Determinants of Student-Faculty Informal Contact

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Western Michigan University

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DETERMINANTS OF STUDENT-FACULTY
INFORMAL CONTACT

by

Alan W. Barr

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
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DETERMINANTS OF STUDENT-FACULTY INFORMAL CONTACT

Alan W. Barr, Ed.D.
Western Michigan University, 1988

There was an examination in this study of the relationship of classroom experiences (cues) and professorial initiative to the frequency of informal student-faculty interaction in the freshman year. The research was conducted at an independent, four-year urban college in the state of Michigan with a predominantly commuter population. A survey instrument was administered to the entire freshman class in the Spring semester of 1988. Information was derived from the survey on the nature and frequency of informal faculty-student contact.

Out of the 137 freshmen receiving surveys, 101 returned them. The response rate was 74%. Data from one survey returned were omitted since the survey was improperly filled out. Of the 100 survey responses used 50 were from women and 50 were from men.

The hypotheses associated with the research questions were tested employing the chi-square statistic. The alpha level selected was .05. The null hypothesis was not rejected in both instances because the numbers were not significant. There was no evidence from the research
conducted that informal interaction level between students and faculty is dependent upon the variables of professorial initiative or classroom experiences (cues).

The research did not support the idea that increasing professorial initiative or classroom experiences (cues) will result in a greater frequency of informal contact between students and faculty. Additional studies need to be conducted with these variables and others to discover the determinants of student-faculty informal contact.
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Determinants of student-faculty informal contact

Barr, Alan W., Ed.D.

Western Michigan University, 1988

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One of the benefits of being involved in any enterprise is the opportunity it affords to meet and work with special people who are connected with the venture. During the process of designing, conducting, and reporting this research I have had the opportunity of working with three extraordinary individuals. They have contributed in important ways to my growth and to bringing this project to completion.

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CHAPTER I

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The purpose of the research conducted was to examine the relationship between classroom experiences and professional initiative and the frequency of student-faculty informal interaction in the freshman year. Assuming colleges play an important role in the socialization of students and that faculty members in particular are a potent force in student change researchers have been curious about the effect of informal faculty-student contact on student outcomes.

Numerous investigations have been conducted to examine the associations that exist between student-faculty informal interaction and college outcomes such as the intellectual and personal development of students, their educational aspirations, their attitudes toward college, their academic achievement, and their institutional persistence (Pascarella, 1980; Wilson, Gaff, Dienst, Wood, & Bavry, 1975). However, little attempt has been made to explain why students happen to engage in more or less informal interaction with professors (Pascarella, 1980). Investigations of the determinants of student-faculty interactions need to be carried out to explain variation

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in the phenomenon of informal contact. Answering the following questions should contribute to an explanation of why students happen to engage in more or less informal interaction with faculty.

1. Do students who have experienced professorially initiated informal contact interact more frequently with professors out of class than those who have not experienced professorial initiative?

2. Do students who perceive classroom cues inviting informal faculty-student contact interact more frequently with professors out of class than those who don’t?

Answering these questions should not only contribute to explaining variation in the phenomenon of informal contact but it should provide a basis for practical policy evaluation and decision making by administrators in higher education.

For the questions posed to be effectively researched, the variables embodied in them must be clearly understood. Therefore, the dependent and independent variables are defined in the following section.

The Variables

Three variables are employed in this study. They are: (1) informal student-faculty interaction, (2) professional initiative, and (3) classroom experiences.
Informal Student-Faculty Interaction

Informal student-faculty interaction is the dependent variable. Informal interaction is defined as nonclassroom contacts of students with faculty. Nonclassroom contacts may take many forms such as student-faculty interaction at college social or sports events, discussions between students and professors in the halls or cafeteria of the institution, or conversations about personal concerns or academic issues in the offices of faculty members.

Professorial Initiative

Professorial initiative is one of two independent variables used in this study. Professorial initiative is defined as the faculty member electing to establish informal contact with a student. The professor may initiate such informal contact outside the classroom by inviting a student to join him or her to have lunch in the college cafeteria or by opening a conversation with a student in the hallway to discuss his or her absence from class.

Classroom Experiences (Cues)

Classroom experiences is the second independent variable employed in this study. Classroom experiences is defined as the professor providing in-class evidences or "cues" of a willingness to interact informally with students outside the classroom. Terenzini, Pascarella, and
Lorang (1982) suggest that in-class experiences with faculty may cause students to interact informally with faculty outside the classroom. The manner in which instructors interact with students in the classroom may provide the cues students need to be at ease in initiating contact with instructors outside the classroom.

Whitman, Spendlove, and Clark (1986) emphasize the importance of professors sharing their thoughts and values in an open and honest manner in the classroom so that students are encouraged to disclose their thoughts and values. They term this ability of professors to be emotionally close to students without necessarily being a personal friend "professional intimacy." Faculty who are professionally intimate in the classroom show students what is desirable and worthwhile. By their attitudes professors can underscore the value of informal interaction. Students may then be more prone to approach them outside the classroom.

What professors say in the classroom can provide cues that they are willing and ready to be accessible to students outside of class. Wilson et al. (1975) point out that faculty attitudes are communicated to students through a variety of classroom cues including the ways in which a professor goes about teaching a class. They discovered students use these cues to determine the amount of concern a faculty member has for them as well as his or
her desire to interact with them. Attitudes and behaviors exhibited by professors in the classroom found to be associated with out-of-class contact with students were termed aspects of faculty members social-psychological accessibility to students. Evidence was marshalled for the hypothesis that students more often seek out those faculty who appear by their attitudes and in-class teaching practices to be most open and accessible for interaction with students beyond the classroom. The variable of classroom experiences in this study is derived from this concept that faculty members are classroom role models that can encourage students to view interpersonal contact as beneficial. The attitudes that faculty members exhibit in class can invite students to interact with them informally outside the classroom.

One dependent and two independent variables were defined. The independent variables, professorial initiative and classroom experiences, are possible determinants of student-faculty informal interaction. A rationale must now be established to provide warrant for researching these possible determinants derived from the research questions. That rationale is set forth in the next section.

Rationale for the Study of Determinants

Assuming the quantity of student-faculty informal
interaction influences student outcomes in a positive manner, administrators of colleges and universities should be proactive in fostering such contact. But how? What steps should be taken? Administrators will find it difficult to promote increased student-faculty contact until they discover why it is that students engage in more or less informal interaction with professors.

Research needs to be conducted to investigate the determinants of student-faculty informal interactions so that administrators can have the knowledge essential to the development of practical programs to increase student-faculty contact in their institutions.

