table 3

PERCENTAGES OF STUDENT AND FACULTY  
OPINIONS ON FORMALITY VS. INFORMALITY  
FOR SIX DIFFERENT AREAS OF INTERACTION

Area of Interaction	STUDENT		FACULTY	
	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal
Advising	30%	70%	50%	50%
Career Counseling	40%	60%	30%	70%
Personal Counseling	30%	70%	30%	70%
Intellectual Discussions	30%	70%	30%	70%
Campus Issues	20%	80%	10%	90%
Socializing	10%	90%		100%

counseling, intellectual discussions, interactions concerning campus issues and socializing. Faculty reported students to be accessible for these purposes but not to as great an extent. Faculty and students agreed that there was a high degree of accessibility for the purposes of advising and career counseling. Responses to these items are summarized in Table 4.

On measures showing who initiates the six types of interaction, a statistically significant difference was found between student and faculty responses on the item, advising. Students reported that they initiated advising far more often than faculty reported them to do so. Students and faculty were in agreement that faculty more often initiated intellectual discussions, while students more often initiated personal counseling and career counseling. Faculty reported students to initiate socializing more often than students reported they did, and while students reported initiating interactions concerning campus issues approximately half the time, faculty felt that students initiated them more frequently. Differences in these two items however, were not significant. The information on initiation is summarized in Table 5.

## II. Interview

Coded responses to the interview questions (Appendix C) showed significant proportional differences on the items of exposure and focus. In both cases, faculty members expressed opinions that these items were important aspects of student-

Table 4

PERCENTAGES OF STUDENT AND FACULTY  
OPINIONS ON EACH OTHERS  
ACCESSIBILITY FOR SIX DIFFERENT PURPOSES

Purpose	STUDENTS		FACULTY	
	Faculty Are Accessible	Faculty Are Not Accessible	Students Are Accessible	Students Are Not Accessible
Advising	90%	10%	90%	10%
Career Counseling	100%		90%	10%
Personal Counseling *	100%		70%	30%
Intellectual Discussions*	100%		80%	20%
Campus Issues *	100%		70%	30%
Socializing*	100%		80%	20%

\*Significant at the .05 level using test of significance between two proportions, two tailed test (J.L. Bruning and B.L. Kintz, Computational Handbook of Statistics, 1968, pg. 199.)

Table 5

PERCENTAGES OF STUDENT AND FACULTY  
OPINIONS ON WHO INITIATES  
INTERACTIONS OF SIX DIFFERENT TYPES

Interaction	STUDENT		FACULTY	
	I initiate	Faculty initiates	Student initiates	I initiate
Advising *	90%	10%	60%	40%
Career Counseling	80%	20%	70%	30%
Personal Counseling	100%		90%	10%
Intellectual Discussions	40%	60%	30%	70%
Campus Issues	50%	50%	70%	30%
Socializing	40%	60%	60%	40%

\*Significant at the .05 level using test for significance between two proportions, two-tailed test (J.L. Bruning and B.L. Kintz, Computational Handbook of Statistics, 1968, pg. 199.)

faculty informal contact. Students responded to the item of exposure expressing opinions that exposure was generally not very frequent and were ambivalent about its importance. In response to the question concerning the focus of informal contact, students generally had no opinion.

On item 2, (impact), both students and faculty agreed that student-faculty informal contact had a strong positive impact on students. On item 3, concerning context, students and faculty generally agreed that the context in which interaction takes place varies to a very high degree and is not an important feature of the variable.

## Chapter 4

### DISCUSSION

The findings of this study clearly lend support to the contention that informality is perceived to be an important part of the relationship between students and faculty members.

The results of the questionnaire and interview lead first into a discussion of how faculty members and students perceive themselves and each other in their relationships. An issue that moves throughout the study is one of selection.

Trends that appear in subjects responses show that students more often initiate interaction and faculty are accessible for these purposes. While students do not perceive faculty as defining the limits and boundaries of these relationships, faculty members perceive themselves as being active in this role.

Both students and faculty reported satisfaction with relationships, and agreed about these additional issues. They did not feel that they play the roles of students and faculty when in relationships. Faculty are genuinely interested in students and allocate their time generously. Students do not interact with faculty for the purpose of receiving higher grades. Students' positions in relation to that of faculty members are subordinate approximately as often as not. Relationships both inside of subjects'



major departments and outside of major departments were reported to be formal approximately as often as not.

Throughout the student and faculty interviews, descriptive phrases and adjectives were used in the discussion of informal student-faculty contact. Although no statistical analysis was applied to these data, due to likely imprecision and bias, a brief discussion of responses to the interview question, asking the characteristics of the variable, is supplied here.

Faculty responses to this single item included the following: frequent, variable in length, different locations, no order or structure or hierarchy, no agenda, open ended, no time structure limitations, based on needs, warm, giving, sharing, to concern ourselves with others, personal, out of class, information shared, out of structure, meeting expectations, away from the roles, maintains a balance, relaxed, non-threatening.