Wilson et al. (1975) indicate that very little research has been conducted to identify the factors that facilitate or impede faculty-student contact. Through their research efforts they did begin investigating some of the barriers to and the facilitators of informal student-faculty contact. They outline three major factors that impact on the frequency and quality of faculty-student contact outside the classroom. They are: (1) institutional characteristics, (2) student characteristics, and (3) faculty characteristics. This study was limited to investigating faculty characteristics. The two characteristics focused upon were faculty disposition to initiate informal contact with students, and the personal openness of professors to interact informally with students,
expressed through classroom cues. Pascarella (1980), in his critical review and synthesis of 37 research studies on the relationship between student-faculty informal interaction and various academic outcomes, concluded that one of the weaknesses evident in the research is a failure to explain why students happen to engage in more or less informal contact with professors. A few of the studies suggest that contact may be due to self-selection and the influence of input characteristics. However, the evidence for those findings is modest. The need to identify determinants of student-faculty informal interaction remains an important area for inquiry.

Identification of determinants of student-faculty informal interaction could be instrumental in the development of purposeful policies and programs that would encourage student-faculty interaction and thus insure more positive educational outcomes. Intervention programs for at-risk students could be developed. Proactive retention efforts by faculty to encourage or assist students who do not voluntarily seek assistance could enable some to continue to graduation who would not otherwise have persevered (Nelson, Scott, & Bryan, 1984). If faculty, through taking the initiative to contact students directly outside the classroom or through providing in-class cues to students that they are open to informal interaction, are instrumental in bringing about increased informal
contact, then programs for faculty could be developed to encourage them to initiate more and to assist them in communicating their accessibility to students. Administrators would be stimulated to provide faculty with more time to initiate interactions and to provide situations where faculty and students can interact informally to bring about positive educational outcomes.

The problem has been stated, the variables employed in the study have been defined, and the rationale for the research has been presented. The following section provides an overall outline of the chapters that follow.

Outline of the Dissertation

The next chapter is a review of the literature on the subject of student-faculty interactions. The literature review was undertaken to provide an historical perspective of the socializing influence of the college and university environment on students, the research findings on student-faculty informal contact and educational outcomes, and a basis for investigating the determinants of student-faculty interactions. Chapter III contains the proposed methodology for this survey research. Included in this chapter on methodology is a description of the sample, the research instrument, and the procedure employed. A description of the research findings and their analysis are set forth in Chapter IV. Chapter V presents the
conclusions and recommendations. The dissertation con­cludes with appendices deemed essential.
CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON
STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTIONS

Introduction

This study was undertaken to find answers to the following questions:

1. Do students who have experienced professorially initiated informal contact interact more frequently with professors out of class than those who have not experienced professorial initiative?

2. Do students who perceive classroom cues inviting informal student-faculty contact interact more frequently with professors out of class than those who don't?

These two questions had their genesis in findings from the literature review that historically colleges and universities have had a socializing influence on students, that faculty have a particularly important role in the socializing process, and that informal interaction of professors with students has resulted in positive educational outcomes in the lives of students. The literature reviewed is organized into three subtopics that parallel the findings referred to above:

1. The function of the college experience in
individual development.

2. The role of faculty in the socialization of students.

3. The findings of research on the relationship of informal student-faculty contact to student outcomes.

The review of the literature that follows provides evidence of the value of student-faculty informal interaction and therefore the need to research the possible determinants of such interaction to provide college and university administrators with the knowledge essential to the development of programs to foster student-faculty informal contact.

The College Experience and Individual Development

Individuals spend a large portion of their lives in people-processing institutions such as schools, universities, prisons, mental hospitals, and the military. Socialization theorists refer to these people processing institutions as developmental socializing and resocializing systems and emphasize they are established for the purpose of changing people. To accomplish the task of modifying the thought and behavior of individuals the socializing organization relies upon socializing and resocializing agents such as administrators, teachers, social workers, attendants, and officers (Wheeler, 1966).

Colleges and universities are socializing
institutions where students make the transition from reliance on parents and parent-supervised activities to a life of self-reliance and personal freedom. During this transition period students are influenced by the student peer group and by the appointed change agents of the institution: faculty and administration (Newcomb & Wilson, 1966).

As socializing institutions, colleges and universities intentionally set out to be instruments of change. Faculty and administrators in higher education seek to stimulate the development of students' problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. They also encourage change in students' attitudes and values. Almost all studies of change in students' attitudes, values, interests, and beliefs, from the freshman to the senior year, indicate significant modification. Students become more liberal and sophisticated politically, socially, and religiously. Although there is evidence of marked change in the personality of students during the college years it is not clear if the experiences associated with the college environment alone produce the changes. Changes in personality characteristics detected between the freshman and senior years may be due to other influences. The culture, the students' personality, the students' maturity or a combination of these elements and the college environment may explain the changes. To be certain that the changes that
take place between the freshman and the senior years of college are due to the college environment alone research would have to be undertaken with a noncollege control group. A comparison could then be made between the college and the noncollege groups to learn whether or not the two groups changed in the same ways over the same period of time. Such research has not been done partly because an attempt to isolate any single characteristic that would explain why one group changed more than another would be very difficult (Lehmann, 1965).

A study conducted at eight colleges on the disposition of students to change over four years employing the Thinking Introversion scale found that they did change in aspects of personality as well as in certain closely related attitudes and preferences. It is noteworthy that the changes were consistent with the expectations of most academic men and women (Clark, Heist, McConnell, Trow, & Yonge, 1972).

There are three possible effects a college may have on its students. They are: (1) anchoring, (2) accentuation, and (3) conversion. Understanding these effects can provide insight into the individual development of students in the college environment and prevent us from overlooking the subenvironments on the campus that impact upon student development.

The anchoring effect refers to the retention of
conservative views by certain students with the aid of conservatively oriented subenvironments on the campus. An example would be a traditional sorority. Women from traditional backgrounds would depend upon the sorority subenvironment to insulate them from the influence of the larger liberal environment of the institution. In some instances the college itself may be a conservative subenvironment providing a protective influence for students. This would be true of colleges with strong religious orientations. The religious institution is committed to stabilizing and maintaining the values of the subculture.

Studies have found that students who were secular when entering college became more secular in the college environment. The same studies indicated many students who entered college with a religious orientation became less religious or nonreligious as a result of the college experience. In contrast, students who attended some colleges did not change their religious beliefs and practices during their undergraduate years. This was due to the religious orientation of the latter institutions. The religious institutions tended to emphasize the maintenance of religious views while encouraging cultural sophistication and autonomy. The anchoring effect tends to assure pluralism in American higher education.

The accentuation effect refers to the phenomenon of certain student entry characteristics becoming more
pronounced from the freshman to the senior years. Students possessing an intellectual disposition at entry were found to have higher intellectual interests after four years of college than those who didn’t. The research indicated that the students who changed the most during the four years of college were those who entered the freshman year with more sophisticated perspectives, intellectual concerns, and liberal values. The accentuation effect emphasizes potentiality or disposition toward change. The college that recruits students with high intellectual interests, liberal values, and sophisticated perspectives can expect its students to change in the direction it perceives are significant.

The conversion effect accounts for those students who make major shifts in thinking and character development during their four years of college. This does not happen often although it is an ideal held by many administrators and faculty members. The phenomenon is likely to occur when there is a high degree of dissonance. Students who misperceive the college at entry and suddenly find themselves in an uncomfortable situation are faced with the alternatives of withdrawing from the environment or changing to meet the expectations of the institution. Such dissonance is unlikely to occur in large universities. In such environments there are opportunities for students to locate a subculture that holds similar views to their own.
and thus avoid conversion. Conversion is much more likely to take place in a small, homogenous institution (Clark et al., 1972).

Three perspectives of the socio-psychological impact of college on students are advanced by social theorists: (1) Measurable and permanent changes in student habits occur during the college years and these changes eventuate in socially adaptive behavior in postcollege years (2) college is one environment among many that individuals are immersed in and called to conform to during their lifetime. Few new habits from the college environment are internalized or carried over into postcollege years, and (3) college is a transition period in which a student leaves family life and prepares for a larger social system. The period should be thought of as a time for erasing childhood habits and preparing for adulthood rather than a time of developing socially adaptive behavior used in the postcollege years (Levine, 1966). All three perspectives recognize the college years as a time of socialization or resocialization. They differ only in terms of the degree of permanency of college impact on students. A seminal reason for student socialization on campus is faculty influence. The following section traces the potency of faculty influence on the lives of students.
Faculty and Socialization

Colleges and universities are socializing institutions where faculty members are the primary designated socializing agents. Faculty are charged with the responsibility of "acting upon" the students in formal and informal ways to bring about change in them. Their responsibility is to influence students so they will exit the institution with new skills, attitudes, and values (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969, 1973).

Educators have tenaciously held the conviction that one of the most effective ways to socialize students is to have them interact with faculty outside the classroom. Faculty-student informal interaction is assumed by educators to be a valuable component of the educational process: a means of transmitting knowledge, stimulating intellectual growth, reducing student stress, and influencing decisions to persist or withdraw from a particular educational institution (Cohen, Kamieniecki, & McGlen, 1980; Iverson & Waxman, 1981; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Whitman et al., 1986; Wilson et al., 1975; Wilson & Woods, 1974). Chickering (1969) believes faculty relationships with students are first in importance in influencing student development after relationships of students with peers. Wilson et al. (1975) are convinced by their own research and that of others that out-of-class interaction between students and faculty

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members is a very significant part of the teaching/learning process.

As institutions have grown in size and complexity, they have frequently been criticized for failing to provide sufficient opportunity for close personal contact between faculty and students. The European tradition of the tutorial relationship is largely something of the past and informal faculty-student relationships have deteriorated since the rise of science and technology in the later half of the 19th century. Faculty in large research universities in the 20th century tend to view themselves as academicians rather than mentors (Fisch, 1978). As academicians they may assume the role of didactic dispensers of facts and neglect interpersonal relations. A variety of reasons are advanced for professors failing to establish interpersonal relationships with students outside the classroom. Faculty members, rewarded for research and productivity and scholarly writing are not predisposed to spend much time with undergraduate students (Astin, 1977; Bean & Kuh, 1984; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Gaff, 1973). Another explanation given by some faculty members for not establishing interpersonal relationships with students is the large number of students assigned to them each semester (Cangemi, 1980). Administrative and service obligations is still another explanation (Newton & Guttman, 1979). Faculty members may also be reluctant to
close the social distance between themselves and their students due to their concern for impartiality. Avoiding personal contact may enable them to fulfil the ethical expectation of their position (Wallace, 1966). The Committee on the Student in Higher Education (1968) posited the idea that the social structure of the academic institution is designed to prevent the student from interacting informally with professors except at certain specified and limited times. Restriction of contact is based upon an administrative assumption that student interruption will prevent faculty members from carrying out their institutional responsibilities. Institutional procedures are standardized and faculty-student contacts are depersonalized. Another possible reason for the present low level of faculty-student informal interaction may be found in the history of institutions of higher education. The early American colleges and universities were primarily religious in nature and as such they emphasized the development of student character. In time, however, the American institutions adopted the German universities focus on intellectualism. Student character development as a major goal was set aside. With the setting aside of character development faculty members gave their time to conducting research, teaching, and writing. Even with the revival of interest in character development of students in the 20th century faculty did not change their focus. Instead, they
delegated the task of character development to professional student personnel workers and continued their intellectual pursuits (Parker, 1978). The historical shift from the faculty focus on the development of student character to the faculty focus on intellectual pursuits reduced the amount of informal contact of faculty members with students.

Clark and Trow (1966) suggest that colleges lie on a continuum from community to bureaucracy. Operationally they describe colleges that fall on the community end of the continuum as those that provide an integration of social and academic activity. Faculty in these settings have the greatest opportunity to impact upon students through their personal influence and example. Operationally they describe colleges that fall on the bureaucratic end of the continuum as institutions where the academic and social activity are separated and faculty opportunity to act as change agents is limited.

Some administrators of institutions on the bureaucratic end of the continuum have endeavored to overcome criticism and encourage faculty-student interaction by developing cluster or mini-colleges. Research provides evidence that cluster or mini-colleges provide more interaction between faculty and students than the more traditional divisions of the same university. The interaction in cluster or mini-colleges has also been found to be of a
quality more common to student-faculty interaction found at small residential colleges where close faculty-student relations are part of their image and history. Administrators have also attempted to improve the frequency of faculty-student interaction by stimulating faculty to become involved in cocurricular activities, striving to maintain small faculty-student ratios, emphasizing the importance of faculty advising and mentoring relationships, and by creating less permanent educational groups (Alberti, 1972; Tacha, 1986; Wilson et al., 1975).

Is the assumption that faculty-student informal contact benefits students merely a part of the folklore of higher education? Is there research evidence that faculty-student informal relationships really make a positive contribution to student personality growth, enhancement of intellectual awareness, and other educational outcomes? Literature on the relationship of faculty-student informal contacts to student outcomes was examined to answer these questions. An analysis of the research findings gleaned from the literature is the focus of the following topic.

Informal Student-Faculty Contact and Student Outcomes

Students are socialized in colleges and universities and faculty are a potent force in that socialization. Informal interaction of faculty with students plays an important part in student change. In their discussion of
the tremendous variability that prevails among students in the manner in which they learn, in the ways they direct their interests and activities, and in the patterns of interacting they employ with their instructors, Wilson et al. (1975) emphasize the value of student-faculty informal interaction for students of every kind.