Student responses to the same item included the following: relaxed, friendly, equal, genuine, interesting, spontaneous, friendly, genuine, frequent, relaxed, roles still present, open, genuine, sincere, equal, special, important, good, at ease, subordinate.

Student responses to this item tended to be single descriptors with relaxed, friendly, and genuine, appearing in more than one subjects response. The responses "subordinate" and "roles still present" expresses some degree of ambivalence in the student responses.

Faculty responses tended to describe the variable in terms of the absence of formal or structured characteristics. Faculty also responded at greater length using phrases and sentences rather than single descriptors.

An important feature of student and faculty response differences is illustrated on item 1 of the interview, exposure. Student responses placed significantly less emphasis on extent of interaction and degree of exposure than did faculty responses. A likely explanation for this is the role differences between students and faculty. Many of the items required responses based on subjects' experiences. Faculty more often responded with the benefit of having been a student for a greater period of time themselves, as well as members of the teaching faculty. Student-faculty ratio should also be taken into consideration on such items as exposure. This is further illustrated on the first portion of the second questionnaire which measured diversity of contact. Almost without exception, faculty reported having engaged in all fifteen types of interaction. Students identified as high interactors reported somewhat fewer experiences on the average.

Interview item 3, focus, also showed a great difference between student and faculty responses. Faculty responded to the term focus with something specific in mind. Some examples of faculty responses are that the focus of interaction is of a professional nature, the sharing of common interests, or intellectual. Students frequently asked the

interviewer what he meant by "focus" and often had no opinion. A partial explanation for this is that students may not have defined their interests and expectations to as great an extent as faculty. Again, the item of defining the relationship indicates that faculty are active in this process while students are not aware of this.

Among the limitations of this study are the generalization of the findings. Pascarella (1980) points out that an additional problem with this area of study is the single institution as the unit of analysis. The demographic characteristics of the institution is likely to have an effect on informal student-faculty contact. Such features as size of institution, student-faculty ratio, emphasis of study and curriculum are all factors that need to be weighed and taken into consideration.

High interacting students were identified for the purpose of providing additional information on student-faculty informal contact and should not be interpreted as the norm.

A substantial body of research exists that indicates that intensive informal contact with faculty is experienced only by a minority of students in a majority of institutions (Chickering 1969; Davis and Brackley, 1965; Del Pizzo, 1971). This evidence indicates that most contact between faculty and students at most colleges and universities is of a formalized nature.

A partial possible explanation concerning why student-faculty contact is limited to formal settings is provided

by Feldman and Newcombe (1969). Their study suggests that a substantial number of students may simply choose to exclude faculty from their non-classroom lives. This view, however, was not supported by the findings of this study.

Malkemes (1972) suggests, in conjunction with the findings of Feldman and Newcombe, that faculty members at many institutions may indeed designate their time away from the institutions as off limits to students. This suggestion was not supported by the findings of this study.

In another study by Newcombe (1966) it is concluded that the pervasive and dominant informal socializing agent in most students lives becomes the peer group. In light of the numerous studies cited in this project that suggest a relationship between informal student-faculty contact and its relationship to college attrition, Newcombe's findings may have far reaching implications.

It has been pointed out that the findings of single institution studies have limited external validity. Despite this limitation, this area of research may have strong practical implications.

A portion of the rationale for using high interacting graduate students in the design of this study was based on the findings of Thistlewaite (1966), among others, that suggest that informal interactions with faculty are related to increased levels of aspiration and attainment of the doctorate degree. Lowest levels of interaction between students and faculty occurred among freshman college students

which is also where highest attrition rates occur.

College administrations could implement cross-sectional and longitudinal data collection of their student populations that would provide a data bank concerning this aspect of the college experience. Through the findings of such data collection, administrations could increase the opportunities for students to interact with faculty in more informal settings. These opportunities could have the greatest impact on student drop-out rates particularly in the early years of college.

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## APPENDIX A

General Directions - This survey is concerned with the extent and nature of contact between students and faculty members outside of formally structured classroom time. For each of the following items please select one answer and darken the appropriate space.

1. Sex.
  - A) Male
  - B) Female
  
2. Educational experience.
  - A) I did my undergraduate work at Eastern Illinois University.
  - B) I did my undergraduate work at another institution.
  
3. Which of the following most closely describes the extent of your non-classroom contact with faculty members?
  - A) Never
  - B) Once or twice per semester
  - C) Several times during the course of a semester
  - D) Several times per month
  - E) Once per week
  - F) Several times per week
  
4. Which of the following best describes the value you place on these contacts with faculty members?
  - A) They are of little or no consequence to me.
  - B) They are very seldom more than casual exchanges.
  - C) Occasionally these contacts are valuable, but for the most part they are not.
  - D) I consider roughly half of them to be valuable to me and half of them to be of little consequence.
  - E) The majority of these contacts are of considerable value to me.
  - F) They are almost all very worthwhile contacts upon which I place considerable value.