Particularly important for the development of all kinds of students, however, is an opportunity for continuing interaction with faculty members. Those students who have had the most interaction with faculty members outside of class, however limited that may be in absolute terms, have gained more educational benefits than those who have had the least interaction. Although there is evidence that students with different interests talk about different topics, most seem to thrive on this kind of experience with faculty. (p. 180)

This section describes several studies of student-faculty interaction emphasizing the role of the faculty in student change.

One significant and extensive unit of research and one examination and synthesis of the research available in 1980, described in the following paragraphs, give credence to the concept that student-faculty informal interactions make a positive impact on the lives of students. Subsequently, three subtopics emphasize the effect of student-faculty informal contact on student outcomes in the areas of academic persistence, personality change, and academic achievement.

A significant study conducted at eight extremely diverse institutions of higher education found that
students who had frequent personal interaction with faculty manifested the impact of the faculty contacts in six ways: (1) a deepening of interest in and commitment to intellectual matters, (2) a perception of advancement in academic competencies, (3) a greater ability to name a faculty member who influenced their choice of college major, (4) a greater satisfaction with their overall college experience, (5) a belief that they were more clear about their personal identity and vocational direction, and (6) a perception that they were more sought after by fellow students for academic or institutional information.

A questionnaire was administered to the students asking them to report the frequency and nature of their out-of-classroom contacts with faculty over a one-month period. The students were then classified into three groups: high-interactors, medium-interactors, and low-interactors. Faculty influence on high-interacting students was greater than it was on medium and low-interactors (Wilson et al., 1975).

Pascarella (1980) did a critical review and synthesis of the research available in 1980 on the relationship between student-faculty informal interactions and various outcomes of college students. A total of 37 studies were examined and evaluated. His review provides evidence that nonclassroom student-faculty contact does increase student satisfaction with college, educational aspirations,
intellectual and personal development, academic achievement, and freshman to sophomore year persistence.

The important unit of inquiry examined and the critical review and synthesis of 37 studies by Pascarella (1980) support the idea that student-faculty interaction positively impacts on students. The subtopic that follows directs attention to investigations of the relationship of student-faculty contact to a specific outcome important to educators.

Student Persistence

One of the major concerns of college and university administrators is the problem of student attrition. Educators are highly motivated to find ways to improve retention (Nelson et al., 1984). Many studies have been carried out to understand the complexity of forces contributing to student attrition in order to provide administrators with new tools to prevent dropout behaviors. A number of researchers have chosen to examine the relationship of informal student-faculty contact to persistence of students attempting to learn why some students persist until graduation and others do not. Descriptions of five studies on the relationship of informal student-faculty interactions to persistence in the following paragraphs underscore the importance of informal student-faculty relationships in reducing student attrition.
Student-faculty interactions concentrating on intellectual or course related matters, were greater in number for freshmen persisters than voluntary leavers in a study conducted at an independent, residential university of 10,000 undergraduates in the Northeast. A random, computerized sample of 1,000 freshmen was employed and the initial characteristics of sex, academic attitude, and personality attributes were controlled in the investigation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979).

Responses to a questionnaire administered to a simple random sample of 1,905 students at Syracuse University, a large independent institution in New York state, underscored the importance of faculty as an influence on freshmen students' decisions to persist or withdraw from a particular educational institution. The findings of this research suggest that quality and impact of the contacts may play as important a role in student persistence as the frequency of contact (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980).

Terenzini, Lorang, and Pascarella (1981) replicated the study reported in 1980 at the same institution in New York state. Their study was based on a different independent sample of students entering the university in a different year. They attempted to keep the methodology as close as possible to the methodology of the previous study. The findings did not replicate with greater success the findings of the initial investigation that
significant associations exist between frequency of student-faculty informal interaction and institutional persistence. The discrepancies in the findings between the two studies may be a function of sampling error, institutional effects, and response bias.

Encouragement from instructors outside the classroom was reported with greater frequency by persisters than nonpersisters in data collected from a random sample of 400 first-time, full-time students enrolled at the University of North Dakota. The encouragement "stayers" experienced, through their informal contact with faculty, may have contributed to their having a sense of belonging in the institution (Nelson et al., 1984).

Evidence exists that student informal contact with faculty may encourage students to stay in school. The following section suggests another student outcome that is positively influenced by informal student-faculty contact.

**Student Personality Change**

Since students change in college, researchers have investigated the variables that might produce change in individuals enrolled in educational institutions. They have discovered that students change their personalities in college because they are impacted upon by the institutional environment, their peer group, and the faculty and administration of the college or university. The
following results of a study conducted by Chickering and McCormick (1973) particularly underline support for the idea that student-faculty informal interactions effect change in student personalities.

Student-faculty relationships were found to be strongly and consistently correlated with change in students in a study conducted at 12 colleges with enrollments of 1500 or less. The students at these institutions were administered the Omnibus Personality Inventory in their freshman year and again when they were seniors. At the colleges where informal contacts with faculty were most frequent the students manifested more autonomy and greater impulse expression. They also showed an increase in complexity and decrease in practical outlook. An interesting finding was the importance of brief contacts of students and faculty on an informal level. The greatest changes were in those students who experienced brief and diverse contacts with faculty members. The study underscored the importance of faculty members being available when students are in need of sharing something they have just discovered or a problem that they have just encountered (Chickering & McCormick, 1973).

There is empirical support for student-faculty informal interactions leading to the desired student outcomes of persistence and personal growth. Additionally, there is research evidence to suggest student-faculty informal
contact leads to higher academic attainment. The next subtopic sets forth some of the evidence from the literature.

**Student Academic Achievement**

Many researchers have investigated the impact of student-faculty informal interactions on student academic goals, motivation, and performance. The following paragraphs describe some of the important research carried out in these research categories that give support to the concept that informal student-faculty interactions affect student outcomes.

A study conducted at a large private university in central New York state provided some support for the hypothesis of a positive relationship between the amount of informal contact freshmen have with faculty members and their perceptions of their academic and nonacademic experiences at college. The research employed a random sample of 500 freshmen students from the university's College of Arts and Sciences. Approximately 54% were male and 46% were female. No causal claim was made by the researchers. However, they believe the results suggest that informal student-faculty contact may be vital to the enhancement of the impact of the academic and nonacademic experiences of college during the freshman year. The research contributes support for the concept of the
faculty member as a role model for students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1976).

Faculty-student contact made a positive contribution to variations in the freshman year educational outcomes of academic performance, and self-perceived intellectual and personal development. This finding is from a study utilizing the identical random sample used by Pascarella and Terenzini in their 1977 research. The investigation controlled for initial student characteristics of aptitudes, personality dispositions, and expectations (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978).

Faculty, through nonclassroom contacts with students, may have an influence on student motivation for academic performance. This finding is from a study employing the same random sample used by Pascarella and Terenzini in their 1977 and 1978 investigations. The researchers controlled for 14 preenrollment characteristics of students (Pascarella, Terenzini, & Hibel, 1978).

The number of faculty-student nonclassroom contacts was found to be positively related to academic, intellectual, and personal growth of students. Terenzini and Pascarella arrived at this finding through an investigation employing a different computerized sample of 1,905 freshmen attending the independent northeastern university from which they drew the sample for their earlier studies. Research was conducted to determine to what extent the
findings of the study of 1978 were replicable on an independent sample (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1980).

A study conducted at a large, highly selective, public residential university in New York state found the frequency of nonclassroom contact with faculty by freshmen appeared to be positively related to the students perceived importance of several educational goals (Theophilides, Terenzini, & Lorang, 1984).

The research reviewed has established that there is a relationship between student-faculty informal contact and positive intrinsic and extrinsic student outcomes including persistence, personal growth, and academic achievement. In light of the findings cited in the literature review college and university administrators should strive to increase the quantity and quality of student-faculty contact in order to foster more positive student outcomes at their institutions.

In order for college and university administrators to increase the amount of faculty-student informal contact on campus they must discover which variables will bring about such an increase. This research examined two variables that may be instrumental in increasing student-faculty informal interaction. They are the variables of professorial initiative and classroom experiences described in the following section.
The Hypotheses Tested

This study examined two possible determinants of increased faculty-student informal interactions by testing the following hypotheses:

1. Students who have experienced professorially initiated informal contact will interact more frequently than students who have not experienced professorially initiated informal contact.

2. Students who perceive faculty providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class informal contact will interact informally with faculty more frequently than those students who do not perceive faculty providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class informal contact.

To test these hypotheses a methodology was developed. Chapter III describes that methodology.

Summary

One purpose of the literature review in this chapter was to direct attention to the findings that colleges and universities have historically had a socializing influence on students, that faculty members in particular have had an important role in the socializing process, and that informal interaction between students and professors can result in positive student outcomes. Additionally, the literature review has provided a basis for researching some possible determinants of increased student-faculty
informal contact so that college administrators might discover which variables increase such contact. Finally, the literature review has resulted in the formulation of hypotheses to be tested. To test the hypotheses a methodology was developed. The chapter that follows describes the methodology employed.
CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter I of the dissertation presented the problem statement and the rationale for the study. The literature review in Chapter II provided an historical perspective of the socializing influence of the college and university environment and of the impact of student-faculty informal interactions on student outcomes. The literature review also led to a recognition of the need to conduct an investigation seeking some possible determinants of student-faculty informal interaction. This chapter will set forth the methodology developed to test the hypotheses formulated to study the relationship between the frequency of faculty-student informal interactions and professorial initiative and classroom experiences in the freshman year. A description is provided of the nature and mission of the institution where the research was carried out. Profiles of the student body and faculty follow. Then rationales for the selection of the college and the freshman class are provided. The chapter concludes with sections on the development of the instrumentation and an explanation of the research procedures.

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Nature of the Institution

The college where the research was conducted is located on a 28-acre suburban campus 25 miles from downtown Detroit. The surrounding property is a combination of residential areas and rapidly developing areas of office buildings. The college complex consists of an administrative/academic building and a cafeteria/residence hall. The Urban Studies students meet in an extension facility of the college in Detroit.

Founded in 1945, the college is a degree granting institution designed to help meet the growing demands for broadly educated and professionally equipped men and women to serve Christ through various avenues of Christian ministry and service.

Student Profile

The profile of students portrays a cultural, ethnic, and denominational diversity. The black minority population is 33%. Students come from 25 Protestant denominations, representing 150 different churches. The average student age is 30. Only 13% live in the college residence hall. The majority of the 425 students commute from within 50 miles.

Faculty

The faculty is diverse in gender and ethnic
composition. In addition to 17 full-time faculty and administrators the college currently draws on 27 part-time faculty. The expected teaching load for full-time faculty is normally 12-14 credit hours per semester. All full-time faculty members hold at least a master's degree and teach in the areas of their graduate degrees.

Rationale for the Selection of the College

With the exception of a few studies conducted at large nonresidential universities, most research on the phenomenon of student-faculty informal interaction has been conducted at large residential universities. This study was undertaken in an attempt to extend research on the phenomenon to a small, independent religious institution with a predominantly commuter population. At large nonresidential universities there is less concern within the institution for individuals than there is at large residential universities (Iverson, 1982). An assumption is made in this research that one might expect to find the faculty at a small, independent religious college more concerned for individuals than faculty at large nonresidential or residential institutions. Faculty at a small, independent religious institution, might manifest more concern for individuals than faculty at large residential and nonresidential universities due to their having: (1) fewer students in their classes, (2) less research
responsibilities, (3) less pressure to publish professional journal articles, and (4) a commitment to the concept of ministry to others. The assumption is made that a commitment to ministry would be a particularly potent reason for faculty showing concern for students. The institution selected for this study was chosen because it has a faculty with a strong commitment to the concept of ministry. The institution was expected to provide an excellent opportunity to extend research on the examination of the relationship between classroom cues and professorial initiative and the frequency of student-faculty informal contact to a different environment and population. Research results generated from a study conducted at this type of institution could have implications for institutions of a similar size and nature.

Rationale for the Selection of the Freshman Class

The freshman were chosen to be the subjects of this research because they had spent less time at the institution than the students in the other classes and might be better able to recall who had actually initiated informal interaction. The intent was to examine the impact of professorial initiative and classroom cues on the frequency of student-faculty informal interaction as early as possible in the student's academic experience. The assumption was made that the longer a student was enrolled
at the college the greater the likelihood that he or she would have had opportunity to establish informal relationships with a faculty member or members and greater the difficulty of determining how such informal interaction began.

Instrument Development

The survey instrument was designed to gather information on the nature and frequency of informal student-faculty contact (see Appendix D for a copy of the student survey). Data was collected on the frequency of informal contact by means of an item on the questionnaire inquiring about the number of informal interpersonal contacts students had with faculty members during their freshman year at the college in each of six categories. Only conversations of 10 minutes or more outside of the classroom were counted. This operational measure of student-faculty interaction was derived from an instrument used by Wilson et al. (1975) (see Appendix B of the questionnaire items measuring the dependent variable of the frequency of student-faculty informal interaction). Additionally, the questionnaire was constructed to collect information on whether or not students perceive faculty as providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class contact and whether out-of-class contacts were initiated by professors or by them. Ten statements were used to measure whether or not
the student experienced professorial initiative and five statements were chosen to measure whether or not the student perceived instructors providing classroom cues. These operational measures, in part, came from the instrument used by Wilson et al. (1975). However, they were modified in order that they might be more appropriate measures of the independent variables at the college where the research would be conducted.