## APPENDIX B

### Student Copy

#### SUB-SECTION 1

General Directions - Based on your own college experience, answer each of the following by marking either Y for Yes, or N for No.

I have...

1. been invited a faculty members home for a meal.
2. invited faculty members to my home for a meal.
3. attended a movie, play, lecture or concert with a faculty member.
4. attended conventions, workshops or professional meetings with faculty members.
5. sought advice on future goals and career issues from faculty members.
6. discussed personal problems with faculty members.
7. discussed campus issues with faculty members.
8. become acquainted with faculty members spouse or family.
9. corresponded with faculty members on the phone or through thh mail when school was not in session.
10. engaged in intellectual discussions with faculty members concerning non-classroom topics.
11. discussed art, music or literature with faculty members.
12. discussed political issues with faculty members.

## Appendix B (continued)

13. attended non-required workshops or seminars with faculty members.
14. approached a faculty member for help or assistance during a time I considered to be a personal crises.
15. attended parties at which faculty members were present.

## Appendix B (continued)

SUB-SECTION 2

General Directions - Read each of the following statements and blacken in the space that best expresses your opinion based on your interactions with faculty members.

- 1) Almost always
  - 2) Frequently
  - 3) Approximately equal in occurrence and nonoccurrence
  - 4) Infrequently
  - 5) Almost never
- 
1. I feel that I have to play the role of the student at all times when in the company of faculty members.
  2. The limits and boundaries that define my relationships with faculty members are set by that faculty member rather than my myself.
  3. My relationships with instructors in my major department are formal and academically oriented.
  4. I perceive my relationship to faculty members as reciprocal and mutually satisfying.
  5. Faculty members designate most of their non-classroom time as off limits to students.
  6. Faculty members express genuine interest in their students lives outside of the classroom as well as inside of it.
  7. My relationships with instructors outside of my major department are formal and academically oriented.
  8. I consider my position, in relationships to faculty members, to be that of a subordinate.
  9. I've found faculty to be very receptive and generous in allocating time for students.
  10. I think that students that spend a lot of non-classroom time with faculty members do so to receive higher grades and "make points."

## Appendix B (continued)

SUB-SECTION 3

General Directions - The following series of items has two sets of answers. For each item, answers: A) formally structured interaction, OR B) informal and unstructured interaction. After answering A or B, apply the following code: What I mainly had in mind while answering was...

- 1) faculty members in my major field,
- 2) all of my instructors,
- 3) all of my instructors plus what I've heard from other students.

1. I consider advising to be....  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
2. I consider career counseling to be...  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
3. I consider personal counseling to be...  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
4. I consider intellectual discussions to be...  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
5. I consider interactions concerning campus issues to be...  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
6. I consider socializing to be...  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...

For each of the following item, answer:

- A) faculty are accessible for this purpose, OR
  - B) faculty are not accessible for this purpose,
- Then apply the same 1, 2, 3 code as above.

7. Advising  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
8. Career counseling  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
9. Personal counseling  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
10. Intellectual discussions  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...

## Appendix B (continued)

11. Campus issues  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
12. Socializing  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...

For each of the following answer:

A) I initiate interaction of this type, OR

B) faculty initiates interaction of this type.

Then apply the following code: What I had in mind while answering was:

- 1) faculty in my major field,
- 2) faculty in general

13. Advising  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
14. Career counseling  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
15. Personal counseling  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
16. Intellectual counseling  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
17. Campus issues  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...
18. Socializing  
What I mainly had in mind while answering was...

For the following statement, answer: A) agree, B) disagree, or C) undecided.

19. In addition to the formal interactions that take place between a student and a faculty member through class, lecture, and other teaching methods, there are also interactions that can be considered informal student/faculty member contact.

## APPENDIX C

### Student Copy

General directions read before each interview - The interview portion consists of ten questions. The first five are in the form of sentence completion. The second series of five asks for your general opinions on the topic. Please answer the questions thoroughly and feel free to elaborate on any of the items.

All responses to the questionnaire and interview are handled confidentially.

#### Sentence Completion.

1. Faculty members in my major department perceive me as being \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I would describe my relationships with faculty as being \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I perceive faculty members in my major department as being \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Faculty members greatest contribution to me is in the area of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Qualities that I admire most in faculty members are \_\_\_\_\_.

#### General Opinions.

1. To what extent do students and faculty interact on an informal basis?
2. How great of an impact do you think informal contact with faculty has on students compared to other aspects of their college experience?
3. What is the focus of informal contact between students and faculty?

## Appendix C (continued)

4. In what context does informal contact take place?
5. Describe in your own words how you would characterize informal contact between students and faculty members.