The Jury

The items in the survey instrument measuring the variables of professorial initiative and classroom experiences (cues) were validated by a jury of the college faculty, staff, and students.

Three staff members of the Student Services Department were selected for the jury due to their close involvement with the student body and their thorough understanding of the institution. One of the staff members was a 1987 graduate of the college. Two other staff members from other departments were chosen because of their daily contact with the student body. They were also graduates of the institution. Two faculty members were chosen for their knowledge of the student body and the institution. Four seniors, two juniors, and two sophomores were chosen at random to provide feedback on the two instrument items.

The jury members were instructed to evaluate the two
independent variables to determine if they were appropriate measures of the variables at the college where the research would be conducted (see Appendix A for a list of the questionnaire items used to measure the independent variables of professorial initiative and classroom experiences).

Survey Scales

In order to collect data on the variables of professorial initiative and classroom experiences (cues) the questionnaire survey provided students with an opportunity to respond to the discriminating statements on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The choices available were:

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 = Neither Agree or Disagree
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly Disagree

Students who agreed or strongly agreed with one or more of the in-class cue items on the questionnaire were classified as students who perceived faculty as providing in-class cues that invited informal out-of-class contact. Those students who were neutral or disagreed with all the same questionnaire items were classified as students who had not received in-class cues from faculty to interact.
informally outside the classroom.

Students who agreed or strongly agreed with one or more of the professorially initiated items on the questionnaire were classified as students who experienced faculty as initiators of informal contact. Those students who were neutral or disagreed with all the same items were classified as students who did not experience faculty as initiators of informal contact. Respondents to the questionnaire also had an opportunity to indicate the number of informal contacts they had with faculty members during the academic year. Those respondents who scored above the mean number of interactions for the freshman class were classified as high-interactors.

Procedures

The student survey and a cover letter were distributed to 137 freshmen in April of the 1987-88 academic year (see Appendix C for a copy of the cover letter). Most of the freshmen (119) received a copy of the survey through their student mailboxes. The freshmen in the Urban Studies program (18) were each sent a copy by regular mail. The freshmen receiving the surveys through their student mailboxes were asked to leave the completed questionnaires in a box provided for that purpose in the student lounge or with the Assistant to the Dean of Students in the student services office. Urban Studies
students were provided with return envelopes addressed to the student services department of the college. The surveys were distributed or mailed on April 1, 1988. Students were requested to return them by April 8, 1988. Each student was given an identification number to facilitate in the follow-up of students who did not return their surveys by the suggested date and to assure anonymity. A memo was sent to those students who did not respond by April 8 informing them that they could still complete and return the surveys. The last surveys received were turned in during the second week of May, 1988.

Operationalization of the Hypotheses

The research hypotheses were operationalized and the null hypotheses and alternative hypotheses were tested employing tests of independent proportions. The alpha level selected for the investigation was .05.

The null hypotheses and alternative hypotheses were developed for the conceptual hypotheses in which the dependent variable is frequency of student-faculty informal interaction. The independent variables are professorial initiative of informal student-faculty interaction and classroom experiences providing evidences of faculty willingness to interact informally with students.

The operational hypotheses are:

1. The proportion of students who report high
informal interaction among all those students who indicate professorial initiative will be greater than the proportion of students who report high informal interaction among all those students who do not indicate professorial initiative.

2. The proportion of students who report high informal interaction among all those students who perceive faculty providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class contact will be greater than the proportion of students who report high informal interaction among all those students who do not perceive faculty providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class contact.

The null hypotheses are:

1. The proportion of students who report high informal interaction among all those students who indicate professorial initiative will be the same as the proportion of students who report high informal interaction among all those students who do not indicate professorial initiative.

2. The proportion of students who report high informal interaction among all those students who perceive faculty providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class contact will be the same as the proportion of students who report high informal interaction among all those students who do not perceive faculty providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class contact.
Summary

This chapter described the methodology developed to test the hypotheses formulated to study the relationship between the frequency of faculty-student informal interactions and professorial initiative and classroom experiences (cues) in the freshman year. Profiles of the college, the student body, and the faculty, where the research was conducted, were provided. Rationales for the selection of the college and the freshman class were furnished. Instrument development and research procedures were described. The next chapter sets forth the findings of the research and the analysis of the data derived from the survey instrument.
CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The results of the empirical study of the relationship between classroom experiences and professorial initiative and the frequency of student-faculty informal interaction in the freshman year are presented in this chapter. The chapter is divided into two parts. Part 1 describes the characteristics of the sample. Part 2 explains the findings of the statistical analysis employed in the testing of the hypotheses.

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample in this research study was comprised of all freshmen students enrolled at a small, private, predominantly commuter college in a suburban community in the state of Michigan during the 1987-88 academic year. When the survey was distributed in April, 1988, there were 137 matriculated freshmen. Of the total number of freshmen, 64, or 47% were women and 73, or 53% were men. There were 17, or 12% enrolled in the Urban Studies program.

Survey instruments were distributed to the entire freshman class. Out of the 137 freshmen who received
surveys, 101 returned them. The overall response rate was 74%. One of the respondents did not complete the survey correctly so the response was omitted from the data analysis. The surveys tabulated were evenly divided between men and women, 50 men and 50 women. Of the 100 respondents, 65% were day college students, 27% were from the evening college, and 8% were enrolled in the Urban Studies program. Table 1 contains the distribution of the student respondents versus nonrespondents by their college classification.

Table 1
Distribution of Student Respondents Versus Nonrespondents by College Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Nonrespondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day College</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening College</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Studies</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those who responded, 39 were married and 61 were single. The majority of the respondents, 82, were commuter students. The remaining 18 were living in the college residence. The racial composition of the responding freshmen was approximately the same as the racial composition of the student body as a whole, 30% Black and
67% White (see Table 2 for the racial composition of the respondents).

Table 2
Racial Composition of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of respondents taking less than 12 semester hours of class work in the Spring semester were 52, slightly more than the 48 students who were taking 12 hours or more. Several respondents, though still classified as freshmen, have been attending the college part-time for a period of several years. One respondent has been at the college for eight semesters. These students who have been in the freshmen class for more than two semesters have not accumulated sufficient semester hours to be classified as sophomores. Half the respondents were at the college for the entire 1987-88 academic year while 13 were new to the college in the Spring semester. Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents by the number of
semesters they have been enrolled at the college.

Table 3

Distribution of Respondents by Semesters Enrolled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semesters Enrolled</th>
<th>Student Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Freshmen were provided an opportunity when responding to the questionnaire to indicate the number of informal contacts they had with faculty members during the 1987-88 academic year. They were asked to record the amount of informal contacts they had in each of six categories. The categories they could select from were: (1) to obtain academic/course information, (2) to discuss career concerns, (3) to discuss a personal problem, (4) to engage in an intellectual discussion, (5) to discuss a campus issue, and (6) to socialize informally. Table 4 lists the categories of student-faculty contact and indicates the mean number of student informal interactions with faculty in
each area. The mean number of all informal student-faculty interactions for the respondents was 8. The single category with the highest mean of 2 for student-faculty informal interactions was the category pertaining to students seeking information about academic and/or course matters.

Table 4
The Mean Number of Student-Faculty Informal Contacts by Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic/Course Information</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Concerns</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Problems</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Issues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialize</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis Testing

Data collected by means of the student survey were employed to answer the research questions posed in Chapter I. The questions were answered by testing the hypothesis associated with each question using the chi-square statistic. The alpha level selected for the investigation was .05.
Hypothesis 1

The null hypothesis for Research Question 1 proposed that the proportion of students who report high informal interaction from among all those students who indicate professorial initiative will be the same as the proportion of students who report high informal interaction among all those students who do not indicate professorial initiative.

All respondents to the student survey who indicated they interacted informally with faculty members nine times or more during their freshman year were classified as high-interactors. Following the identification of high-interactors, the data was examined to discover the number of high-interactors who indicated that they had experienced professorial initiative during their freshman year and the number who indicated they had not. The data established that of the respondents who indicated they had experienced professorial initiative during their freshman year, 37 were classified as high-interactors. Of the respondents who indicated that they had not experienced professorial initiative during their freshman year, four classified as high-interactors (see Table 5).
Table 5

Summary Data of Freshmen Who Did or Did Not Experience Professorial Initiative Who Were High Interactors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professorial Initiative</th>
<th>Number of High Interacting Freshmen</th>
<th>Percentages of High Interactors From All Who Did and Did Not Experience Professorial Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The critical value of chi-square is 3.84 for one degree of freedom at the .05 alpha level. The calculated value of chi-square is 0.53. Since the calculated value of chi-square does not exceed the critical value, the null hypothesis is not rejected and no support is found for the hypothesis that students who have experienced professorially initiated informal contact will interact more frequently than students who have not experienced professorially initiated informal contact (see Table 6).

Table 6

Crosstabulation of Professorial Initiative With Student-Faculty Informal Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>d.f</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Cells with E.F. &lt; 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.52794</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4675</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Hypothesis 2

The null hypothesis for Research Question 2 proposed that the proportion of students who report high informal interaction among all those students who perceive faculty providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class contact will be the same as the proportion of students who report high informal interaction among all those students who do not perceive faculty providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class contact.

The data was examined to determine the number of high-interactors who indicated they had perceived classroom cues during their freshman year and the number who indicated they did not. The data established that of the respondents who perceived classroom cues during their freshman year, 40 were classified as high-interactors. Of the respondents who did not perceive classroom cues during their freshman year, one was classified as a high-interactor (see Table 7).

The critical value of chi-square is 3.84 for one degree of freedom at the .05 alpha level. The calculated value of chi-square is 1.19. Since the calculated value of chi-square does not exceed the critical value, the null hypothesis is not rejected and no support is found for the hypothesis that students who perceive faculty providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class informal contact will interact informally with faculty more frequently than
those students who do not perceive faculty providing in-class cues that invite out-of-class informal contact (see Table 8).

Table 7
Summary Data of Freshmen Who Did or Did Not Perceive Classroom Cues Who Were High Interactors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Cues</th>
<th>Number of High Interacting Freshmen</th>
<th>Percentages of High Interactors From All Who Did and Did Not Perceive Classroom Cues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8
Crosstabulation of Classroom Experiences With Student-Faculty Informal Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Cells with E.F. &lt; 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.19186</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2750</td>
<td>2 of 4 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The null hypothesis was not rejected in both cases. There was no evidence that interaction level is dependent on professorial initiative or classroom cues.

Summary

This chapter described the characteristics of the sample used in the research study and explained the
findings of the statistical analysis used to test the hypotheses. The null hypothesis was not rejected in both hypothesis 1 and 2. The conclusions and recommendations derived from the findings of the statistical analysis will be set forth in the chapter that follows.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was undertaken in order to explain variation in student informal contact with faculty. Pascarella (1980), in a comprehensive review of the research literature on the phenomenon of faculty-student informal interaction, found a definite lack of research on determinants of the occurrence. This study considered two possible explanations of variation. One was professorial initiative and the other was classroom experiences (cues). The analysis of the data derived from the student survey instrument provided no support for the belief that professorial initiative or classroom experiences might be variables that would determine the level of student informal contact with faculty members. The research results suggest that the level of student-faculty informal contact might be the same whether faculty members initiate informal interaction or they do not or if faculty members provide classroom cues inviting informal interaction or they do not.

Conclusions

There was no evidence in the research conducted that
the level of student-faculty informal contact is dependent on professorial initiative or classroom experiences (cues). However, there were a large number of respondents who indicated they experienced professorial initiative. The majority of freshmen responding to the survey, 86, indicated that they experienced professorial initiative. Only 14 recorded that they had not experienced any attempt by a faculty member to start a conversation with them outside of class. A large number of respondents also reported perceiving faculty providing in-class cues inviting out-of-class contact. The majority, 93, indicated they perceived faculty doing and saying things in class that gave evidence that they were open to informal interaction while only 7 indicated they did not. These findings are significant in light of the tendency for commuter students to enroll in college with orientations and personal characteristics that tend toward the limitation of informal interaction with faculty (Pascarella et al., 1983). Apparently the faculty members made special efforts to overcome the barriers or the student body, though commuter, is different. The high incidence of student informal contact with faculty found in this study could well be a reflection of the nature of the institution, the faculty, and the student body. While there is cultural, ethnic, and denominational diversity in the student body, there is a commitment to purpose that tends to bind
students and faculty together. The unity of purpose and the small enrollment may explain, at least in part, why the research results on incidence of student-faculty contact does not dovetail with the results of some of the previous research carried out with commuter student populations. The lack of agreement with previous studies may also be due to the fact that 50% of the freshmen have taken classes at the college for more than the normal two semesters. It would seem that the longer the student is enrolled at the institution the more likely it is that he or she might experience professorial initiative of informal interaction or perceive faculty members providing cues that they are open to out-of-class contact.

Recommendations

The majority of freshmen responding to the survey reported they had experienced professorial initiative and classroom cues. However, the research did not provide evidence that there is a relationship between these two variables and high informal student-faculty interaction. One of the reasons no relationship was found may be due to the individual entry characteristics of students. Freshmen do not arrive on campus as blank screens. At the time of enrollment they bring all their past academic experiences, their expectations regarding their new academic setting, and their perceived needs. These individual
student characteristics need to be controlled in future efforts to determine the impact of professorial initiative and classroom cues on the amount of student-faculty informal contact. Some freshmen arrive on campus with a perceived need to interact with faculty informally while others do not. Those students with a high perceived need to interact with faculty informally may choose to interact with faculty more often whether they experience professorial initiative and classroom cues or whether they do not. Those students with a low perceived need to interact informally with faculty may choose to keep the amount of student-faculty informal interaction to low levels even though they have experienced professorial initiative and classroom cues.

Future research should be designed to determine, at the time of matriculation, the individual characteristics of freshmen so those characteristics can be controlled. Do newly enrolled freshmen perceive a need to interact informally with faculty? Do they expect faculty to initiate informal contact? Did they have a history of informal interaction with teachers during their high school years? The results expected in the research might have been obtained if these and other individual freshmen characteristics were controlled.

An experimental design might be employed in future research using two equivalent student groups. The
experimental group would receive classroom cues from their professor and the control group would receive none from their professor. Comparison of the amounts of informal interaction the students in each group had with their respective professor could then be made to discover whether or not differences in student-faculty informal contact are associated with differences on the independent variable represented by the two conditions of cues/no cues. A similar experimental design, using an experimental and a control group, might also be employed in the study of the professorial initiative variable in the continued search for the determinants of student-faculty informal interaction.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Questionnaire Items Measuring the Variables of Professorial Initiative and Classroom Experiences
PROFESSORIAL INITIATIVE

I have personally had a professor at this college initiate a discussion with me outside the classroom.

I have personally had a professor at this college invite me to lunch.

I have personally been invited to the home of a faculty member of this college for a meal.

I have personally been invited to the home of a faculty member of this college to discuss an academic matter.

I have personally attended a meeting with other students at the home of a faculty member of this college.

I have personally been invited by a faculty member of this college to his/her office to discuss a personal matter.

I have personally been invited by a faculty member of this college to his/her office to discuss an academic matter.

I have personally had a professor of this college invite me to have refreshments in the college cafeteria.

I have personally had a professor of this college call me at home.

I have personally had a professor at this college initiate a conversation with me at a college athletic event or social activity.

CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

Professors at this college encourage students during class periods to make appointments to see them after class.

Professors at this college make reference during class periods to discussions they have had with students outside of class.
Professors at this college say things in class that encourage students to talk with them informally after class.

Professors at this college remind students during class periods that they are available during office hours.

Professors at this college answer questions in class in a manner that indicates they believe no question is unimportant or insignificant.
Appendix B

Questionnaire Items Measuring the Number of Informal Interactions Students Had With Faculty
The following questionnaire items provided students with an opportunity to indicate the number of informal (outside the classroom) contacts that they had with a faculty member during their freshman year. Only conversations of ten (10) minutes or more were considered. (From Wilson, Gaff, Dienst, Wood, & Bavry, 1975).

_____ 1. To obtain academic/course information.
_____ 2. To discuss career concerns.
_____ 3. To discuss a personal problem.
_____ 4. To engage in an intellectual discussion.
_____ 5. To discuss a campus issue.
_____ 6. To socialize informally.
Appendix C

Cover Letter Introducing the Survey Research
Dear Freshman,

I am conducting research on the subject of freshman student-faculty informal interaction. I need your assistance to have a complete representation of your class. Please take a few minutes to complete the attached survey. My goal is to begin tabulation of the data on April 8.

Completed surveys may be left in the box provided in the student lounge or with the assistant to the Dean of Students in Student Services.

thank you very much for participating in the research. I sincerely appreciate your response and return of this survey.

Sincerely yours,

Alan W. Barr
Dean of Students

A WB:lt
Enclosures
Appendix D

Survey Instrument
STUDENT SURVEY

This questionnaire is a study of the perceptions and activities of students. Please give truthful and complete answers to all the questions below.

This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers.

Please follow the directions given for each section.

SECTION I

Please put an X next to the most appropriate response.

1. What is your sex?
   _____ Female
   _____ Male

2. Are you currently married?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

3. What is your classification?
   _____ Day College Student
   _____ Evening College Student
   _____ Urban Studies Student
   _____ Genesis Studies Student

4. How many hours are you enrolled for?
   _____ Less than 12 hours
   _____ 12 hours or more
5. How do you describe yourself?
   _____ Asian
   _____ Black
   _____ Hispanic
   _____ Native American
   _____ White
   _____ Other (please specify: ___________________________)

Please fill in the blanks with the appropriate responses.

6. _____ How old are you?

7. _____ How many semesters, including the present semester, have you been a student at this college?

SECTION II

Using the scale given below indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements. Place the numbers 1 through 5 in the blank next to each statement.

5 - Strongly Agree
4 - Agree
3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 - Disagree
1 - Strongly Disagree

SAMPLE:

   _____ 2. I have personally had a professor at this college invite me to lunch.

   _____ 1. I have personally had a professor at this college initiate a discussion with me outside the classroom.

   _____ 2. I have personally had a professor at this college invite me to lunch.
3. Professors at this college encourage students during class periods to make appointments to see them after class.

4. I have personally been invited to the home of a faculty member of this college for a meal.

5. Professors at this college make reference during class periods to discussions they have had with students outside of class.

6. I have personally been invited to the home of a faculty member of this college to discuss an academic matter.

7. Professors at this college say things in class that encourage students to talk with them informally after class.

8. I have personally attended a meeting with other students at the home of a faculty member of this college.

9. Professors at this college remind students during class periods that they are available during office hours.

10. I have personally been invited by a faculty member at this college to his/her office to discuss an academic matter.

11. Professors at this college answer questions in class in a manner that indicates they believe no question is unimportant or insignificant.

12. I have personally been invited by a faculty member at this college to his/her office to discuss a personal matter.

13. I have personally had a professor at this college invite me to have refreshments in the college cafeteria.

14. I have personally had a professor at this college call me at home.

15. I have personally had a professor at this college initiate a conversation with me at a college athletic event or social activity.
SECTION III

Indicate the number of informal (outside the classroom) interpersonal contacts you have had with faculty members during the past year in each of the following categories. Only conversations of ten (10) minutes or more should be considered.

SAMPLE:

____ 3. To discuss a personal problem

____ 1. To obtain academic/course information.
____ 2. To discuss career concerns.
____ 3. To discuss a personal problem.
____ 4. To engage in an intellectual discussion.
____ 5. To discuss a campus issue.
____ 6. To socialize informally.
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